



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 1, 2022

AMC Mourns the Loss of Beloved First Nation Youth Worker

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and Deputy Grand Chief Cornell McLean send condolences to the friends and family of Mackaylah Gerard-Roussin, whose life was taken this past weekend in Steinbach, MB.

On Monday, RCMP announced that Josh Benoit had been charged with the death of 20-year-old Mackaylah Gerard-Roussin after calls to Emergency Dispatcher launched the investigation for a homicide. Mackaylah was a bright young woman whose outgoing spirit will be missed deeply, and as she begins her journey home, we lay down tobacco and send prayers to her family and friends.

"We grieve the loss of a bright spirit who has impacted the community with her positivity and beautiful voice. I send my condolences to Mackaylah's family and to former AFN Regional Chief Kevin Hart as he mourns the loss of his niece. I offer my prayers as the family gathers this week to give Mackaylah her going home ceremony," said Deputy Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

The AMC sees violence such as this as further evidence that concrete steps need to be taken in order to stem the hostility against First Nation women. This past April, Statistics Canada released the *Violent victimization and perceptions of safety among First Nations, Metis, and Inuit women and among women living in remote areas of Canada* report, wherein it states that more than 6 in 10 Indigenous women (63%) experienced either physical or sexual assault in their lifetime (since the age 15). Of 63%, almost two-thirds were First Nations.

The AMC reiterates its call on all levels of government to work in partnership with First Nations to advance the calls for justice outlined in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, specifically section 1.0 to 1.11; implementing the necessary reporting mechanisms to provide the public with an updated and accurate database of MMIWG2, stringently advocate against the ongoing human rights violations, and ensure that resources to support families are First Nations-centred and First Nations-led to restore the balance that has been profoundly weakened by colonization.

"Words cannot convey how deep the pain is of losing someone so young and full of promise. We demand that not only is justice rendered for this family but that the Province and Federal Government take steps to counter the colonial culture of violence and disregard for First Nation women." Concludes Deputy Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

For more information, please contact:

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.