



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC and AFN Manitoba reflect on Treaty Partnership with the Queen as Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Begin

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) acknowledges the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth. This week the Queen celebrates her 70th year on the throne, and at 96 years old she is the longest-reigning monarch.

AMC Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean said, "On behalf of the AMC, we would like to congratulate Queen Elizabeth II on this momentous occasion, but we would be remiss if we did not reflect on the past 70 years and how our Treaty partnership with the Queen has progressed so far."

Since the Queen's coronation in 1953, there have been several legal battles lost and won by First Nations in Manitoba to have governments affirm and respect the Treaty relationship. In addition to constitutional amendments and various assertions of self-determination, there has been notable progress in asserting Treaty rights and creating equitable support. Working together with the Chiefs of 62 AMC member First Nations, the AMC continues to raise issues that they bring to our attention to push for change. AMC Political Advisor and Knowledge Keeper Dennis White Bird said, "According to the Royal Proclamation, Queen Victoria's reign promised a relationship to last *as long as the sun shines, grass grows, and rivers flow*." This promise is what drives the AMC's continued advocacy.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' predecessor was the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood (MIB). Founded in 1934, it saw many strong leaders who advocated for First Nations in Manitoba despite a lack of resources and no federal or provincial financial support. One such leader was MIB co-founder, Dave Courchene Sr., who travelled to the Pas in July of 1970 to meet the Queen while she was touring Canada. His incredible leadership will forever be worth noting as he had prepared a speech which, despite being rejected when reviewed by the Queen's staff, demanded that the Treaties be honoured, "It is with sorrow that we note that the promises of peace and harmony, of social advancement and equality of opportunity, have not been realized by our people," said Dave Courchene Sr. We honour Dave Courchene Sr. and his bravery that set a critical precedent for further and more direct advocacy efforts by our leadership.

First Nations leaders require ongoing and meaningful engagement with the original Treaty partner, the Queen. Dennis White Bird said, "Our Treaties are direct with the First Nations and the British Crown, so we must reconnect and remind the Crown of the original provisions, obligations, promises, and spirit and intent behind the original Treaties."

"We are incredibly proud of the leaders who came before us, many understood what it meant to serve their nations with dedication and integrity. We hope to continue that legacy of acting and advocating for the success

and benefit of our Manitoba First Nations," said Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean, "Our ancestors acted with courage and strength so that we can find progress and healing today, and so we continue to do our best so that our children and their children can live better and more thriving lives."

At last year's celebration of the 150th anniversary of Treaties 1 and 2, Manitoba Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse expressed that the original intent of Treaties signed with the Crown was a respectful partnership, not a forfeit of First Nation sovereignty and self-determination. Unfortunately, the relationship between First Nations and the British Monarchy has not always been good. The turbulent history of colonization imposed by settlers has caused tremendous trauma that continues today. Without the creation of our pre-confederation and numbered Treaties, Canada would not have been able to exist.

Assembly of First Nation's Manitoba Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse stated, "The Treaty relationship between First Nations and the Crown in many parts of Canada predates the creation of Canada itself. For Treaty First Nations, marking the Queen's Jubilee Year provides an opportunity to reinforce the special nation-to-nation relationship. We remind everyone that the dynamics of colonialism were never part of the Treaty relationship. The fact that the spirit, intent, and even letter of the Treaties have been violated through federal and provincial governments' policies and legislation, cannot change our sacred obligations to respect these agreements made between sovereign nations. We need to move beyond broken promises and unfulfilled commitments. With that, I want to congratulate Queen Elizabeth II on her many decades of service."

The AMC also acknowledges Canada's first-ever Indigenous Governor General, Mary J Simon. Inuk from Kangiqsualujjuaq, in the Nunavik region of Northern Quebec, her Excellency signifies further change and an extension of the resilience and strong leadership we see more often. In her position, despite her limited amount of influence, she has shown a commitment to advocating for Reconciliation and pushing for accountability from parliament when engaging with First Nations people.

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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 / Inineu (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.