



Manitoba
Keewatinowik
Okimakanak Inc.



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First Nation Citizens in Manitoba Urged to Get the Flu Shot: Protecting Ourselves and Our Loved Ones

Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, MB – First Nation citizens across the Province of Manitoba are being urged to get their annual flu shot as soon as possible.

“Once again, I am encouraging all First Nations citizens from Northern Manitoba to get your flu shot sooner rather than later,” stated **Grand Chief Garrison Settee, Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak**. “The flu vaccine takes about two weeks to start working, so it’s important to be proactive and get your shot now, before anyone gets sick. Unfortunately, Indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to an increased risk of serious illness from the flu. Making a habit of getting your flu shot every year is a great way to protect yourself and the people around you. This year the flu shot is more important than ever as we live with the challenges of COVID-19. I urge you to call your pharmacy or nursing station to set up your appointment as soon as you can.”

According to Indigenous Services Canada, 14.5 percent of people living in First Nations in Manitoba were immunized with the seasonal flu vaccine during the 2019-2020 flu season. This is in lower than the provincial coverage rate of 26.3 percent, reported for all Manitoba residents.

“The flu shot is one of the most effective ways of keeping yourself and those around you safe and healthy this fall and winter. It’s free and everyone who is six months and older is able to get the flu shot. This year, it’s especially important to avoid a ‘twindemic’ during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are currently seeing very high rates of COVID-19 in parts of southern Manitoba, and we must take care to make sure our immunity is as strong as possible. Consider taking this important step to protect our Elders, families, and communities,” said **Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, Southern Chiefs’ Organization**.

“We know that the flu shot save lives. While we wait for a vaccine for COVID-19 to be ready, we can take the simple step of getting the flu shot. This is especially important for First Nations families in the north where there is limited access to health care, leaving them especially vulnerable. Other factors, such as the shortage of housing and people living with chronic health conditions, create further risk for hospitalization and getting serious health complications from the flu. We encourage people to take steps to improve their immunity, such as improving their dietary and lung health, particularly by eating healthier and quitting smoking,” shared **Dr. Barry Lavallee, Chief Executive Officer of Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoyawin**.

“First Nations people across the province have worked diligently to keep COVID-19 out of our Nations. I urge everyone to use the flu shot as another method to ensure our Nations remain as safe as possible during these challenging times. The flu shot is a safe and effective way to protect ourselves and our families, so let's all step up and do our part,” stated **Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**.

“Indigenous Manitobans may be more at risk of serious illness from influenza, especially if someone has underlying health conditions. By taking the time to protect each other, we can help everyone stay healthy. The flu vaccine is a great way to protect your loved ones and other community members, and I encourage everyone to add an extra layer of protection this fall by getting the vaccine,” shared **Dr. Brent Roussin, Chief Public Health Officer for the Province of Manitoba**.

“The flu shot is a safe, effective measure for keeping you and your loved ones safe during the upcoming flu season. I encourage everyone in Manitoba to get the flu shot, especially as we deal with the added stress of the COVID-19 pandemic this year,” said **Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living Minister Cameron Friesen**.

The annual flu vaccine is free of charge and is available now from healthcare providers and pharmacies across the province. Contact your local health facility or find a list of scheduled vaccine clinics in your area at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/flu/where.html>.

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Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is a non-profit, political advocacy organization that has represented 26 First Nation communities in Manitoba's North since 1981. The MKO represents more than 72,000 First Nations people.

The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations in what is now called southern Manitoba. SCO is an independent political organization that protects, preserves, promotes, and enhances First Nations peoples' inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.