



# *Manitoba Keewatinowî Okimakanak Inc.*

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## MEMO

**Date:** December 1, 2020

**To:** MKO Chiefs

**From:** MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee

**Subject:** Recommendations for measures to respond to COVID-19

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Manitoba Keewatinowî Okimakanak (MKO) receives and accepts medical advice from Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin (KIM) on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are offering these seven recommendations for MKO leaders to respond to high rates of COVID-19 in the Province of Manitoba:

1. We recommend that First Nations adopt a limitation on large-scale gatherings hosted by and in the MKO First Nations. We strongly urge that funerals follow the provincial public health orders, which limit the gathering size to 5 people at a time, with physical distancing practices in place along with other public health measures aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19. These measures include hand washing, hand sanitizing, the wearing of non-medical masks, having attendees stay six feet apart, etc.
2. We recommend that leadership support their members to keep attending medical appointments in Winnipeg as necessary. These should not be interrupted at this point as evidence is not showing that COVID-19 is contracted by visiting hospitals or clinics. Rather, evidence suggests that infection occurs when people go visiting or shopping after their appointments—we encourage leadership to continue to share messaging for people to limit their outings while in Winnipeg and continue to practice measures such as wearing a mask, physical distancing, and practicing ongoing hand hygiene. Gathering in the homes of friends of family in Winnipeg is not permitted at this time.
3. We recommend that leadership **NOT** require mandatory testing for people who show no signs of illness who are returning to their home First Nations.  
You may wish to provide a simple set of screening questions to people who have been travelling and recommend that they self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19.  
**Note:** There is a printable sheet for COVID-19 screening online here:  
[https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/covid19\\_screening\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf)
4. We recommend that each First Nation adopt a colour-coding system to reflect the risk level their community is in.  
**Note:** The Manitoba First Nations COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team has created a document to assist with this identification. You can find the document online here:  
<https://manitobachiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/PRCT-MB-First-Nations-COVID-Alert-Levels.pdf>

5. If the borders to your First Nation are not already closed, we recommend that you close them while the entire province is under code red. Public health measures limit people from having gatherings in their homes. While we are under code red, it is ideal to share messaging that visitors living outside of your community are not permitted.
6. The Province of Manitoba has stepped up enforcement for people who are not following public health measures. We recommend that you share information with your community members that there are fines in place for people who do not wear a mask in public spaces (\$298), people who open non-essential businesses (\$5000), as well as people who host gatherings (\$1296). From November 14 to 20, the Manitoba RCMP received 236 calls related to COVID-19. In 24 cases, the RCMP issued fines for “failing to comply with a provincial emergency order.” To report non-compliance, you can call the Manitoba Government Inquiry line at 1-866-626-4862.
7. We recommend that you start thinking about the messaging you share with your members around holiday gatherings and whether they will be permitted in your community. For now, public health officials have been recommending that people NOT gather at Christmas. This guidance may change but it’s important to consider that we may still need to be under code red/lock down during the Christmas season.

#### **Communication recommendations:**

1. If leadership have question on how to respond to COVID-19, contact your health directors first. If your health director needs assistance, they can reach out to **Joni Wilson** by email [joni.wilson@mkonorth.com](mailto:joni.wilson@mkonorth.com) or call/text 204-390-0829 or **Caroline Chartrand** [caroline.chartrand@mkonorth.com](mailto:caroline.chartrand@mkonorth.com) or call/text 204-390-0273.
2. We recommend that all MKO leadership work to provide regular COVID-19 updates to membership to help ease any fears people are feeling. Many leaders are using Facebook to provide regular updates and some communities provide updates via radio. If you need ideas on communication, please contact my office.
3. If someone is emailing updates about COVID-19 from your First Nation, please add us to your distribution list: [political.team@mkonorth.com](mailto:political.team@mkonorth.com)
4. If you need to share information about COVID-19 in your community with the media, our Communications Officer is available to assist you in drafting or distributing media releases/statements for media. Email [melanie.ferris@mkonorth.com](mailto:melanie.ferris@mkonorth.com) or call/text: 204-612-1284.
5. If you are interested in keeping up with data on COVID-19 in First Nations citizens in the province, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has been sharing detailed bulletins each week on behalf of the Manitoba First Nations COVID-19 Pandemic Response Coordination Team. You can find these bulletins on their COVID-19 webpage here: <https://manitobachiefs.com/covid-19-updates-and-information/>