



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs  
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS



O-PIPON-NA-PIWIN CREE NATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 6, 2023**

## **O-PIPON-NA-PIWIN CREE NATION DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY**

**South Indian Lake, MB** – Following a string of critical incidents in the northern First Nation community caused by death, addictions and mental health issues O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN) Chief Shirley Ducharme has declared a state of emergency and is calling on both the federal and provincial governments for immediate assistance in resolving the issues that have plagued the community.

"We are declaring a state of emergency following a string of deaths in our community. The root causes of our emergency come from centuries of colonial impacts resulting in addictions, reactions to trauma and mental health issues. We are requesting that the federal and provincial governments for immediate assistance with supports to address the immediate issue," said Chief Ducharme.

"We can't wait any longer. We are dealing with emergencies and tragedy on a daily basis here it seems. Our people are dying and as leadership, we have to do something. Today I am calling for help to get crisis supports to help our community heal," she added.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) support their member First Nation and are assisting OPCN with short- and long-term solutions.

"I pray for justice and healing for the family of Noreen Tait," said AMC Grand Chief Cathy Merrick. "AMC stands with Chief Shirley Ducharme and O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation as they declare a state of emergency over the numerous deaths in their First Nation within a short period of time." OPCN has requested AMC to facilitate a process to design, develop and implement a Community Action Plan to address the immediate, medium and long term needs of the community.

"This is not a time for words. This is a time for action," says MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee. "MKO has responded to Chief Ducharme's call for immediate assistance by deploying our Mobile Crisis Response Team to assist OPCN in their hour of need. They work directly with families who have experienced trauma and will be a part of a response that includes other entities. We are also going to assist our member First Nation with their call for more housing by advocating on their behalf Federally and asking the Province to limit the hours of their ferry to control the flow of alcohol into their community."

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