



Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Supports People Experiencing Homelessness in The Pas: *Oscar's Place Provides Essential Service During COVID-19 Pandemic*

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. is pleased to work in partnership with the Swampy Cree Tribal Council (SCTC) to support Oscar's Place in The Pas, Manitoba.

"First Nations people are disproportionately impacted by the issue of homelessness and lack of housing in Northern Manitoba and across Canada," shared **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. "Issues causing homelessness are complex and varied. MKO is pleased to work with the Swampy Cree Tribal Council to remove barriers to assist those who are literally left out in the cold in The Pas. A safe, warm, and welcoming space has become even more essential due to fact that COVID-19 has closed many spaces where people would normally seek refuge from the cold."

As a result of funding provided from Indigenous Services Canada, MKO has been able to assist Oscar's Place with much-needed repairs that enable the space to be open to people experiencing homelessness. Funding also helped with the installation of plexiglass barriers and the provision of safety resources such as personal protective equipment and sanitizing supplies.

In addition, MKO was able to purchase a large supply of groceries, large and small appliances, dishes, pots, pans, sleeping mats, and shelving units. Staff at Oscar's Place also received training in first aid, CPR, safety, and preparing Indigenous foods. MKO was also able to assist with opening a day site at the Guy Hall to accommodate people during the cold spell of -50 Celcius temperatures in February.

"Providing a warm, safe place to sleep is only the beginning of the journey. We are also working to integrate cultural considerations into service delivery. This is also an essential part of the work we do as it enables more successful outcomes," said SCTC Technical Unit Manager **Carolyn Smeltzer**. "The Northern climate can be particularly harsh when it comes to those experiencing homelessness, so our shelter becomes a lifeline on a completely different level than in milder climate areas. We are extremely thankful for the strong and growing partnerships that assist and empower people experiencing homelessness in The Pas and Opaskwayak Cree Nation."

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