



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Update on COVID-19 in Northern Manitoba: *Grand Chief Urges Eligible Citizens to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine*

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is issuing this statement to provide an update on issues related to COVID-19 in Northern Manitoba.

“The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 variants in Northern Manitoba have increased. I am encouraging citizens to remain calm but to take action to stop the spread of this virus,” shared **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. “We have witnessed a rise in cases of COVID-19 and we are now in the third wave of the pandemic here in Manitoba. It is essential to keep your number of contacts as low as you can during this challenging time.”

“Yesterday the Province of Manitoba announced that anyone who is 18 year and older and living in Northern Manitoba is now eligible to book a vaccine appointment,” shared **Dr. Michael Routledge**, medical advisor at Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoyawin (KIM) Inc. “We encourage everyone who is 18 and older to make your appointment to receive the vaccine if you have not already done so. Continue to follow public health measures as we wait for more vaccines to be put into arms. Having more Manitobans vaccinated will have a positive impact on the entire province along with MKO First Nations.”

While any adults in Northern Manitoba can now book appointments, MKO citizens also live off reserve in other parts of the province. MKO encourages all Manitoba residents to listen to the provincial updates to determine when you can book your COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

There are “priority areas” in Winnipeg where anyone who is 18 and over can book a vaccine appointment. The areas identified to date are Seven Oaks, Downtown East, Inkster East, and Point Douglas South.

Several MKO First Nations continue to host vaccination clinics for community members who are 18 and older. Anyone living off reserve or who cannot return to their First Nation to receive a vaccine can book an appointment at one of the Manitoba supersites or a pop-up clinic.

First Nations people across Manitoba who are 30 years old and above and who do not live or work in any of the priority areas of Northern Manitoba, Seven Oaks, Downtown East, Inkster East, and Point Douglas South can call to book their COVID-19 vaccine appointments at 1-844-626-8222 or book online at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/eligibility-criteria.html>. As vaccine supply increases and age cohorts near completion, further age groups will become eligible to book their vaccines.

Yesterday the Province of Manitoba also announced updated public health orders, which include guidance that visitors will not be allowed at private homes (with an exception for people living alone, who can have one designated visitor), no indoor gatherings will be allowed, and outdoor gatherings will be limited to 10 people in public spaces. These updated orders come into effect **Wednesday, April 28, 2021, at 12:01 am**. A full list of orders can be found here: <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=51171&posted=2021-04-26>

“Pandemic fatigue is certainly real and many of us are feeling the impacts of these ongoing lock downs,” shared Grand Chief Settee. “I want to encourage everyone to hang in there. Having access to vaccines provides us with hope, so make sure to book your appointment if you are eligible. Meanwhile, please continue to follow the public health measures of physical distancing, practicing good hand hygiene, wearing a mask when in public spaces or when you are with people from outside your household, and staying home and seeking out a COVID test if you are showing any symptoms of the virus.”

MKO and KIM continue to work on strategies to promote uptake of the vaccine. The organizations have partnered with the Southern Chiefs’ Organization and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to ask First Nations adults in Manitoba about their views of the COVID-19 vaccine. Interested adults who complete a short online survey will be entered to win a \$500 prize. The final day to complete the survey is tomorrow, April 28. It is available here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DP6W7SF>

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