



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Launches *Minoayawin Keewatinowi Askik*: New Vaccine Project Aimed at Increasing Vaccine Uptake

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. is launching *Minoayawin Keewatinowi Askik*, a new project to engage Northern First Nations in Manitoba to increase the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.

“MKO is pleased to launch a new project, *Minoayawin Keewatinowi Askik*, to identify barriers to accessing vaccines and promising practices for providing trusted information to enable members to make informed choices to improve overall community wellness,” shared **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**.

The project team for *Minoayawin Keewatinowi Askik* is coordinating community engagement sessions with project partner **Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc.** MKO leadership have completed a survey as a starting point on what First Nations need and to find out information regarding barriers to getting vaccines. Community engagement sessions start next week.

“Thank you to the health care professionals who continue to work diligently to help distribute the COVID-19 vaccines to the people who need them, including our children. Let’s continue to do what we can to protect our people,” said **Dr. Barry Lavallee**, Chief Executive Officer of Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc.

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the importance MKO First Nations place on community wellness, as well as the need for Indigenous-led processes in providing trusted information on vaccines. While overall COVID-19 vaccine uptake among MKO First Nations was excellent, ongoing work is needed to address the challenges of vaccine hesitancy.

The project will address a wide range of aspects related to vaccine promotion and a vaccine toolkit will be developed and made available for First Nations towards the end of the project in early 2023.

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