



Manitoba Keewatinowi  
Okimakanak Inc.



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## Supporting First Nations Citizens Experiencing Homelessness: MKO Pleased to Provide Funding to YWCA Thompson

**Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB** – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is providing financial support to the **Sheltering the Homeless in Place Project** hosted at **YMCA Thompson**, so that the organization may continue sheltering First Nations people living off reserve. These people are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the COVID-19 virus.

“At MKO, we are aware that half of First Nations people from MKO First Nations live off reserve in both urban and rural settings. We recently learned we would receive funding to assist people who live off reserve as they deal with the growing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,” stated **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. “Today we are pleased to present some of our funding to the YWCA Thompson, which has been working tirelessly to support Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in the City of Thompson.”

“The YWCA Thompson is fully committed to assisting Thompson’s homeless population within a housing first – harm reduction framework during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Kim Hicks**, Executive Director for the YWCA Thompson. “With this additional funding, we will be able to continue our efforts to encourage and practice healthy COVID-19 measures. Clients complete a screening twice a day, have access to laundry and shower facilities, handwashing, masks and gloves. We also encourage everyone to practice physical distancing.”

“Beyond these measures, we will continue to support clients by providing on-site access to community resources, in-house access to supports and treat all clients with dignity and respect,” stated Ms. Hicks. “At the YWCA Thompson, we believe that by having a positive impact on clients, in turn we create a positive impact on our community. We are extremely grateful for MKO’s generous contribution to this project and look forward to a continued partnership.”

Since April 2020, the YWCA has hosted 25 of Thompson’s most vulnerable residents, who in addition to having elevated risk of COVID-19 complications, have nowhere to safely shelter in place. The YWCA has also allowed many of these residents to access personalized counseling services.

The program was initially organized through **Thompson's Community Advisory Board on Homelessness** and funded through **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy**. MKO's contribution will allow the program to continue into the late fall.

"We have been concerned that people are going to fall through the cracks when it comes to the response to COVID-19," shared Grand Chief Garrison Settee. "We are pleased to have a strong partner with the YWCA Thompson; they work to ensure that people experiencing housing and homelessness issues are well cared for at all times, no matter whether there is a pandemic."

MKO will continue to advocate for Northern First Nations and continues to share updates as they become available. MKO leadership continue to meet on a regular basis with both provincial and federal partners.

MKO shares information on COVID-19 on our social media accounts and on a webpage created for this purpose. You can find our COVID-19 webpage at [www.mkonorth.com/updatesoncovid19](http://www.mkonorth.com/updatesoncovid19).

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*Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is a non-profit, political advocacy organization that has represented 26 First Nation communities in Manitoba's North since 1981. The MKO represents more than 72,000 First Nations people.*