



## Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc.

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### **MKO Statement on the Need for Urgent Action on Ending Homelessness**

**Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB** – Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is issuing this statement regarding the urgent need to end homelessness in Manitoba. It is clear that there is an urgent need to take further steps to protect people experiencing homelessness from both the impacts of the COVID-19 virus as well as the dangers of living in the outdoors.

“A significant number of First Nations people from MKO First Nations live off reserve in both urban and rural settings. There is an urgent need to do more to respond to the issue of homelessness both on and off reserve,” stated **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. “While homelessness is an issue off reserve, we also know there is a severe lack of housing in First Nations that leads to hidden homelessness and overcrowded housing.”

“We are pleased to witness the commitment of various organizations and grassroots leaders such as Rylee Nepinak, who have been working diligently to support Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in The Pas, Thompson, and Winnipeg,” said Grand Chief Settee. “However, there is an urgent need for people working at all levels to collaborate on ending homelessness immediately. Overcrowded housing leads to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus once it enters a household and to protect our most vulnerable from the negative impacts of COVID, we must work urgently to address the housing crisis.”

“We also see a need to support people experiencing homelessness by providing access to community resources and supports such as counselling and harm reduction programs,” shared Grand Chief Settee. “All efforts to address homelessness must include leadership and input from First Nations people as we are disproportionately impacted by this crisis. We acknowledge and lift up all of the volunteers and front line workers who have been working tirelessly to ensure that people experiencing housing and homelessness issues are well cared for during these challenging times. I call on municipal, provincial, and federal officials to step up and show increased leadership and care on this human rights issue.”

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