



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Launches Survey for Youth Ages 12 to 18 to Gather Insights on Support Needed as COVID-19 Pandemic Continues

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact children, youth, and families in Northern Manitoba, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is announcing the launch of a survey for youth from MKO communities. The survey launches today and closes at 11:59 pm Central Time on Tuesday, March 16.

MKO's experts have been working diligently on issues connected to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. As we near one year of living within a pandemic, MKO has also been working to develop a comprehensive strategy for child and youth mental wellness. The first part of the strategy entails providing a survey to MKO youth ages 12 to 18.

"Today we are announcing the launch of a survey for youth from MKO communities," shared **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. "It is live on SurveyMonkey is also available for downloading and printing from our website. The goal of the survey is to gain insights on potential programs we can develop to support children and youth from MKO communities as the pandemic carries on."

"I am pleased MKO is looking at programs or other measures that may be able to support and empower children, youth, and their families during these pandemic times," shared **Chief Betsy Kennedy** of the **War Lake First Nation**. "We are nearing one year of living with COVID-19 and our children and youth have shown a lot of resilience during these difficult times. As leaders, it is important we acknowledge the strain the pandemic has had on our young people. We welcome any support that can be extended to help address and improve their mental wellness. I want to encourage youth ages 12 to 18 to complete the survey to help inform MKO on what programs and services are needed."

"As I always tell our people, we are all in this together," says **Chief Nelson Genaille** of **Sapotaweyak Cree Nation**. "What's going to happen next? You know, that's what we need to prepare for. We don't know what's coming in the future for our children or grandchildren... how can we make it better? One good way is communication, another good way is teamwork, another thing is to properly uplift ourselves because the mind is very powerful."

MKO encourages First Nation leadership as well as educators to encourage their youth to complete the survey. Youth who complete the entire survey will be entered into a draw to win a \$50 gift card. There will be 10 chances to win.

“Mental wellness is a major concern for people of all ages as the COVID-19 pandemic continues,” shared **Dr. Michael Routledge**, medical advisor to MKO and health entity **Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc.** “I am pleased to be part of the team developing the strategy to develop programs to support and empower young people living in MKO communities as the pandemic continues. I encourage young people to complete the survey to help guide the development of this work.”

“We want to encourage young people to take care of themselves and reach out to talk to others if they are feeling down,” shared Grand Chief Settee. “Talk to a responsible adult about what you are going through. This could be a member of your family, but it could also be someone like a teacher or a leader in your community. If you don’t want to talk to someone in your area, you can access a counsellor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868.”

MKO youth ages 12 to 18 can access our survey online here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mkoyouth>

Anyone who wants to print a copy of the survey or who would like to learn more can visit our website at: www.mkonorth.com/mkoyouthsurvey2021

MKO will use the results of the survey to inform the next steps in the development of the organization’s child and youth mental wellness strategy.

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