



Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MKO Urges Manitoba to Account for First Nations' Traditional Harvesting Infrastructure lost in Wildfires

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson MB July 8, 2025- As Tataskweyak Cree Nation has suffered the severe loss of several homes to wildfire, Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak (MKO) is calling on the Government of Manitoba to take urgent action to ensure more First Nations' property is protected from loss; including traditional harvesting infrastructure.

Since June, more than 17 thousand people were evacuated from northern Manitoba due to wildfire threats. Many of these evacuees are from First Nations whose camps, buildings, equipment, and other infrastructure essential for the exercise of Treaty-protected rights to hunt, fish, trap, and harvest—have been destroyed or severely damaged.

Despite the enactment of Manitoba's Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation (M.R. 42/2025) on June 6, 2025, the changes fail to clearly include traditional harvesting assets under eligible expenses. This omission directly contradicts MKO's demands to create a permanent First Nation Disaster Financial Assistance Program (FNDFAP) to address such losses.

"Our people are losing not just property, but the very tools and spaces that sustain our way of life," said the MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee. "We need Manitoba to recognize that traditional harvesting infrastructure is not optional—it is vital to our food security, culture, and Treaty rights."

The wildfire season has already seen 235 fires across Manitoba. First Nations communities are disproportionately affected, and their recovery is hindered by a lack of targeted support. MKO is calling on the Province of Manitoba to:

- Amend the Disaster Financial Assistance Regulation to explicitly include traditional harvesting infrastructure.
- Establish a permanent FNDFAP, modelled after the successful program developed and delivered in response to the disastrous 1989 wildfires through a collaborative partnership between MKO, Manitoba, and Canada, and which DFAP was continued in major wildfire years such as in 2003
- Engage directly with First Nations leadership to ensure disaster response policies reflect Indigenous realities and rights.

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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.

