



Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee speaks at Senate Committee on Bill S-2

The un-ceded Anishinabe Algonquin territory, Ottawa, Ontario - Grand Chief Garrison Settee of Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak (MKO) appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Monday to present MKO's position on Bill S-2: An Act to Amend the Indian Act (New Registration Entitlements). Grand Chief Settee emphasized MKO's support for legislative reforms that uphold non-discrimination and advance First Nations self-governance.

During his remarks, Grand Chief Settee called for amendments to Bill S-2 that would make it easier for First Nations to assume control of Band membership under Section 10 of the Indian Act. He proposed a two-vote ratification process modeled after the Manitoba Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement, which would allow First Nations to move forward even if the initial voter turnout falls short of the current "double majority" threshold.

"150 years of our experience with the state has done irreparable harm to our people and has assaulted our languages and our culture," stated Grand Chief Settee. "We are here to right wrongs and correct the damage that has been done... 150 years later it is time we forged a path forward and include all our people. That's why we are here."

Grand Chief Settee also highlighted the importance of recognizing the constitutionally protected Right of Top Priority to hunt, fish, trap, and gather, which applies to all registered individuals with Indian status, regardless of Band membership. And empowering First Nations through MKO's By-Law Pilot Project to enact new enforceable Housing By-Laws and Community Protection By-laws will evict drug dealers, bootleggers and violent persons from Band-owned housing.

While Bill S-2 strengthens the principle of non-discrimination, only self-governance will truly empower communities. First Nations are ready to enact laws that protect our people and our lands, and legislation must support that vision.

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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.

