



UPDATE TO CITIZENS ON THE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

JUNE 2020

KII-KAY-TAAK - LET'S HEAL / WIICHIHITOYAAHK - HELPING ONE ANOTHER

MN-S Cares

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) has worked to contribute to the global efforts to protect public health and safety, and in particular the health and well-being of its citizens, staff, and elected officials. We have taken proactive steps to protect the health of our citizens, families and our communities.

The MN-S COVID-19 task team has been in place since March 12. Led by our Minister of Health Marg Friesen, it has been charged with coordinating and implementing measures to respond to the pandemic as the situation has evolved. In mid-March, the MN-S took steps to reduce the spread of the virus, including suspending gatherings and public consultations. MN-S provided staff with the necessary means to continue to work remotely and closed all our offices, including registry offices, to the public.

On March 30, MN-S announced its first set of emergency relief measures including distributing emergency supports for childcare, personal protective equipment, and financial aid to Métis households in need. We also increased capacity to each of our 12 regions to allow them to provide tailored and specific support to citizens in a manner that was flexible and responsive to the distinct needs of communities across the province. In the past two months, over 4000 Métis families have benefited from these childcare and household supports.

These initial emergency supports were intended to assist those most in need and bridge the gap between the outbreak of the virus and the provision of core financial support by other levels of government. Most regions of MN-S have already begun to wind down these initial support programs. MN-S emergency COVID-19 childcare, household, and financial supports will end across the province on June 30th. MN-S Ministry of Health will keep you updated on COVID-19 responses as we plan for a potential "second wave" in the fall. Our focus will be on protecting the vulnerable, our seniors and Elders and to those most in need.

A new support program will be offered to eligible Métis Elders, seniors, and persons with disabilities to maintain health and safety throughout COVID-19 pandemic.

The Eldercare and Disability Support Program will provide a consistent and ongoing effort for food security and other necessities such as prescription support or medical transportation if needed for Elders age 60 years and over or persons with enduring disabilities. This program will encourage Métis persons with disabilities and Elders to remain as physically and socially active as possible while observing safety protocols and addressing the fear of possible exposure of COVID-19. Further information on this program will be available soon.

To protect Métis entrepreneurs and businesses from the significant financial uncertainties placed on them by the pandemic, MN-S introduced business and entrepreneurial supports through the Métis Emergency Capital Assistance Program (MECAP), administered by SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO). Since its introduction on April 23, 2020, the Métis Emergency Capital Assessment Program (MECAP) has helped 70 Saskatchewan-based Métis businesses through the uncertainties faced by COVID-19. In two months, \$2 million in emergency loans has been approved and dispersed, and further applications are arriving daily. Qualified participants are eligible for loans with six months, no interest-no payment options. More information on these supports are available at <https://www.smedco.ca/metis-emergency-capital-assistance-program/>

Recognizing the stress and profound personal toll that the pandemic places on families and individuals, MN-S has introduced a mental health support line. This toll-free line ensures that Métis citizens have access to culturally appropriate mental health services for navigating mental health and addiction supports. The Help Line is now available at 1-855-671-5638 from 8 am to 4 pm central time. For crisis situations, a 24 hr Crisis Line is available at 1-877-767-7572. Individual counsellors are available to connect citizens to the appropriate professionals to address their needs, from crisis management to financial consultations.



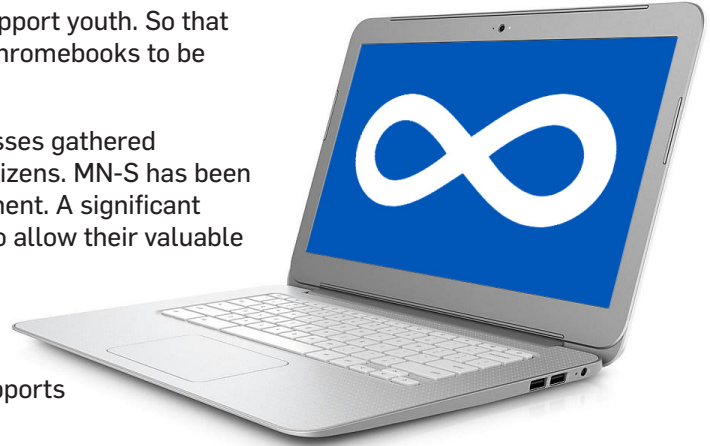
MN-S Supports Community

As schools and educational institutions across the province monitor the situation before announcing whether they will open in the fall, MN-S continues to support youth. So that learning can take place at home, MN-S is working to secure 3000 Chromebooks to be distributed in the fall for Métis students in all school divisions.

In response to the pandemic in Saskatchewan, a group of seamstresses gathered together to produce face masks for distribution to our vulnerable citizens. MN-S has been supporting the 'Masked Makers' with donations of fabric and equipment. A significant gift of 15 industrial style sewing machines was made by the MN-S to allow their valuable work to continue with ease.

MN-S has provided Les Filles De Madeleine representatives for our all regions with COVID-19 response funding. With this support they are delivering hampers containing various food staples and supports or interventions for citizens in need.

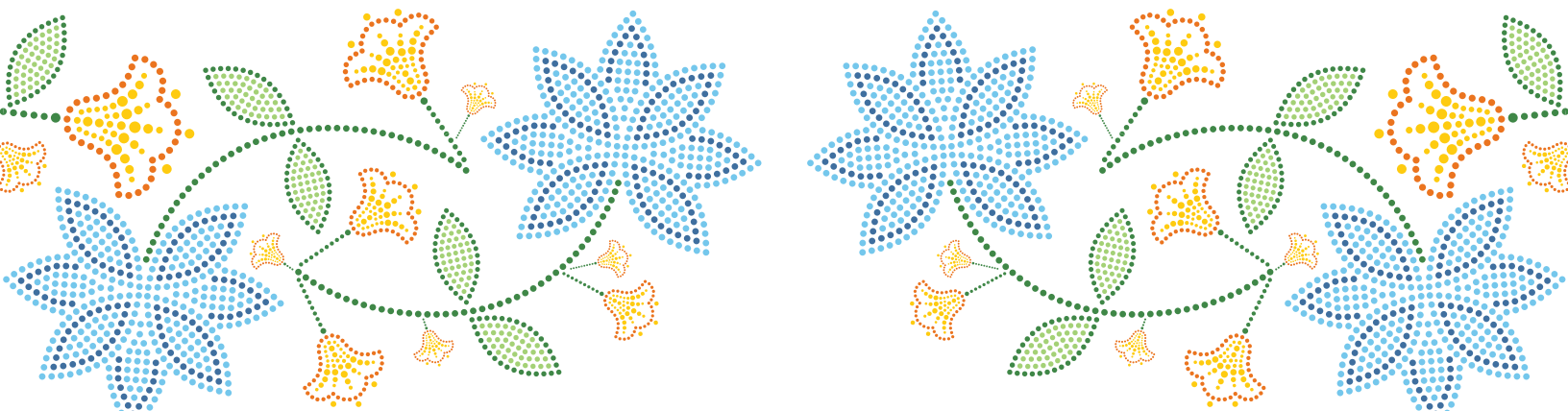
MN-S has developed a multi-governmental and agency collaboration to respond to the pressures created by COVID-19 for our homeless population. MN-S affiliate, Provincial Métis Housing Corporation (PMHC), is establishing a COVID-19 Homeless Response for enhanced funding to provide care kits and transportation as well as support for emergency shelters including but not limited to: The Lighthouse, Salvation Army, Kikinahk in La Ronge and the North Battleford Friendship Centre. Mobile trailer units are also serving as emergency shelters in select communities.



MN-S Adapts

With the cancellation of public gatherings, we limit activities which could promote transmission. MN-S has moved cultural activities online. MN-S has been providing online entertainment on our Facebook page with the weekly MN-S Virtual Kitchen Party. The first was on April 18, and they continue running every week while social distancing guidelines are in place. <https://www.facebook.com/MNSask/>

MN-S has postponed the in-person 50th-anniversary Back to Batoche Festival. This was a difficult, but necessary, decision and we will gather together in Summer of 2021 to celebrate the milestone 50th anniversary. MN-S is working with Canadian Geographic to deliver an online cultural experience during the week of our regular Back to Batoche days. We hope this will bring new ways to learn together, celebrate together, and join together.



MN-S Leads in the North West Response

During COVID-19, the MN-S has remained committed to working with First Nation Communities as friends, relations and partners to keep our people safe. Even before there were cases in the northwest of our province, Métis and First Nation leaders were working together to protect the health and well-being of our citizens and communities.

MN-S Minister and regional representative, Tex Bouvier, established the North West collaboration between First Nations, Municipalities, and Métis in early March. This led to the establishment of the Incident Command Centre (ICC). MN-S leaders in the North West, including President Glen McCallum and Ministers Tex Bouvier and Leonard Montgrand, have played an active and pivotal role in developing and implementing a coordinated response to the pandemic in the region.

As leaders of this regional approach, Meadow Lake Tribal Council and Métis Nation-Saskatchewan have worked together in responding to the outbreak in North West Saskatchewan. This unique, unprecedented partnership resulted in a \$2.3 million investment from the federal government to support security checkpoints, community monitoring, measures to address food security, provision of homecare supplies, and enhancement of regional and community capacity.

In response to the growing number of cases in the north, MN-S declared a state of emergency on April 18 and took immediate action by supplying 37 self-isolation units to northern communities experiencing a spike in symptoms of COVID-19. This action provided housing to those affected as well as front-line workers in remote regions.

MN-S secured and distributed household sanitation kits, PPE (gloves and masks) and hand sanitizers across the province. MN-S has also taken significant measures for food security providing shipments of food to communities in North West Saskatchewan, and enough supplies sent to last for two months. MN-S and our partners have provided critical food supports to La Loche, Turnor Lake, Bear Creek, Lac Point, Dore/Sled Lake, Green Lake, Birch Narrows Dene Nation, Buffalo River Dene Nation, Canoe Lake Cree Nation, Clearwater River Dene Nation, English River Dene Nation, Buffalo Narrows, Michel Village, St. George's Hill, Ile a la Crosse, Pinehouse, Jans Bay, Cole Bay, Patuanak and Beauval.

MN-S also recognizes that the pandemic creates specific challenges for those striving to manage addiction issues. To ensure that northerners have support during these stressful times, MN-S has provided additional funding to expand capacity for northern addictions treatment.

MN-S Plans Forward

MN-S is looking to the future to ensure we continue to be ready to adapt and prepare as the situation in the province and across the globe evolves. Collecting data and information from community leaders will help prepare us for what is to come. MN-S has secured Personal Protective Equipment to be ready to respond if and when the need arises. We have been revising the MN-S pandemic and response plan as the COVID-19 situation has evolved and have been responding accordingly.

Through this pandemic, MN-S has built valuable partnerships with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Meadowlake Tribal Council (MLTC), Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), the cities of Saskatoon and Regina, municipalities, provincial officials and the federal government. Collaboration works. Beyond the immediate threats posed by COVID-19, MN-S will strive to maintain these significant ties and be prepared to respond as this situation continues to unfold. We will learn, remain vigilant and be prepared.



MN-S Wishes You Good Health

MN-S is in continuing ongoing discussions with all levels of government, including with our partner Métis governments. MN-S participates in the Emergency Operation Centers (EOC) for the province and works closely with the Saskatchewan Health Authority. We are advocating to ensure the needs of our citizens are understood and addressed. .

MN-S promotes precautions and personal protective practices, like hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, social distancing, and staying home if ill. MN-S encourages monitoring the advisories of governmental health authorities and taking action when it is necessary.

While we cannot predict the future with certainty, MN-S will continue to monitor the situation and will evaluate developments and plan for what lies ahead.. Our objective is always first and foremost to take care of each other because this is what we do at MN-S. Our response to this has been and will continue to be motivated by this simple fact: **The safety and security of all is the number one priority, and MN-S will continue to support measures to protect the vulnerable and help those who need it the most.**

