



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(amiskwacîwâskahikan) The Confederacy of Treaty Six Chiefs are united with the call by Chief Conroy Sewepagaham of Little Red River Cree Nation for great health care within our communities.

“Peace and Friendship Treaty Six made in 1876 with the Crown contains the medicine chest clause”, said Grand Chief - Okimaw Vernon Watchmaker.

Our Peoples are guaranteed access to health care – instead of receiving the best care as guaranteed by Treaty, Canada has chosen to provide us with substandard care. Not so long ago, the government of Canada underfunded care for tuberculous and our peoples were dying at pandemic levels. Now, we have a pandemic and trying to get adequate funds has been a challenge. Rather than having the best care for our people, our Nations are left without adequate medical support – from lack of doctors, nurses, access to proper medicines and fully staffed facilities.

It was the lack of support staff at the Fox Lake medical center that led to the death of six-year-old Harlen Laboucan in November 2020. A global news story has drawn attention to his death due to the lack of access to proper and immediate healthcare.

Chiefs are calling on the federal government to fully implement our treaty right to health so that we can manage and maintain our own health care delivery system. “With the proper resourcing, our Peoples can receive proper care,” said Grand Chief Watchmaker.

At this time, Canada makes unilateral decisions on health delivery based on their own value systems without consideration of the Nations. When we call for more funding, people think that we are adequately funded. This is a false narrative. We try to manage the limited funds to provide as much care as possible. However, we are always falling short.

“What needs to happen is for our health care systems in our communities to be built on our needs as decided by our peoples. We know what is required” added Grand Chief Watchmaker.

As Chief Sewepagaham calls for greater access to funds for proper health care delivery, we stand with him. All our peoples will benefit from better health care within our communities.

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For more information or media inquiries, contact:

Gina Potts – Chief of Staff
Office of the Grand Chief – Okimaw Vernon Watchmaker
cos@treatysix.org