

**Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald Supports call for Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership committee for Manitoulin Island and non-essential travel ban in place.**

(Cochrane, ON, May 5, 2020) – The Regional Chief of Ontario, RoseAnne Archibald fully supports Chief Debassige and the council of M'Chigeeng First Nation and the continued implementation of a non-essential travel ban, with checkpoints entering into their community. I also support the establishment of a committee between Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership on Manitoulin Island to de-escalate tensions and maintain a non-essential travel ban to stem the flow of visitors, traffic and COVID-19 into the community and Manitoulin Island. The actions of the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising (UCCM) show through respect and solution oriented collaboration that this can be resolved to the benefit of all by working cooperatively.

"I support the approach of the UCCM in asking for an Indigenous and non-Indigenous committee of Manitoulin Island leadership to deal with tensions and non-essential travel bans for the Island. It's important to note that non-essential travel bans slow the movement of the virus into all communities. It's saving lives for everyone and that's what we need to collectively focus on as we move through the pandemic together.

Tensions are rising and there is a very serious risk of emotions boiling over or escalating if we do not address this issue immediately. We need the province to step in and declare non-essential travel bans for not only those checkpoints and sections of highway on Manitoulin, but also leading onto Manitoulin Island. I have reached out to the Premier and Minister Rickford to have that conversation, not only for Manitoulin but across Ontario, including the Kawarthas, Fort Francis, and Kenora areas, as many highways and roads, skirt or lead through First Nations communities.

With Mother's Day and the Victoria Day long weekend approaching, time is of the essence to institute non-essential travel bans in strategic locations to stop the flow of outside visitors and the spread of COVID-19. I applaud the efforts of First Nations leaders and volunteers who have been working tirelessly to keep their communities safe and stop the spread of COVID-19. The costs that communities continue to endure, both in people and resources, is another burden that would be best utilized elsewhere if people would heed the calls of the Premier and stop non-essential travel, especially to the north to cottages and cabins.

We have to work together to defend against this invisible and invasive agent to protect the integrity of the local hospitals, front line workers and the health and well-being of First Nations and all people. Many of these areas could easily be overwhelmed by an influx of COVID-19. Our leaders' concerns must be taken seriously, we need to trust the ones who are on the ground in those regions as it's their lives that are at stake."

Ninankamon!

Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald

The Chiefs of Ontario is a political forum and a secretariat for collective decision making, action, and advocacy for the 133 First Nation communities located within the boundaries of the province of Ontario, Canada. Follow the Chiefs of Ontario on Facebook or Twitter @ChiefsOfOntario.

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