

May 11, 2021

INFLUENCER-LED VACCINATION CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES YOUNG FIRST NATION PEOPLE TO PROTECT OURSELVES AND OUR COMMUNITIES

The new **Protect Our People MB** campaign officially launched today to encourage vaccine confidence and uptake among young First Nation people throughout the province. This grassroots campaign is an effort led by the Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc. (SCO), Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO), Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc. (KIM), the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba (FNHSSM), and the Manitoba government.

As Manitoba's test positivity rate rises with an increasing number of variants of concern in younger age brackets, some are choosing not to get vaccinated because of misinformation and fears about the virus and the vaccines. Protect Our People MB focuses on those aged 18 to 35, primarily through social media platforms, in partnership with recognized First Nation influencers and trusted community leaders. The campaign focuses on their stories, why the vaccine is important to them, and how it can protect people, their Elders, and communities as a whole.

Influencers involved to date in the campaign include comedian and TikTok influencer Sherry Mckay (Sagkeeng First Nation), musicians William Prince (Peguis First Nation) and Leonard Sumner (Little Saskatchewan First Nation), and entrepreneur Brandi Woodhouse (Pinaymootang First Nation), as well as TikTok star Michelle Chubb, actor and comedian Ryan McMahon, comedian Ken Bighetty, and community organizer and public speaker Michael Redhead Champagne.

This collaboration aims to generate a broader awareness of the facts behind the COVID-19 virus and vaccines, while emphasizing the importance of protecting First Nation peoples and cultures by getting vaccinated.

All people are encouraged to follow and share videos and posts from the Protect Our People MB campaign accounts: Instagram @protectourpeoplemb, Twitter @protectourpplmb, and Facebook @ProtectOurPeopleMB.

They are also invited to share their stories and experiences as part of the campaign by using the vibrant star blanket motifs in the social media frames available on Facebook and Instagram, using the following campaign hashtags: #protectyourself, #protectourpeople, #protectourcommunities, #protectourpeoplemb #doitforourelthers, #doitforourchildren and #vaccineproud.

Indigenous physician, Dr. Marcia Anderson, who is the medical lead of the Pandemic Response Coordinating Team and member of the Vaccine Implementation Task Force, will also be an integral participant in the vaccination campaign. Dr. Anderson will answer questions posed by each influencer to debunk misinformation and myths about COVID-19 and the vaccines, in support of boosting vaccine confidence and promoting a good life and future for all Indigenous people.

This multi-phased campaign will also include radio public service announcements throughout Manitoba in English and various Indigenous languages, along with other supporting materials that will be distributed to provincial vaccination sites.

For more information on the Protect Our People MB campaign and how to get involved, visit protectourpeoplemb.ca.

For more information on Manitoba's vaccine program, visit protectmb.ca.

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Background information attached

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BACKGROUNDER

Protect Our People MB Campaign

“For too long First Nation people have been undervalued and greatly underserved by the health care system. This is contributing to vaccine hesitancy we are now seeing among our people, specifically our youth. But we are a resilient people, and it’s our own leadership, health care experts, and influencers who have come together to help combat misinformation and uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. We know the best way to reach people is to amplify First Nation stories and voices, so I encourage everyone to add their voice to the campaign and get involved in #ProtectOurPeopleMB. Help do your part to protect yourself, your community, and our people.”

-Southern Chiefs’ Organization (SCO) Grand Chief Jerry Daniels

“Now more than ever, it is important for us to work together, protect each other and get vaccinated. We each have a responsibility to protect our Elders and those who cannot yet be vaccinated including our children. This campaign exemplifies our collective efforts and directs united support for us all to protect our people. I acknowledge that there is a further aspect to the #ProtectOurPeople campaign that makes available graphics for First Nation allies to use to help promote. I encourage all allies to join us in the fight against COVID-19 and make your support known.”

- Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Arlen Dumas

“Getting vaccinated is one of the key steps we can take to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities. I want to thank all the influencers who have come forward to share strengths-based messaging to encourage other young people to consider getting their COVID-19 vaccine. Let’s work together to protect Manitoba.”

- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. Grand Chief Garrison Sette e

“This partnership and the Protect Our People MB campaign will help share the facts about the COVID-19 vaccine, but also share the stories and perspectives of people who understand why it is so important. The province is proud to support this work, to amplify the voices of people who can connect and encourage those who might be unsure or uncertain. This campaign, developed by First Nation people for First Nation people, is a powerful way to encourage vaccine confidence – and ultimately that protects all of us.”

- Hon. Heather Stefanson, Minister of Manitoba Health and Seniors Care