

Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

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March 31, 2020

There are two confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Manitoulin District. Public Health Sudbury District (PHSD) confirmed the case March 29, 2020. It reports a male and a female, both in their 50's exposed through international travel. The two people are currently self-isolating and have been in self-isolation since they returned to Manitoulin Island.

I want to assure Wiikwemkoong citizens that we do not have any confirmed COVID-19 cases in our community. But the reality of COVID-19 is now closer to home. That means we must be vigilant, more than ever, in doing everything possible to safeguard Wiikwemkoong.

Council is urging people to stay home and to refrain from all travel. We have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and each other. Now that COVID-19 is confirmed on Manitoulin Island, we can expect the number of cases to increase. This means an increased impact on our local health care system.

Our leadership continues to work collaboratively with community organizations. The status of the health of the community is important to know and we need to continually update our community members with new information.

Our two new community-wide initiatives are:

1. Community Wellbeing Checks: A team of Wiikwemkoong workers will be calling each household in our community to check up on the health of each person/per household and ask COVID-19 Screening questions. We strongly urge everyone to participate in this process.
2. The Community Wellness Checkpoint at the Wiikwemkoong border: Preparations for this continue. This is a necessary step to help limit the traffic flow in the overall effort to assist our health professionals in monitoring and preventing COVID-19 from entering our community. COVID-19 screening questions will be asked at these checks.

This virus is serious. We urge community members to stay home. If you 'must' leave your home, please practice social (physical) distancing (minimum 6 feet apart). We are urging you to keep washing your hands often, avoiding touching your face, cough or sneeze into your arm sleeve or tissue, and to sanitize and disinfect items that may be used often (doorknobs, handles, desk surfaces, tables etc.).

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Council is encouraging us to take into consideration our community wellness. Our community wellness includes our sacred medicines. Our community wellness includes our traditional values and teachings. Remember the Seven Grandfather Teachings: Truth, Honesty, Respect, Bravery/Courage, Humility, Wisdom and Love.

This is a time of the 'unknown' – many of our people are worried about the virus. And it's because of this, that we must practice and live our teachings; those teachings including health safeguarding our people. We all need to take care of one another.

We are encouraging our community to practice physical distancing but continue to check in with our loved ones and neighbours through phone calls and messages.

We all must work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is up to each one of us. Love and support each other. Reach out for guidance and support if you need it.

We, your leadership hear you and are here for you.

We will continue to update Wiikwemkoong through every means possible. Ka naagdawenimigoo gwa, bekaa yaan endaayin. (You will be taken care of, stay home.)

Miigwech,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peltier' with a stylized flourish.

Ogimaa Duke Peltier
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