



State of Local Emergency Declared on Violence, Mental Health & Addictions

Monday, January 8, 2024

Bigstone Cree Nation urgently calls upon the federal Ministries of Public Safety, Indigenous Services Canada-First Nations Inuit Health Branch, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and the Justice and Attorney General of Canada to provide infrastructure, capacity and mental health resources to deal with the crisis our communities are facing.

Bigstone Cree Nation urgently calls upon the Alberta Ministries of Indigenous Relations, Health, Mental Health and Addictions, Public Safety and Emergency Services, and Municipal Affairs to keep Albertans safe as part of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples by addressing the social issues of mental health, policing, gangs, rising crime rates, poverty, food security, Child and Family related issues, homelessness and housing crisis.

Bigstone Cree Nation has an obligation to provide safety for members and citizens working in its' communities.

The communities of Wabasca and Calling Lake are being threatened with a rise in serious and violent crimes, arsons, assaults, break and enters, gangs, and increased illegal drug use and mental health crisis.

Drug abuse is a major cause of social concerns and issues in Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN) communities and Indigenous youth and members are dying from an increased supply of highly addictive illegal drugs, opioids and stimulants such as methamphetamine.

Mental health and addiction challenges are among the leading cause of intentional injury, death, hospitalizations, and suicide. Alcohol and drug use contribute to the severity of unintentional injuries and most recently a homicide.

Bigstone Cree Nation signed a Community Tripartite Agreement (CTA) with the Wabasca RCMP detachment through the Enhanced Policing Program for access to dedicated RCMP Officers that are intended to spend the majority of their time on the Bigstone Reserves #166 A, B, C, D including Sandy Lake and Chipewyan Lake, but no Community Tripartite Agreement exists with the Athabasca RCMP for Jean Baptiste Gambler Reserve #183 – Calling Lake nor does full-time policing exist.

Alberta RCMP rural detachments have a large geography to patrol, and jurisdictional issues should not impact community safety.

Bigstone Cree Nation is facing many challenges and immediate support is needed from all levels of government; local, provincial, and federal.

Chief Andy Alook – Bigstone Cree Nation