



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Attawapiskat  
First Nation

### **State of Emergency Declared on Illegal Drugs and Alcohol**

Kashechewan  
First Nation

Fort Albany  
First Nation

Moose Cree  
First Nation

Taykwa Tagamou  
Nation

Chapleau Cree  
First Nation

Missanabie Cree  
First Nation

November 15, 2017, Moose Factory, ON. A pandemic caused by illegal drugs and alcohol (including prescription drugs) continues to grow rapidly and is a very serious problem for the Mushkegowuk First Nations. The illegal drug trade is overpowering, it's a major source for the criminal activity, family difficulties and a contributing factor to many deaths. As well, the illegal drug trade is adversely affecting public safety, health, child welfare, education, housing and police services. And most saddening of all is that the young children, including the unborn children are forced to live the life of a drug addict. They do not eat properly, don't have proper clothing, don't sleep properly, and their mental well-being is compromised and this impacts their learning, social interactions and overall health. In reality, the entire community and region is suffering and no one is left unaffected. The existing programs and services are overwhelmed in trying to provide support, they are underfunded and need emergency support to implement more effective strategies to reduce the illegal drug trade in our communities.

"Since July 2017, the Deputy Chiefs of the Mushkegowuk First Nation's have been collaborating on developing a regional Campaign Against Illegal Drugs and Alcohol. As well, community programs and services have been trying their best with what limited resources they have to combat this serious problem. In Attawapiskat, the Northwest Company, Canada Post and Ministry of Transportation are a big part of the problem because illegal drugs are easily flowed through their systems. We immediately need four (4) additional police officers and four additional mental wellness counsellors," says Attawapiskat First Nation's Chief - Ignace Gull.

At the Council of Chiefs meeting on November 9, 2017, the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs declared a State of Emergency and submitted necessary documentation to the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety Services. On November 10, 2017, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre coordinated a teleconference between the Mushkegowuk First Nation leaders, the federal and provincial governments.

"This pandemic has reached serious levels where it's clearly destroying our people and communities. We acknowledge that we have been provided with some resources to address various health and social related issues but the health and social problems seem to persist and we have exhausted all our resources so we need the governments of Canada and Ontario to respond to this state of emergency" says Grand Chief Jonathon Solomon.

During the November 10 meeting with the federal and provincial ministries the following immediate calls to action were identified;

- Adequate resources to develop a regional task force with a clear mandate to address the pandemic caused by illegal drugs and alcohol,
- Additional funding for Nishnawbe Aski Police Service to operate their drug enforcement unit,
- Airport screening services, and
- More healing and harm reduction services.

It is expected that follow-up meetings between all governments will be conducted until such time the emergency is brought under control.

For further inquiries for this press release you may contact Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon at 705 658 4222 or email [grandchief@mushkegowuk.ca](mailto:grandchief@mushkegowuk.ca)

*Mushkegowuk Council is a regional organization that represents the collective interests of the Kashechewan, Fort Albany, Chapleau Cree, Missanabie Cree, Moose Cree, Taykwa Tagamou and Attawapiskat First Nations in northeastern Ontario.*