COVID-19 in First Nations Communities: Funeral Services

We know that saying goodbye to a loved one is a difficult time under usual circumstances. We usually gather to pay our respects to a family or community member who has passed — which is something we are not able to do for the next while.

We need to find new ways to show our respect, love, and support while we protect our loved ones and community members from the risk of spreading COVID-19 at gatherings. As of Monday, March 30th, the Province of Manitoba has recommended that all gatherings, including funeral services, are limited to less than 10 people.

When working with funeral service providers/spiritual leaders/church or faith leaders, some of the different options that could be considered — to both participate in the services and follow the public health order to keep gatherings to less than 10 people — include:

- Private service for immediate family now and public memorial service later when concerns about COVID-19 have passed;
- Broadcasting the wake or funeral service on Facebook live or other social media platform so people can participate from their homes;
- Broadcasting part of the service on a community radio station so people can participate from their homes;
- Staying in parked vehicles along the road where a funeral procession will pass or following a funeral procession but not getting out of the vehicle at the cemetery;
- Sharing memories, prayers, songs and/or other support with the family of the person who has passed via phone, social media, or other virtual platform;
- Come and go viewing with door management to keep the number of people within the viewing space to less than 10 at all times;
- Donating food or items to the family of the person who has passed, if able.