



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 12, 2019

PRESS STATEMENT FROM GRAND CHIEF ARLEN DUMAS AND THE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS

Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, Manitoba

“The statement that I made on Wednesday, July 10th, 2019 is true. I never operated a fake Facebook account called Charles Forbes. This appears to be a manufactured political smear. This is not the first time false social media allegations have been made against me or many other First Nation leaders and Canadian politicians. It is unfortunate, but this likely won’t be the last time. I have reported this misrepresentation to Facebook and a third-party firm has been retained to complete a full assessment to try and determine who is responsible. In addition, AMC is undertaking a full review of our systems in order to lock down our security to prevent this from happening in the future.”

These allegations are entirely false. I did not pursue a relationship of an intimate nature with this woman. I was asked by her for advice and guidance on her path forward. I provided assistance to the best of my professional ability. I messaged her to follow-up. I do this on a regular basis with numerous community members, students, and colleagues who often seek out my support. As the Grand Chief, every single day is filled with in-person meetings, phone calls, e-mail and text messages.

However, the very clear upset expressed by this woman has caused me to reconsider my open and informal communication style. While I was Chief of Mathias Colomb Cree Nation for a decade, I have always engaged with my staff, community members, other First Nation leaders and professional colleagues via calls and informal texts at all hours of the day and night on pressing issues. My ten years as Chief of my First Nation I greeted each day by hugging visitors to the band office be, they elders, friends, family, students or staff and complimenting them on their accomplishments and offering support when asked.

Upon reflection, I realize that this style of open and informal communication may not be suited to the role of Grand Chief. While I was sincerely trying to respond to her requests for support, it is clear from her recent public expression of concern that she did not appreciate our informal message exchange. I apologize if this made her feel uncomfortable.

This incident has also caused me to reflect on how others may be feeling the same way about my open and informal communication style but did not feel comfortable to tell me directly. If I have ever made anyone else feel uncomfortable in my communication style, then I would also like to apologize to them as well. I can assure you that this was never my intention, but what matters here is how people feel. I take responsibility for that.”

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas

Grand Chief Dumas has faced unthinkable tragedy and hardship throughout the last few years and he too has leaned on his staff, friends, colleagues and First Nation citizens for support. He realizes that perhaps he needs to take some time to deal with these tragedies instead of leaning so heavily on those around him. Despite his many losses, he has not taken off sufficient time to heal with his family.

After careful reflection, the Grand Chief has decided to take a brief leave of absence from his role to heal. During his time away, he also commits to taking active steps to receive counselling for his losses and also engage in professional sensitivity training so that his future communications follow a more formal communication style. His goal is to ensure that all interactions are helpful and supportive.

The media circus which focused on unfounded allegations about the Grand Chief has become a distraction to the important issues facing First Nations in Manitoba and the good work done by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The AMC Secretariat stands behind the Grand Chief and will continue to move forward to protect the rights and interests of our First Nations.

During Grand Chief's brief leave of absence, Chief Sheldon Kent, Black River First Nation, will be acting Grand Chief. The Grand Chief and his family ask that you respect their privacy through this time of healing.

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 per cent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene and Dakota people and traditions.

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