



New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council **PRESS RELEASE**

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council calls on the federal government to provide equal access to federal health supports for all indigenous people

Fredericton, July 8, 2022, Revised- The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council has, once again, been confronted by the federal government's discrimination against our members. This time, the federal government's discrimination takes the form of denying Indigenous people who live off reserves and non-status Indigenous people access to health benefits that the federal government provides to reserve residents.

A number of our members have found themselves in a situation in which they have to pay out-of-pocket for services that would get paid for by the federal government if they were reserve residents. In one case, a member who is in long-term care in a hospital, because they cannot get a room in a long-term care home, finds themselves having to pay a per diem out of their own, limited funds to remain in the hospital, even though they need 24-hour a day care. If they were a reserve resident, though, the federal government would pay their per diem for them. This is nothing more than discrimination by the federal government against Indigenous people who live off reserves.

New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council Chief Barry LaBillois pointed out that "This discrimination is leading to real harm to the health of our members. We will not just listen to stories from our members and their families about their suffering; we will not ignore their plight, the way the federal government is." "We have to act; we have to bring the real, harmful effects of the federal government's discrimination against our members to light. Since the federal government seems to ignore the off-reserve Indigenous people of our province, we are asking our allies among the general public to tell the federal government that this discrimination is unacceptable." said Chief LaBillois.

In 2016, The Supreme Court of Canada decided that the federal government's jurisdiction over "Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians" means that the federal government has the jurisdiction to serve all Indigenous people. In coming to that decision, Madame Justice Rosalie Abella, for the Court, stated that "Non-status Indians and Métis are 'Indians' under s. 91(24) and it is the federal government to whom they can turn." Thus, Chief LaBillois commented that "For the federal government to tell some 'Indians' that they cannot receive services that the federal government provides to other 'Indians', simply because of their place of residence, violates the equality rights of our members. This is completely unacceptable; it is the antithesis of reconciliation, which the federal government so proudly claims it is committed to."

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The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council (NBAPC) is the voice for Status and Non-Status Aboriginal Peoples who reside off-reserve in the Province of New Brunswick, providing a political voice for our members, services and programs.
