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Dene Nation leadership passes motion to implement restrictions on liquor and cannabis sales in the NWT for the duration of COVID-19 State of Emergency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – April 3, 2020] – Dene Nation leadership convened today via teleconference and passed a resolution to request the Government of the Northwest Territories begin to restrict the sale of liquor and cannabis in the NWT during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. All regions were represented during the meeting called out of concern about the wellbeing and safety of the Dene people during the ongoing pandemic.

“During this time of crisis, we must display unity as the Dene Nation,” said Dene National Chief Norman Yakeleya. “Alcohol and cannabis abuse are complicating the battle against COVID-19 in our communities and as leadership, we must provide every support we can to ensure the health and safety of our people during this time. We are many heartbeats, one Dene drum.”

“We continue to work collaboratively with our partners and all levels of government to collectively defend our people against COVID-19. We are working to get Dene citizens to return to the land as a form of isolation and social distancing as we do our part to prevent any further spread,” continued National Chief Yakeleya.

The resolution calls for the creation of Intergovernmental Working Group comprised of both GNWT and Indigenous government officials from all regions to draft an immediate plan for restrictions, including rationing and restricted store hours and to work in collaboration with the Chief Public Health officer and RCMP in the development and implementation of the plan as well as funding for the potential effects of alcohol withdrawal.

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