

## COVID-19 STATEMENT

## **NAN Elders' Statement on Funerals & Bereavement**

## **April 28, 2020**

Dear NAN Leadership and Community Members,

As the Elders of the NAN COVID-19 Task Team, we have been thinking about our communities and what they will do when they lose someone during this pandemic. We know it is difficult to deal with grief and mourning at this time, and that Public Health restrictions are affecting community members.

We have learned that only 10 family members are able to be physically present at funeral and memorial services. That is not our process of closure. When there is a funeral, the surrounding communities come for a feast, make music, sing songs of praise, and pray. We cannot do that right now, but there are other ways to give comfort to the families left behind, and to ourselves.

Each community needs to follow what they believe in, and traditional and Christian beliefs should be respected by all. Our guidance is based on what we know and have learned from our own communities.

We suggest that people who cannot attend funerals can pray, offer food, and wish loved ones a peaceful journey from their homes. Condolences can be expressed by phone, email and with cards. We encourage communities to gather after this pandemic and have memorial feasts to celebrate all of the lives that have gone on.

We must all acknowledge that we cannot do everything we normally would during this time. However, we can pray and ask the Creator to forgive us for not being able to follow all of our traditions or to give our loved ones full ceremonies and services.

The people of NAN are close to our hearts and we keep you in our thoughts. When the need for social distancing has ended, the three of us will get together and acknowledge the people of NAN in a ceremony.

Miigwetch,

Barney Batise Helen Cromarty Teri Fiddler

