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YANKTONSI OYATE ISSUES STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION CONCERNING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, IMPOSES A TRAVEL BAN, SUSPENDS PORTIONS OF PERSONNEL POLICIES, ADOPTS INTERIM MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS, AND WORKS TO DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN WITH INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

March 13, 2020

The Yankton Sioux Tribe has been closely monitoring the developments in the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) including the updates provided by the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are 117 countries and territories outside of China with reported laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths as of March 12, 2020. The United States had its first reported case on January 14, 2020, and there are 1,215 cases and 36 deaths in 42 states and the District of Columbia as of March 12, 2020, according to the CDC. These numbers continue to increase as more presumptive positive cases are confirmed by the CDC and testing capacity increases. The WHO recently characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic.

On March 10, 2020, the Yankton Sioux Tribe Business and Claims Committee was notified there is one presumptive positive diagnosis at the IHS service unit in Wagner, South Dakota which provides healthcare services to the Yankton Sioux Reservation. The test has been sent to the CDC for confirmation.

We have taken multiple measures in order to ensure the safety and well-being of our tribal citizens, our employees, our customers, and the larger surrounding community. We imposed a travel ban restricting travel of tribally-funded outgoing and incoming travel. We also took an extraordinary but necessary step to declare a state of emergency for the Tribe and its Reservation. This allowed us to then suspend portions of the personnel policies for tribal employees, Marty Indian School employees, and Fort Randall Casino and Hotel employees to allow for leave and work from home on a case-by-case basis for the protection of our employees, citizens, customers, and the surrounding community. We also encourage the Yankton Community College and Yankton Sioux Housing Authority to do the same. Finally, we adopted the CDC Mitigation Strategies and Recommendations regarding COVID-19 on an interim basis while we work with our entities to develop a tribal-specific emergency response plan and strategies. We welcome input from tribal citizens, employees, and the public including parents, advisory boards, elderly populations, veteran populations, immunocompromised individuals, and customers as we develop this plan.

Later today we will meet with stakeholders from the Tribe as well as stakeholders from the surrounding community to discuss and share ideas and solutions. We call upon each of us to practice personal responsibility and instill within our households practices that will mitigate and combat the spread of COVID-19. We have always been a resilient Oyate and we will get through this together!