

**Head Office**

Swan Lake First Nation 200-200 Alpine Way, Headingley, Manitoba R4H 0B7

Winnipeg Sub-Office

1572 Dublin Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba

R3E 0L4

www.scoinc.mb.ca

Phone: (204) 946-1869

Fax: (204) 946-1871

Toll Free: 1-866-876-9701

**PRESS RELEASE
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Southern Manitoba First Nations vote to Seize Control of Child Welfare

The Southern Chiefs Organization held a special Chief's summit yesterday in Winnipeg, Manitoba to discuss issues pertaining to child and family services. In unanimous votes, leadership passed resolutions aimed at restructuring the Southern First Nations Network of Care, developing Anishinaabe and Dakota family law. And, to collaborate with Southern First Nations that choose to pursue agreements and/or arrangements through the proposed federal legislation Bill C-92 'An Act Respecting First Nation, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families', should it become proclaimed.

"For too long our kids have been taken out of our homes and communities and placed with strangers" said Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "As someone who spent time in the CFS system, I know firsthand the failings and shortcomings of a broken system that is harming First Nations families more than it is healing. The jurisdictional juggle between federal and provincial legislation and policies can no longer be the reason that this humanitarian crisis is not fixed".

The Southern Chiefs' Organization Grand Chief delivered a personal invitation to Minister of Families Heather Stefanson to attend, but she did not make the time to hear the concerns of First Nations leadership in the room, despite nearly 50% of the current children in care being from southern Manitoba First Nations.

"It is not the role of the Southern Chiefs Organization to take the side of any one community over another", said Grand Chief Daniels. "We support each community and Tribal government's aspirations to implement the changes and direction they wish to see for their community. This is not about putting one act against another."

Chief Debra Smith of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, and Chair of the SCO Chiefs Standing Committee on CFS spoke in favour. Stating that "No legislation is perfect and will need to be worked on no matter what. But what's important is that there are mechanisms put in place and jurisdictional clarity on how to bring our children home. We now have direction and a mandate to do that."

"Representing Anishinaabe and Dakota First Nations in Southern Manitoba"

The Southern Chiefs Organization has begun to forge strong and collaborative working relationships with the southern First Nation child and family service agencies. “We have held out hope that our leaders would support us in our efforts to make the necessary and overdue changes to the CFS system to keep our families intact and children safe. We applaud their direction to revamp the system to align services with First Nation standards.” Said Clemene Hornbrook, Peguis Child and Family Services.

For more information please contact:

Diane Kelly – Director of Child and Family Services

Diane.Kelly@scoinc.mb.ca