

**Waakaabit** – Working within the circle to make good decisions for our children, families & communities

The Child and Family Services Jurisdiction Development Initiative at the Southern Chiefs' Organization received its name in prayer and ceremony at Roseau River First Nation by Elder **Charlie Nelson** on February 4, 2020:

**Waakaabit**

The **Waakaabit** initiative at the Southern Chiefs' Organization is comprised of four streams of development that will best position our Southern First Nations families, communities, and leadership to exercise jurisdiction in relation to their families:



Elder Charlie Nelson, Roseau River First Nation, at the naming ceremony for the SCO Child & Family Services program

- **Individual capacity-building:** Child and Family Services System Navigator
- **Community capacity-building:** Individual First Nation community engagement and resource development Pilot Project
- **CFS system transformation:** Develop standards, policy, practice model and definitions to reflect Southern First Nations Jurisdiction and values.
- **Governance:** draft a First Nation Family Law template



**Individual Capacity Building**

The **CFS System Navigator** is available for Indigenous families from Southern First Nations that are involved with CFS. We help by:

- Educating parents about their CFS rights, CFS policies, and available resources for families
- Developing the knowledge and self-confidence of parents so they can be strong advocates for themselves and their families
- Acting as a liaison with families and child & family services agencies to help facilitate resolution

**Call our CFS System Navigator for help with CFS today!**

**Community Capacity Building**

Community Engagement Workers are located in:

- Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
- Lake St. Martin First Nation
- Lake Manitoba First Nation
- Pine Creek First Nation

The SCO First Nation Family Jurisdiction Development Pilot Initiative will assist communities with developing their own First Nation family laws through:

- Community engagement
- Community capacity building

Several other communities have requested to join the pilot program; the program is expected to more than double in size by September, 2020.

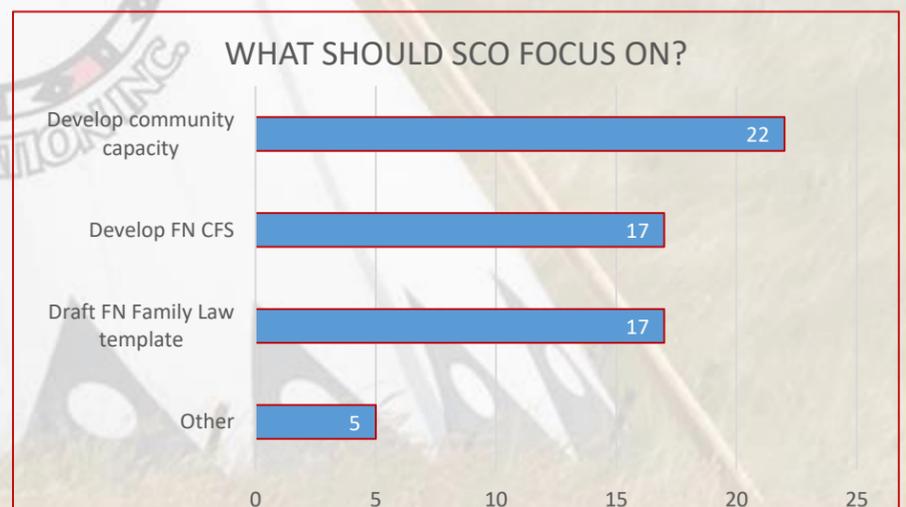


Parents, **you have these and other rights** in relation to CFS:

- To identify a safe person to care for your child(ren),
- To bring in your own supports when meeting with CFS,
- To receive services focused on early intervention & prevention of apprehension,
- To receive help & resources to support family preservation, as long as there are no immediate risks to the safety of your child(ren),
- To attend court proceedings regarding your children & to provide input to the Judge,
- To receive culturally appropriate services & resources,
- To provide input into your case plan and receive notification prior to significant actions.

**Each situation is different and you must use your common sense. Stay calm and remember everything that happens. Remember your rights.**

A Southern First Nations **Chiefs' CFS survey** was completed with 82% participation. These survey results have provided SCO Waakaabit Initiative with confirmation and priority areas of focus:





SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels & Chief Garnet Woodhouse, Pinaymootang First Nation at the SCO flag raising ceremony at the MYS grounds on Mayfair Avenue. Chief Woodhouse is also a member of the Chiefs' Standing Committee on Child Welfare.

### Child and Family Services System Transformation

- The SCO exercised its jurisdiction over the Southern First Nations Network of Care (SFNNC) to transform the Board appointment process, and structure of the Board of Directors.
- Birth Alert Directive issued to SFNNC (September 2019) by SCO Chiefs-in-Summit, to develop a culturally-appropriate and safe alternative to Manitoba's Birth Alert practice.
- In collaboration with the SFNNC and its' agency Executive Directors, we are developing a southern First Nations practice model that aligns with our Jurisdiction.
- Formalized the relationship with MacDonald Youth Services (MYS) to establish a governance and community care model that reflects the needs and aspirations of Southern First Nations.

### Governance

- SCO Director of Child and Family Services Diane Kelly is working with Anishinaabe and Dakota Wisdom Keepers to draft the foundation of a First Nation Family Law framework that can be adopted by southern First Nation communities who wish to exercise jurisdiction over their own family services.
- Sadly, the reality is still that more than half of the 11 000 children currently in care in Manitoba belong to Southern First Nations communities. Many of them are in non-culturally-appropriate placements, disconnected from their families, languages, cultures, and communities.
- The SCO Wisdom Keepers' Liaison has been connecting with the Elders in our communities to help them share their knowledge and experiences in our journey to help communities recreate their own child welfare laws, as they are a vital part of developing these laws and ensuring that they work with our families instead of against them.

### Chiefs' Standing Committee on Child Welfare

Under the direction of the Chiefs' Standing Committee on Child Welfare, SCO has hosted major gatherings of Southern First Nation Wisdom Keepers who have shared valuable teachings on community principles, the historical context and advice in moving forward in a good way in the care of our children and families.

SCO has met monthly for direction and reporting with the Chiefs Standing Committee on Child Welfare. This work would not have been possible without the steadfast leadership of Chair, Chief Deborah Smith of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and Co-Chair, Chief Cornell McLean of Lake Manitoba First Nation. Miigwetch to both of them.



Chief Deborah Smith, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Chair of the Chiefs' Standing Committee on Child Welfare & SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. Grand Chief Daniels recognized the commitment of Chief Smith with the gift of a beaded hat.

### SOUTHERN CHIEFS' ORGANIZATION



**For help, please call our  
CFS System Navigator  
at 204-946-1869**

**Sub Office**  
1572 Dublin Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3E 0L4  
Phone: 204-946-1869  
Fax: 204-946-1871

**Waakaabit:** Working within the circle to make good decisions for our children, families & community.

[www.scoinc.mb.ca](http://www.scoinc.mb.ca)