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Historic signing will help bring equitable health services to Anishinaabe and Dakota First Nations

SCO signs historic MOU with Government of Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JUNE 18, 2020 - ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB

Anishinaabeg and Dakota peoples will assume greater control of their health and wellness, as a result of an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed today in an innovative virtual ceremony between Canada's Minister of Indigenous Services, Marc Miller; Southern Chiefs' Organization Grand Chief, Jerry Daniels; and Chair of the Chief's Health Action Table, Pine Creek Chief, Karen Batson.

"This MOU signals the beginning of health transformation for First Nations in southern Manitoba," said Grand Chief Daniels. "Equitable access and culturally-appropriate health care for Elders, youth, families, and communities is central to wellness and the success of our Anishinaabeg and Dakota peoples."

"The path forward to improved health outcomes for First Nations must include high quality, culturally-safe health systems that are designed by and under the leadership of First Nations," said Minister Miller. "This Memorandum of Understanding, together with significant investment, will not only help the Southern Chiefs' Organization address gaps in the health care system, but will also assist in bringing much needed health care services closer to Manitoba First Nation communities, and improve health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples living in their home communities."

"This is a significant moment for southern Chiefs and for Canada, a commitment to work together on a new health system governance model," said Chief Batson. "By improving our health status, we improve not only health, but well-being, quality of life, and the future for our communities, and for the generations to come."

The MOU outlines the values and principles of equitable and culturally appropriate health care for the 34 First Nations that form Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO), and formalizes both parties' commitment to a working relationship.

Health Transformation will create a new First Nations health governance structure that is representative of, and accountable to, First Nation communities. The MOU recognizes the expertise of First Nation communities and health care professionals in developing and implementing a First Nations-governed health system. The model will be community-led and holistic, encompassing physical, spiritual, mental, economic, environmental, social, and cultural wellness.

In 2007, The United Nations emphasized the importance of Indigenous rights to pursue self-determination in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The MOU responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Calls to Action* and the *Calls for Justice* from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), which calls on governments to implement actions to improve First Nations' health.

In 2019, the SCO Chiefs-in-Summit passed a resolution supporting the health transformation process called "Exercising our Treaty and Inherent Right to Health".

The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations in what is now called southern Manitoba. SCO is an independent political organization that protects, preserves, promotes, and enhances First Nations peoples' inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

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For more information on Health Transformation:

<http://scoinc.mb.ca/programs/health/>