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SCO AND SIOUX VALLEY DAKOTA NATION HOST EVENT TO HONOUR RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

Today We Offer Prayers to Those Who Survived and Who Never Came Home – Grand Chief Daniels

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 21, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — Today, the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation (SVDN) marked National Indigenous Peoples Day with a ceremonial event at the site of the former Brandon Indian Residential School.

“Normally, June 21st is a time to celebrate and gather in joy,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “However, the recent events in Kamloops have captured the public’s attention and everyone continues to mourn the discovery of at least 215 children buried at the site of the former residential school. By gathering here today, we acknowledge all residential school Survivors and pledge to do everything we can to help identify those children who never came home.”

Today, SCO and SVDN welcomed Elders, Survivors, family members, community members, and the general public to an event called Prayers for the Children. People were invited to gather and reflect on those who were lost at the Brandon school, along with others across what is now known as Canada.

“Our community empathizes and understands the collective pain and sorrow that the forced residential schools afflicted upon our nations,” said SVDN Chief Jennifer Bone. “The news of the Kamloops discovery has triggered raw emotions of sadness and grief in all of us.”

Like Kamloops, research also shows unmarked grave sites linked to the former Brandon residential school. In a partnership with Simon Fraser University, Brandon University and the University of Windsor, SVDN has identified 104 potential graves in three local cemeteries, but only 78 are accountable through historical records.

The primary goal of this partnership is to create a roadmap that can help Indigenous communities like SVDN and others across Canada to navigate a complex system to restore the identities of children who never came home.

“The Kamloops discovery is not new for us,” added Chief Bone. “For many years we have been actively working to identify the Brandon residential school cemeteries and the unmarked graves. Children from

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various First Nations were forcibly brought here. Many perished and were never returned home for a proper burial.”

“What we have before us, is the true meaning of a watershed moment,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “The hard and honest truth about the residential school system is being revealed to the public one painful layer at a time. We must now utilize that pain and channel it into making real, lasting, and positive change that will elevate our people back to the place they were, before the scourge of colonialism literally stole lives away. I call on all Canadians on this Indigenous Peoples Day, to demand better of our society and of the people we elect.”

SCO continues to explore all options to address the sale by Brandon City Council of a known residential school cemetery and the park surrounding it in 2001, and is working with all parties connected to the children buried in the unmarked grave sites.

An Indian Residential Schools Help Line 1-866-925-4419 is available 24 hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience. Meanwhile there are also six healing centres in southern Manitoba that offer support and services for IRS Survivors and their families.

The healing centres have also created a safe space in Winnipeg for Survivors to give prayers, offer tobacco, and receive support. Called ‘A Fire to Honour the Children,’ the space is open every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday until July 13th.

More information on all support for Survivors can be found [on the SCO website](#).

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The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations, and more than 80,000 citizens 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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