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SCO DECRIES LATEST INCIDENT OF SYSTEMIC RACISM IN CRITICAL CARE City of Winnipeg Leadership Needs to be Held Accountable – Grand Chief

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO) is expressing grave concern over yet another glaring example of systemic racism when it comes to emergency care for one our relatives.

“Here we are again, beating our heads against the proverbial systemic racism wall,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “I am calling on Mayor Brian Bowman along with Fire and Paramedic Services Chief, John Lane, and all relevant officials to take immediate disciplinary action as it relates to this damning report.”

SCO is responding to published reports which reveal City of Winnipeg firefighters ignored repeated requests for help from a paramedic who was trying to administer care to an Indigenous woman who had been stabbed in the throat. The incident occurred in October of last year.

The third-party probe also revealed the firefighters failed to provide medical care to the patient and delayed transportation of the patient to the hospital. The report goes on to show that one of the firefighters who then rode in the ambulance with the victim continued to refuse to assist with her care. The delays caused by this reprehensible and discriminatory behavior put the victim’s life in serious jeopardy. To make matters even worse, the probe also revealed that the firefighters in question conspired to lie to the investigator hired by the city to review the incident.

“I am deeply disappointed but sadly not surprised by yet another overt incident of bias and bigotry being inflicted on an Indigenous person, with potentially deadly consequences,” added Grand Chief Daniels. “To think, these so-called first responders can turn a blind eye to another human being’s distress, simply based on her race, is disturbing and beyond defense.”

According to the Winnipeg Free Press, during interviews with the investigator, one of the firefighters repeatedly referred to the incident as “just another call in the North End” and claimed that “Black Lives Matter had made martyrs out of career criminals.”

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SCO is in the midst of revealing even more incidents of systemic racism. A soon to be released survey takes a hard look at racism in healthcare. Initial findings reveal an overwhelmingly consistent pattern of discrimination, neglect, and even abuse. An astounding 92% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “racism is a problem in Manitoba’s healthcare system.” More than half of respondents are deterred from seeking medical help due to experiences of racism within the health care system.

“This latest report corroborates what we have found as well as what we painfully know and it continues to show a deadly pattern of systemic racism and neglect,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “Make no mistake, we plan to hold every single entity and person involved here to account. From the unions who represent the firefighters to the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg, we will advocate for answers, justice, and lasting change. The lives of our people literally depend on it.”

-30-

The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 First 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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