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SCO RESPONDS TO INFLAMMATORY ARTICLE FROM RCMP VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION

Dangerous example of re-writing Canada's destructive past – Grand Chief Daniels

July 12, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is deeply disturbed and outraged by an article published by a staff member of the RCMP Veteran's Association regarding the celebration of Canada Day and the history of this country.

"Racism is alive and well in this country, its institutions, and many of the people who work for those institutions," said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "It's clear that Canada has failed to educate its people on the real history of this land and what was done to the First Peoples, and we are tired of having to have this outdated, deeply discriminatory, and hurtful conversation, especially during such a difficult time."

The piece posted to the RCMP's Veteran's Association website, titled 'My Canada – Is it your Canada?' includes many inflammatory and destructive comments, most of which are not worth repeating. Overall, the piece argues that Canadian history has many bright and dark spots, and that we need to accept the good with the bad and we shouldn't use "today's values" to judge the actions of people in the past.

The article completely ignores the irrefutable fact that residential schools were never meant to be educational facilities to teach Indigenous children about European culture and languages. The people who established the schools and managed them did not have good intentions, and were never doing the right thing, based on values from today or from 150 years ago. Residential schools were created to "kill the Indian in the child" and were a tool of genocide, the worst crime known to humankind. This is not a crime that one can simply move on from, despite the author's insistence that we need to "get on with life."

"It's incredible to watch the number of people telling us to just 'move on' from residential schools, as though we aren't still living the trauma and negative effects every single day," added Grand Chief Daniels. "I can think of no greater privilege, or heartbreak, than being able to watch the discovery of over a thousand children's bodies and then think it's something that people can simply move on from. That people can hear the statistics of how First Nations continue to be hurt by residential schools and colonial policies to this day, how we continue to receive poor access to essential services such as health care, face a severe infrastructure deficit, and are routinely over policed and underserved by the justice

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system, and yet they still think we are overreacting when we call for acknowledgement, justice, and equal rights.”

This latest issue is one small part of the RCMP’s long history of racism and discrimination towards First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. They were complicit in the apprehension of Indigenous children, stealing them from their families and communities to take them to residential schools. They have also over policed Indigenous communities for decades, which has often resulted in violence and death.

A 2019 report by the Globe and Mail found that one-third of fatal shootings by RCMP officers from 2007 - 2017 were Indigenous peoples, despite the fact that Indigenous peoples make up only five percent of the total Canadian population. Also, recent analysis has shown that since 2017, an Indigenous person in Canada is more than 10 times more likely to be shot and killed by a police officer than a non-racialized Canadian. In the weeks to come, SCO will be releasing the results of its revealing survey about First Nation experiences of racism in policing, and 88 per cent of respondents agree that racism is a problem in policing in Manitoba, with the majority actually feeling less safe when they see a police officer.

“Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in its Calls to Action, and the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, with their Calls for Justice, singled out the RCMP, its staff, and officers, as needing to make substantive changes as part of this country’s overall path to reconciliation,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “The RCMP’s focus should be on completing the relevant Calls to Action and Calls for Justice, and doing the difficult work of decolonizing to ensure the next 150 years aren’t mired with racism and violence as the past 150 plus years have been. This country is never going to overcome its past and achieve true reconciliation without the RCMP and the justice system as a whole undergoing a true transformation. This article has made it clear just how much work they have left to do.”

SCO and southern First Nations in what is now Manitoba are committed to reforming the justice system and ending the severe overrepresentation of our people in the justice system, through a [First Nations-led Justice strategy](#) centered on restorative justice interventions and mediations.

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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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