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SCO WANTS ANSWERS AFTER TROUBLING POLICE RESPONSE TO WOMAN IN DISTRESS

Another Concerning Incident between Indigenous people and Winnipeg Police Service

March 20, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO) is seeking answers and a thorough investigation following a disturbing Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) response to an Indigenous woman who was in mental distress and attempted to take her own life.

“I wish I could say I was shocked by this kind of news about the WPS and how they treat our people,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “While this latest story comes as no surprise, I will do everything I can to once again seek answers for the people I represent and all Winnipeggers who rely on having an accountable police force.”

On the afternoon of Monday, March 15, Jasmine Smith, and her colleague, Angela Desrosiers were driving on the Redwood Bridge in Winnipeg, when they came upon an Indigenous woman in obvious distress. The woman had a noose around her neck and was preparing to jump off the bridge. Jasmine and her colleague stopped on the bridge and despite a hail of insults and honking from other drivers, they gave their full attention to the woman. They also called 9-1-1 for further assistance.

As they were talking her down and offering their supports, a WPS cruiser pulled alongside them. The attending officers began swearing at and berating the woman, and in her distress she jumped. In the end, the officers were able to cut the rope and bring the woman down from the bridge. However, instead of offering injury treatment or mental health care, she was immediately placed under arrest and thrown in the back of the cruiser.

“There is a great deal of wrong that needs to be unpacked here,” said Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Chief, Deborah Smith. “I am not only saddened for the fact a woman was in so much anguish that she did not want to live, but also the unspeakable trauma experienced by Jasmine and Angela. Finally, I am dismayed by the callous lack of response shown not only by the police officers, but also the other motorists on the bridge. How can any First Nation person feel like they can trust others after an incident such as this?”

To their credit, Jasmine and Angela had the fortitude to create a full incident report, which includes the attending police officers’ badge numbers. They also filed an official complaint with the WPS.

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“I want to fully commend these two women for their bravery and wherewithal to document this unfortunate event and to share this horrific experience publically,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “They have more than done their part. Now it is up to First Nations and all Indigenous leadership to demand answers and the systemic changes our people so desperately need.”

Combatting racism in policing is a top issue of concern for SCO. On Indigenous Justice Awareness Day, SCO launched a [survey](#) to all First Nation people in Manitoba to report on experiences of racism when dealing with police services across the province. The survey results will be used to inform how we can build better systems and policies that serve to benefit southern First Nations.

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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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