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SCO CALLS FOR CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION INTO ALL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

No Reconciliation without Justice – Grand Chief Daniels

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is calling on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and all levels of the current colonial justice systems to open criminal investigations into the many forms of abuse suffered by children at former Indian Residential Schools across what is now known as Canada.

“For the last few months, we have heard the phrase truth and reconciliation uttered over and over,” said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “Canadians need to realize that there are still major gaps when it comes to learning the hard truth and consequences of the trauma caused by the many forms of abuse suffered at the hands of those who ran this country’s residential schools.”

This week it was learned the RCMP has been investigating allegations of sexual abuse at the former Fort Alexander Residential School in Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation. That investigation has been underway for the last 10 years. Meanwhile it was also revealed that similar investigations are underway in other locations across Turtle Island.

“This is such a difficult but necessary process and I support all of our Relatives in Sagkeeng throughout the criminal investigation,” said Peguis First Nation Chief Glenn Hudson. “Now we need the RCMP to expedite and prioritize the process and open up investigations into all residential schools. We know the abuse suffered wasn’t limited to Fort Alexander. All criminals guilty of the worst offenses imaginable against children must be thoroughly investigated and brought to justice. These investigations are needed in addition to the vital work of searching for unmarked graves at former residential school sites and supporting the affected families and communities.”

Many Canadians first heard of sexual abuse suffered at residential schools when Sagkeeng citizen and former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Dr. Phil Fontaine courageously spoke out about the abuse he suffered there more than 30 years ago. He was one of the first residential school Survivors to publically reveal the physical, psychological, and sexual abuse he and other students were subjected to at the Fort Alexander Residential School.

“We need to carry the torch that was so bravely lit by Phil and other Survivors decades ago,” continued Grand Chief Daniels. “To do any less would dishonour their extraordinary courage.”

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Dr. Fontaine called for a public inquiry into the horrors of the residential school system and their lasting effects, which led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), which brought to light the truth of Canada's genocide. Now, it is time for criminal investigations to be launched into the multitude of crimes unearthed by the TRC and the many stories that brave Survivors have shared.

"These investigations are not only warranted, they are critical in helping all First Nation people fully heal," added Grand Chief Daniels. "By exposing all of the horrors inflicted upon our people and seeking justice, we can then chart a clear path to reconciling with everyone who now shares this land. We know it is beyond difficult to continually relive traumatic experiences but Survivors have said it's even more challenging to believe you live in a place where no one cares to right the horrific wrongs you experienced. I pledge to not allow that to happen."

The 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.

More information on supports for Survivors can be found on [our 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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