

Head Office

Swan Lake First Nation 200-200 Alpine Way, Headingley, Manitoba R4H 0B7

Winnipeg Sub-Office

1572 Dublin Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 0L4

Phone: 204.946.1869 Fax: 204.946.1871 Toll Free: 1.866.876.9701

www.scoinc.mb.ca Facebook: @SCOIncMB



Southern Chiefs' Organization Statement on Former TRC Chair Murray Sinclair's Calls to Conduct Investigation into Residential School Burial Sites

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The unsurprising discovery of 215 precious children buried in a mass grave at the Kamloops residential school site is absolute and further proof of the genocide and crimes against humanity that Canada committed, kept silent on, and tried to cover up for generations.

Canada presents itself on the global stage as a peaceful nation and a human rights leader, but the news from last week shatters that false image.

The churches are parties to the genocide as they worked to fulfill the government of Canada's policies, intended to "Kill the Indian in the Child." We now know that this often meant simply killing the "Indian." The actions and omissions for the Government and the churches meet the tests of genocide and crimes against humanity under Canadian law within the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act* S.C. 2000, c. 24 and international law through the *International Genocide Convention* and the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)*.

We already have an irrefutable record of state-sanctioned laws, policies, and practices designed for the systematic and progressive genocide of Indigenous Peoples. These were designed to isolate, impoverish, and destroy Indigenous peoples, cultures, and communities. There can no longer be any cover ups or silence of this truth. It is Canada's darkest chapter, a chapter that has not yet been closed and continues in insidious ways through ongoing and deadly systemic racism.

The Southern Chiefs' Organization fully supports the Honourable Murray Sinclair's call for a full inquiry into the former residential school burial sites. This is work the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada tried to do during its mandate, work Canada refused to fund.

We call on the United Nations and its High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide oversight and to support First Nations and all Indigenous communities with highly trained forensic experts and expertise, so that we can bring our children home.

We call on the Catholic Church and the Pope to publicly apologize, disclose all documents it has refused to provide to date, and make reparations.

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Investigations bring truth, not justice. Therefore, we call on Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Lametti to immediately begin an investigation under the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act*. Further, we call on the ICC to commence investigations under the *International Genocide Convention* and the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*.

Anything less would be a continued cover up of these atrocious acts, further perpetuating the genocide.

ALL Canadians need to understand how they continue to benefit from the genocide of Turtle Island's original peoples.

Canada has killed our Elders and killed our children, but will never kill the fire in our hearts.

Canada must do better than this.

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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.

For Media Inquiries:

Vic Savino, Communications Officer, Southern Chiefs' Organization

(204) 881-4512 | Email: Media@scoinc.mb.ca

www.scoinc.mb.ca