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Southern Chiefs' Organization Denounces Federal Government's Position that Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA People Do Not Face a "Special Threat"

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) strongly disagrees with the federal government's arguments that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people do not face a "special threat from a special source" and are not unique victims of criminal violence. SCO believes they fly in the face of the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

"The argument that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people do not face a special threat is irresponsible and completely out of line with the findings of the National Inquiry," stated Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, of the Southern Chiefs' Organization. "The government has already accepted the National Inquiry's findings, including that the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people amounts to genocide. It is incomprehensible that they are now arguing that they do not face a special threat."

The federal government made these arguments in a court hearing in Regina this week, arguing against certification of a \$600 million class action lawsuit, filed on behalf of Dianne Bigeagle, whose daughter has been missing since 2007. Bigeagle says she went to police no less than 50 times, yet as far as she is aware, they never did a proper investigation and never searched beyond Regina's city limits. Bigeagle's description of police treatment shows how little law enforcement prioritizes cases of missing Indigenous women and girls. Ms. Bigeagle also is seeking \$600 million in compensation for families of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

The National inquiry into MMIWG found that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to go missing or be murdered than non-Indigenous women and girls. It also revealed that Indigenous women make up twenty-four percent of all homicide victims in Canada, yet they only made up four percent of the total population.

Despite having acknowledged the wrongs committed against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, the federal government has yet to take concrete steps to address the issues laid out in the National Inquiry's final report, and the 231 Calls for Justice. The government's legal team asserted that it is working on a national action plan in response to the National inquiry's final report and Calls for Justice.

“Reforming law enforcement practices are integral to ending the epidemic of violence against our women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “All Indigenous women and girls are sacred. They are mothers, daughters, sisters, cousins, aunties, grandmothers, granddaughters, and leaders, and its time that the government and law enforcement treated them that way, the same as they treat all other Canadians.”

Federal Justice Glennys McVeigh has reserved decision in the class action certification hearing. A date has not been provided for the return of her decision.

SCO is committed to ending the violence. On June 3, 2020, one year after the National Inquiry released their final report, SCO launched a public awareness campaign which has highlighted the Calls for Justice to remind governments, institutions, and Canadians of their responsibilities. Our campaign comes to an end on October 4, 2020, a special date to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Manitoba.

For more information on what you can do to end the violence, and for helpful resources, go to: <https://scoinc.mb.ca/programs/violence-prevention/>.

The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 Anishinaabe and Dakota First Nations that came together in 1999 to protect, preserve, promote, and enhance 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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