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SCO DENOUNCES DETAINMENT OF SIPENKNE'KATIK FIRST NATION CHIEF

No questioning the harvesting rights of our Mi'kmaq relatives – Grand Chief Daniels

August 17, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB —The Southern Chief's Organization (SCO) decries the detainment of Chief Mike Sack, of the Sipekne'katik First Nation.

"I have stated on a number of occasions that there is no disputing the harvesting rights of the Mi'kmaq people," said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "First Nations have sustainably fished and respectfully managed our resources since the first sunrise, unlike colonial management practices. There is absolutely no valid reason to harass Chief Sack or any other Indigenous fisher in this manner."

Chief Sack was arrested and taken in for questioning by federal fisheries officers on Monday, just after he announced the expansion of his band's self-regulated lobster fishery in the territory now known as Nova Scotia. According to the published reports, he was held for approximately 45 minutes and questioned about the fishery before being released.

This latest development comes after Royal Canadian Mounted Police and federal fisheries officers showed a complete lack of will to protect Mi'kmaq Fishers last fall, when two facilities storing lobster caught by Mi'kmaq fishers were raided and vandalized by a mob of hundreds of non-Indigenous commercial fishers. Several traps belonging to Mi'kmaq fishers were cut along with other incidents of violence and vandalism, including arson, directed towards members of the Sipekne'katik First Nation.

SCO has consistently advocated for our Mi'kmaq relatives. In October of last year, SCO co-organized a Spirit Ride with other Indigenous leaders throughout downtown Winnipeg as a show of strength and solidarity with Chief Sack and his fishers.

"Given the events of last year and the Inherent rights of First Nation fishers, what has happened this week amounts to nothing less than colonial intimidation and harassment," added Grand Chief Daniels. "I am astounded, yet not surprised, that a federal entity is showing such an utter disregard for our legally protected rights."

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With the writ being dropped on a federal election campaign, SCO is calling on all leaders, candidates and federal parties to commit to upholding Inherent, Treaty and human rights, and the Constitution Act, which protects the rights of Mi'kmaq fishers.

“Reconciliation is not just a word that can be tossed around loosely,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “All colonial entities in Canada need to be put on notice, that First Nations will not stand by and allow this kind of systemic racism and bullying to continue. If we are to share this land and its resources, they need to acknowledge that we operate under our own guidelines and set our own agendas.”

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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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