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SCO LAUNCHES MONTH OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL AWARENESS

Now more than ever, we must honour Survivors and those who never came home, and remember that Every Child Matters – Grand Chief Daniels

September 01, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB —The Southern Chief’s Organization (SCO) is launching a month of reflection, commemoration, and solidarity as we honour those who were subjected to the Indian Residential School system.

“September has been a traumatic month for First Nation people, because it was the month the children were stolen from our communities,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “This September, and for the next 30 days and every day after, I call on all those who now share this land to learn everything you can about this dark period in Canada’s history, so that we can properly honour Survivors and remember the innocent lives lost because of it.”

This year, for the first time, the federal government designated September 30th as a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, honouring Call to Action #80 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. That announcement came in the wake of the discovery of thousands of unmarked graves at the former sites of residential schools across the country. That includes the site of the Fort Alexander facility in the community of Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation, one of 14 residential schools in Manitoba. Not only is Sagkeeng using ground penetrating technology to identify grave sites, it is also in the midst of a decade long RCMP investigation into child sexual abuse allegations at the school.

“We still await final word of which of our ancestors are literally buried under our feet along with closure on the criminal investigation,” said Sagkeeng Chief Derrick Henderson. “I know my community is just one of many that will be dealing with this nightmare in the months and years to come.”

SCO has launched an ambitious Orange Heart Awareness campaign, including billboards, bus boards and transit shelters in Winnipeg and Brandon, and billboards in Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, Minnedosa, and Winkler. SCO invites all Manitobans to join us, by picking up a free lawn sign from SCO’s Dublin office in Winnipeg, making your own sign, or hanging an orange shirt in your window.

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SCO asks all Canadians to use the month of September to honour Survivors, their families and communities, and to recognize the tragic legacy of Indian Residential Schools. In the days leading up to the September 20th federal election, and with a new provincial premier soon to be sworn in, we call on our Treaty partners to find meaningful ways to address the damage done to First Nation people and communities.

SCO acknowledges the 10 Indian Residential School healing programs in Manitoba and the many initiatives that are helping Survivors and their families cope with the intergenerational trauma. One such place is a healing garden, created by the people of Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation.

“Just north of our community, stands the very building that housed the Birtle Residential School,” said Birdtail Chief Lindsay Bunn. “My people drive by and see that place almost every day. It only stands to reason that we needed a healing space to help people come together and share their collective stories and pain.”

“The timing for a commemorative month such as this, could not be more fitting,” added Grand Chief Daniels. “As the search for more unmarked graves at former residential school sites and criminal investigations continue in the days, months, and years ahead, we need to keep the conversation about colonization and residential schools going. I hope everyone who now shares in this land, will use the days leading up to September 30th to reflect on the truth and begin the process of real reconciliation.”

From now until the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, SCO will be sharing information and resources on Indian Residential Schools including counselling support and healing services.

For more information, be sure to visit SCO’s [Indian Residential School Survivor Page](#).

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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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