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# SCO REFLECTS ON LEGACY OF HELEN BETTY OSBORNE

## 50 YEARS AFTER HER MURDER IN THE PAS

### Racism Still Plagues Justice System – Grand Chief Daniels

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 13, 2021**

**ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB** — Fifty years after the brutal kidnapping and murder of a young First Nations woman in The Pas was met with indifference by law enforcement in the community, her memory still guides the work of those committed to addressing racism in policing, Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) Grand Chief Jerry Daniels said today.

“Helen Betty Osborne was a bright young woman whose light was extinguished by four non-Indigenous men who faced little consequence for their crimes due to racism and police indifference,” added Grand Chief Daniels. “Today, we extend our condolences to Helen’s family and community as they commemorate this day, and we honour her memory by continuing to hold all levels of government accountable for addressing systemic racism in the justice system.”

Helen was a 19-year-old woman from Norway House who dreamed of being a teacher. As there was no secondary school in Norway House, she had to leave her home community and move to The Pas for further education. It was there that she was kidnapped, beaten, stabbed and murdered on the morning of November 13, 1971.

Although the four men from The Pas were identified as suspects, it was 16 years before any charges were laid. Only one man was convicted. The justice system failed Helen, and the lack of justice for her and her family, as well as the police shooting of J.J. Harper in 1988, led to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI).

Today her legacy lives on through her family and community, and in the work of those committed to justice for First Nations Peoples.

“While we recognize the efforts of governments to correct past wrongs, recent events such as the police killing of Eishia Hudson and the ongoing overrepresentation of First Nations citizens in the criminal justice system, remind us that there is still much more work to be done to address racism in policing,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “We call for renewed efforts from all levels of government to ensure everyone working in the justice system, from law enforcement to the judiciary, to corrections

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officers, has cultural competency and anti-racism training, and that better systems are in place to hold police accountable.”

According to Statistics Canada, 75 per cent of adults admitted into custody in Manitoba in 2017/2018 were Indigenous (First Nation, Metis and Inuit). Manitoba also has the highest number of incarcerated Indigenous women in Canada and the highest youth incarceration rates in Canada (19 youth per 10,000 population).

To read SCO’s Racism in Policing Survey Report, go to <https://scoinc.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SCO-Racism-in-Policing-Report-Web-FIN.pdf>.

SCO is a founding partner of the MMIWG Manitoba Coalition. As a signatory to the Coalition, SCO was a Party with Standing with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

To read SCO’s Survey Report on the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry, go to <https://scoinc.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SCO-MMIWG-Report-Final.pdf>.

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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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