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SOUTHERN CHIEFS' ORGANIZATION CONGRATULATES FIRST NATION STUDENT ON PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP FROM BANGABANDHU CENTRE FOR BANGLADESH STUDIES

Aluk Fontaine Richardson will Travel to Bangladesh to Study Peace Initiatives, Reconciliation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 24, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — A student from Sagkeeng First Nation has been selected as the first Indigenous female recipient of the Bangabandhu Peace Philosophy and World Peace Scholarship, announced today by Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) Grand Chief Jerry Daniels and His Excellency Dr. Khalilur Rahman, the Honourable High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Canada.

"Our southern First Nation citizens share many of the same basic goals as the Indigenous peoples of Bangladesh: the protection of our human rights and entitlements, and for the legacy of colonialism to be recognized, so we can move forward together as nations in equal standing," said Grand Chief Daniels. "SCO commends Ms. Fontaine Richardson for this tremendous scholarly achievement, and we look forward to her work towards advancing reconciliation in both countries."

"This scholarship award is a shining example of multilateral cooperation and transnational Indigenous engagement, and we thank the Southern Chiefs' Organization for their support," said His Excellency. "We look forward to Ms. Fontaine Richardson's accomplishments in her studies, and trust that her stay in Bangladesh will facilitate researching the 1997 peace accord that brought decades-long armed conflict to an end."

Grand Chief Daniels and His Excellency presented the letter of scholarship to Aluk Fontaine Richardson in person today. The scholarship was made possible by the Honourable Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and the award will support travel and accommodation.

"I am deeply honoured to be chosen as the recipient of the Bangabandhu Peace Philosophy and World Peace Scholarship. I am grateful for the incredible opportunity to travel to Bangladesh and conduct research that aims to find common core values between Indigenous communities in Bangladesh and our own First Nation communities here at home, and to use what I have learned as a guide for developing a framework for peace and reconciliation," said Fontaine Richardson. "I hope that my research can also unearth valuable lessons from Bangladesh's own journey with post 1997 peace accord reconciliation that can be used within Canada's ongoing reconciliation process and help lay the groundwork for future partnerships between Indigenous peoples."

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Fontaine Richardson is a recent political science graduate from the University of Winnipeg, where she was the recipient of the Gold Medal for Achievement in a Major. Fontaine Richardson currently works as a junior research analyst for Apoqon Consulting, a boutique Indigenous consultancy firm, and serves as the co-director for Realize Radicalization, a student-led counter-extremism organization that aims to raise public awareness about radicalization. Beyond her work, Fontaine Richardson is an Anishinaabe, Cree, and Mi'kmaq woman and a proud member of Sagkeeng First Nation. Fontaine Richardson's family inspired her passion for Indigenous advocacy, and she remains keenly interested in the topics of reconciliation, Indigenous self-governance, and Nationhood. She is currently planning to attend law school, where she hopes to focus her studies on Indigenous rights and sovereignty within the purview of international law.

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The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 80,500 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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