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Statement on the Papal Apology to Indigenous Delegates in Rome

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, April 1, 2022

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — First Nation peoples have lived on and cared for Turtle Island since time immortal. We have inherent rights and sacred obligations to the land and to each other. The arrival of missionaries and settlers disrupted these rights and obligations, as churches and governments sought to erase us as a people. This has resulted in a highly complex relationship between First Nations people and the Catholic Church.

“I am optimistic that the apology offered today by Pope Francis will be a first step to healing for many, however there is still much work to do,” said Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “The ongoing legacy of colonization, intergenerational trauma, and the continued unsuccessful attempts to assimilate and eliminate First Nation peoples from Turtle Island have impacted generations of our people in profound ways. I am hopeful that we will see another apology from Pope Francis in our territory and I encourage the Catholic Church to work with us to develop a concrete plan for action to promote healing and justice for Survivors, their families, and communities.”

The path forward to reconciliation with the Catholic Church has now started with an apology, an acknowledgement of the truth and the suffering of Survivors and the children who did not return home. Now comes the opportunity for reparations, as we work together on true and meaningful reconciliation.

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The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 81,000 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.