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SCO RESPONSE TO NEW FUNDING FOR UNMARKED GRAVE SITES AT FORMER RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

A Step Forward in Bringing Our Children Home– Grand Chief Daniels

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2022

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB – The Southern Chiefs’ Organization (SCO) is welcoming news that our provincial Treaty partner is allocating \$2.5 million for the identification, commemoration, and protection of potential burial sites, for children who were lost to the residential school system.

“As the past year has painfully revealed, there is no plausible way to deny the genocidal impact of the residential schools and their painful legacy in our communities,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “This gesture by the provincial government is welcome, and it is one step in the journey of repairing the damage that colonial systems have done.”

The funding will be divided among First Nation, Inuit and Metis organizations and governments. SCO will also be responsible for \$200,000 to establish commemorative gathering places and monuments that encourage healing, including a monument or memorial at or across from the Manitoba Legislature.

“There’s no question, anytime we create a place to gather, share and collectively heal, it has a positive impact,” added Birdtail Sioux Dakota First Nation Chief, Lindsay Bunn. “In my community, we have already created a healing garden that has become an important meeting place. I look forward to seeing what develops with this new funding.”

There were 18 residential school sites in Manitoba, with 12 of those located in the south. Currently, ground penetrating radar searches are occurring or are set to take place in communities including at Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation, Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation, and Long Plain First Nation.

“These searches will undoubtedly unearth more truths, pain, and trauma when it comes to colonial attempts to erase us from the lands we have occupied since time immemorial,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “Now as stewards of this funding, we must do all we can to honour these little ones who never came home.”

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SCO is in the process of launching a Survivors Healing Supports Program to support residential and day school, MMIGW2S+, Sixties Scoop, and child welfare system Survivors and intergenerational Survivors, and provide funding to southern First Nations that want to hold gatherings or commemorative events to remember the children that did not return home.

In February of 2022, SCO launched a Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) of qualified professionals trained in trauma informed practice who offer crisis response, intervention, and case coordination services. The MCRT is available to all southern First Nations and can be reached by phone at 1.877.SCO.2880 (1.877.726.2880) or by email at CrisisResponse@scoinc.mb.ca.

-30-

The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 81,500 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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