

Head Office
Swan Lake First Nation 200-200 Alpine Way, Headingley, Manitoba R4H 0B7

Winnipeg Sub-Office
1572 Dublin Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 0L4
Phone: 204.946.1869 Fax: 204.946.1871 Toll Free: 1.866.876.9701
www.scoinc.mb.ca Facebook: @SCOIncMB



SCO RESPONSE TO ASSAULT CHARGES AGAINST FORMER SAGKEENG RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL PRIEST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 17, 2022

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB – The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is responding to the assault charge of a former priest of Fort Alexander Residential School in Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation.

“My prayers are with the victim and her family and all who have fought and struggled to be heard,” said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “This proves that when proper and thorough investigations are done by law enforcement, justice can be served.”

With a long reputation of abuse by Survivors, the Fort Alexander Residential School operated from 1905 to 1970 and children from nearly two dozen First Nations attended.

“Survivors have been sharing their stories of horrific abuse for years,” said Sakeeng Anicinabe First Nation Chief Derrick Henderson. “Today, we shine light on that truth and commit to holding all who have harmed our children accountable to the fullest extent.”

With this being the only investigation into residential schools by RCMP, it is clear more has to be done. “We know that they are others who have harmed our children, that have not yet been held accountable,” said Grand Chief Daniels. “We call on law enforcement to investigate and re-investigate claims that have gone unheard and unanswered for decades and take the concerns of our people seriously.”

There are 18 former 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 to identify unmarked grave sites.

“I will continue to advocate for the victims of these devastating crimes, and ensure supports are available for optimal healing,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels.

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.

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.

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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.

For Media Inquiries: Media@scoinc.mb.ca