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SCO LAUNCHES RESTORATIVE JUSTICE DIGITAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

**New programming allows for increased accessibility
to support and healing**

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB – The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is launching a Restorative Justice Digital Wellness Program, guided by SCO's Community Justice Workers, consisting of five videos and a workbook for First Nation clients.

“Our members in the Restorative Justice program have taken responsibility for the harms they have caused their families and communities,” said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “This program will further support those who are taking concrete action and steps toward their healing.”

The program was created as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic as in-person programming was put on hold and clients were prevented from completing their programming and accessing mental wellness services that would help them heal and move forward in a good way.

The videos feature Elder William Campbell (Ebb and Flow First Nation), Elder Gertrude Ballantyne (Brokenhead Ojibway Nation), mental health therapist Anita Prince (Sagkeeng First Nation), and traditional Knowledge Keeper Cecil Sveinson (Poplar River First Nation) as they discuss the importance of healing through culture and ceremony, as well as how to move forward by making healthier decisions. Topics include abandonment, trauma and healing, coping strategies, as well as cultural teachings and language.

The short form and full length versions were produced by First Nation filmmaker, Graham Constant, from Opaskwayak Cree Nation who has more than 10 years of experience in the multimedia industry. While the full length teaching videos are available for clients of the program, the short videos help share the vision and can be seen on SCO's [social media channels](#).

The well regarded [Restorative Justice Program](#) serves a number of First Nations and has dedicated Community Justice Workers (CJWs) in six communities: Bloodvein, Long Plain, O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi, Pinaymootang, Sagkeeng, and Sandy Bay. The program also serves Brokenhead, Dakota Tipi, Dauphin River, Ebb and Flow, Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, Little Saskatchewan, Skownan, and beyond.

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“Restorative Justice means we give the opportunity for our people to make amends and heal in our traditional ways,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “Programs like these are crucial and with this being a digital initiative, it can reach many who are on the recovery journey.”

First Nation citizens are over-represented in the Canadian justice system, and statistically over-incarcerated and given longer sentences. A recent audit by the Office of the Auditor General, released in June of 2022, found systemic disparities in security classification and in parole and programming that persistently disadvantage Indigenous people.

SCO’s First Nation Justice Program is expanding to address the needs and gaps that exist within the criminal justice system. SCO’s First Nation Court Worker Program will soon be launching to provide culturally appropriate justice services, supports, and advocacy for our citizens, as well as working to reduce access issues that are prevalent in the court room.

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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.

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