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## **SCO UNVEILS RENOWNED ARTISTIC TRIBUTE TO HONOUR RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL – AND THOSE WHO NEVER CAME HOME**

*Iconic Totem Pole to eventually be on display at redeveloped  
HBC Building in downtown Winnipeg*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 30, 2022**

**ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB** – Today, the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) unveiled a powerful and towering tribute to the children who were stolen from their families and sent to Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The Residential School Totem Pole, by Kwakiutl artist Charles Joseph, was raised this morning in Assiniboine Park. The piece is being gifted to SCO and will eventually be located in a place of prominence within SCO's transformative Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn project at the Hudson's Bay building in downtown Winnipeg.

"No matter where you came from in what is now known as Canada, the pain and genocidal legacy of residential schools continues to be felt by First Nation peoples and their families everywhere," said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "I am honoured and humbled that Charles Joseph is allowing us to share his story through his art, as we continue our efforts to honour all Survivors and help with their healing."

The totem pole stands 21 metres tall, and tells the story of Joseph, who was taken away from his family as a child and forced into the residential school located in Alert Bay, British Columbia. The magnificent finished piece was carved from a massive west coast tree and commissioned by Jim Balsillie, Canadian businessman, philanthropist and former Chair of Research in Motion. Until recently, the totem pole had been on loan to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

"I am so proud to be able to share my story through my art to people across Turtle Island," stated Charles Joseph. "I am particularly moved today, to have the opportunity to share it with my relatives in Manitou Api, the geographical centre of the land we all share. The centre is where you will find a heartbeat, and my hope is my work will help draw us all to those healing rhythms."

The Charles Joseph Family Box Protocol Ceremony for Raising the Totem Pole will occur on October 2, 2022, at 11 a.m. at the totem pole location by the Leaf in Assiniboine Park. The event will be hosted by Grand Chief Daniels, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers from the

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territory now known as Manitoba and it was made possible through the collective efforts of SCO, Assiniboine Park Conservancy President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Margaret Redmond, and the park's Indigenous Programming Advisory Circle.

“We believe that everyone who shares this land has a role to play when it comes to truth and reconciliation,” added Redmond. “Given the history of Assiniboine Park as a gathering place and the importance of the Indigenous Peoples Garden, we are honoured to know that Mr. Joseph's totem pole and, more importantly, his story and the story of the Survivors and children who never came home, will reach all who visit this very special place.”

“I want to pay tribute Mr. Joseph and his family, Mr. Balsillie, Ms. Redmond, SCO CEO Joy Cramer, and everyone else who played a part in bringing this vital piece to Treaty One Territory,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “The totem pole is a powerful reminder to us all to honour IRS Survivors, their families, and to remember the little ones who never returned home. It's their stories of tragedy, survival, and resilience that give us purpose every day at SCO. I will not rest until their sacrifices have been properly acknowledged.”

When SCO's Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgoohn redevelopment project at the HBC Building is complete, the totem pole will form a key piece of the collection that will eventually be on display at the building's museum and gallery.

For more information on the transformative HBC redevelopment endeavour, be sure to visit [THE PROJECT'S WEBSITE.](#)

SCO recently launched a [Survivors Healing Supports Program](#) and a Harm Reduction Awareness and Land Based Healing Fund to support Survivors and intergenerational Survivors. The need has only been exacerbated since the discovery of the unmarked graves of the children who died at residential schools across Turtle Island.

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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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