

## Head Office

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## It's All About Connections

Health Transformation News Update: August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022

On August 17 to 19 the SCO Youth Council, in collaboration with Health Transformation, hosted a Land-Based Youth Gathering in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. The three-day event focused on strengthening connections: to other youth, to the land, and to ancestors as a way of promoting healthier and more culturally grounded lives among southern First Nation youth in Manitoba.

As the first major youth-focused event of the summer, it was a great opportunity for the youth to connect with themselves. There were icebreaking activities by Ka Ni Kanichihk, various physical activities with Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council, a talent show and lots of bonding and recreational activities conducted around campfire.

Camping on the field around the harbour was also available to youth who chose to camp in keeping with the theme of connecting to land. The gathering also featured a number of educational activities including a tour of the Brokenhead Wetland Interpretive Trail / Anikanotabijigade where the youth learned the importance of the wetland ecosystem to the health of the community and the medicinal values of some of the different Indigenous plants that surrounded the area.

The Youth Gathering was especially an opportunity to reconnect with traditional ways through ancestral teachings passed on by the Elders. Every day was started with ceremony, and the gathering was blessed with prayer by an elder to creator. Members of the Health Transformation Elders and Knowledge Keepers Committee shared stories, teachings, and their work in community, creating a link to pass on knowledge and wisdom to the next generation.

The SCO Youth Council met the challenge of hosting an event with grace and a positive mental attitude which defined the entire three days. They provided a safe and healthy place for Indigenous youth of all orientations to gather. A very special thanks goes out to all the chaperones, helpers from various Indigenous organizations, Bear Claw Security, Health Transformation staff, and many others who worked to make the three days fun and safe for everyone.

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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.*