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SCO LAUNCHES NEW SURVEY SEEKING CITIZEN INPUT ON REFORMING JUSTICE SYSTEM

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — Today, the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is launching a new online survey with the goal of seeking input that will assist SCO in advocating for the creation of an effective, equitable, and safe justice system from a First Nations perspective.

“One of my principal mandates is to reduce the overrepresentation of First Nation citizens within the Canadian criminal justice system,” said **SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**. “The goal of this survey is to provide our community members with a voice to help develop alternative measures for care that revolve around accountability and personal growth, rather than the current punitive measures of the colonial state.”

In January 2021, the federal government was mandated with developing—in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous partners, provinces, and territories—an Indigenous Justice Strategy to address systemic discrimination and the overrepresentation of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples in the existing justice system.

In Manitoba, 75 per cent of adults admitted into custody are Indigenous. In the last 10 years, there has been a 60 per cent increase in the rates of incarceration of Indigenous men and a 139 per cent increase in the rates of incarceration of Indigenous women. Manitoba has the highest number of incarcerated Indigenous women in Canada and the highest youth incarceration rates in Canada.

“This new Anishinaabe and Dakota Justice Survey will help clarify the priorities of our First Nations related to the justice system, whether it be through prevention, policing, courts, corrections, or victim’s services,” stated **Chief Gordon Bluesky** of the Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation. “We are encouraging our citizens to complete this survey to share their visions of how the justice system should operate and to learn more about their personal interactions with the current justice system.”

The survey is the latest tool as part of SCO’s overall First Nation’s Justice Strategy, which includes a focus on restorative justice. SCO’s Restorative Justice Program serves several First Nations and has dedicated Community Justice Workers in six communities—Bloodvein, Long Plain, O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi, Pinaymootang, Sagkeeng, and Sandy Bay First Nations. 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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“As a leader, I am responsible for working with our Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations, and the more than 81,500 citizens SCO represents, to create a more just Manitoba,” added Grand Chief Daniels. “The results of this survey will provide First Nations leadership in southern Manitoba with guidance on how we can work to restore balance, health and real justice for our people.”

The Anishinaabe and Dakota Justice Survey consists of about 16 questions and will remain open until Sunday, December 18, 2022.

You can find our survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SCO-IJS>

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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:

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