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SCO'S NATION REBUILDING PROGRAM SEEKING CITIZEN INPUT ON GOVERNANCE

SCO Announces New Program to Reestablish Traditional Forms of Dakota and Anishinaabe Governance

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is pleased to announce the Nation Rebuilding Program. SCO is working with southern Nations in exploring traditional forms of Dakota and Anishinaabe governance, including looking at how to integrate traditional knowledge into transforming and strengthening governance.

"In 2019, SCO hosted a historic and large gathering of the Anishinaabe people. Building on the success of this gathering, we are engaging with southern Anishinaabe and Dakota leadership and citizens about how to strengthen and rebuild our Nations so we can move forward with self-governance and self-determination," shared **SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**. "As part of this work, today we are launching a new online survey to ask citizens of our member Nations about their priorities when it comes to Nation rebuilding."

The National Rebuilding Program Team is launching an online survey to engage and seek input. The 13-question survey is open to all Dakota and Anishinaabe citizens from southern First Nations. It asks citizens to identify their priority areas, aspects of traditional governance, and information to guide project direction. SCO will analyze and compile survey responses into a strategic plan to present to the SCO-member Chiefs in 2023.

"SCO is committed to working with our Dakota and Anishinaabe Nations to align our strengths to support and empower one another," said Grand Chief Daniels. "In addition to this survey, SCO is hosting a series of gatherings to seek input that will advance our work in rebuilding our Nations."

The **Women's Gathering on Nation Rebuilding** is entering its second and final day in Winnipeg today. SCO invited women from the 34 southern First Nations to gather to discuss the importance of Nation rebuilding. The gathering also seeks to share information and identify women's priorities for action.

"Women from SCO Nations have gathered in Treaty One territory this week to discuss the issue of Nation rebuilding," shared **Chief Lola Thunderchild** of the Canupawakpa Dakota Nation. "I am grateful to the women who travelled to provide direction on steps we can take to build stronger Nations. There is much work to be done to restore our original citizenship, languages, laws, institutions, ceremonies, protocols, and procedures of governance."

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This Nation Rebuilding Program is a result of First Nation leadership discussion and direction, including messages heard in First Nation gatherings. In 2019, First Nation Elders, leadership, youth, and other First Nation citizens developed the ‘*Collective Message of the Anishinaabe Gathering*’ declaration that included the statement, “We will restore our original citizenship, language, laws, institutions, ceremonies, protocols, and procedures of governance.”

“We have to get back to our way of life as we move forward. It is essential for the health and well-being of our Nations that we restore our traditional ways,” said **Chief Derrick Henderson** of the Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation. “The Nation Rebuilding Program is an important step in helping our Nations move forward together to real autonomy. I encourage all Anishinaabe and Dakota citizens to complete the Nation Rebuilding Survey to provide direction and insights to SCO on this important initiative.”

Anyone interested in learning more about our National Rebuilding Program can visit our website:

<https://scoinc.mb.ca/nation-rebuilding/>

The Nation Rebuilding Survey is open until January 31, 2023. It is available online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q88T89S>

-30-

The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 83,000 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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