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SCO EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF WOMEN LOST TO VIOLENCE

Hate Crimes Against Indigenous Women Show Continued Need for Urgent Action on 231 Calls for Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 1, 2022

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is expressing condolences to the family, friends, and Nations of the four women whose lives have been lost due to the actions of a serial killer in Treaty One territory.

"I am extremely distressed to hear the news that a serial killer has taken the lives of four women," shared **SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**. "On behalf of SCO, I extend our deep condolences to the families, friends, and those who loved these four women. We will be keeping you in our thoughts and prayers as you grapple with the news that your loved ones have been taken from us in such a violent way."

SCO is aware that three of the four women were from southern First Nations. The women are **Rebecca Contois** (age 24), a member of the O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation; **Morgan Beatrice Harris** (age 39), a member of the Long Plain First Nation; and **Marcedes Myran** (age 26), a member of the Long Plain First Nation. A fourth woman is unidentified, and police are appealing to the public for tips on her identity. She is believed to be an Indigenous woman in her twenties.

"The person charged with committing these heinous crimes has an online presence that must be investigated," shared Grand Chief Daniels. "SCO urges all those involved in investigating and prosecuting this person to charge him with committing hate crimes against Indigenous women. I also urge investigators to take very seriously that for years, families have been asserting there are serial killers who are targeting Indigenous women."

SCO is intentionally not naming the man charged with the murders of these women and encourages media outlets and others to do the same. There is no need to amplify this man's identity in the public. There is concern that his actions will be celebrated by those who share his hateful views.

"I am aware that our community is extremely concerned that the Winnipeg Police Service had previously stepped away from Project Devote, a task force for missing and murdered people," stated Grand Chief Daniels. "There are also strong concerns around how the medical examiner's office operates. There have been multiple suspicious deaths that have been ruled as suicides or drug overdoses. When the medical examiner makes the decision that someone has died by suicide or accidentally, there is no investigation. There is a feeling the medical examiner's office is quick to rule something as an accidental death or suicide and there is also a sense in community that

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overall, the police aren't taking this seriously enough. SCO continues to urge all levels of government to work to implement the 231 Calls for Justice that came out of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Time is of the essence, and we must see clear progress being made to protect our people and keep them safe."

"I am extremely saddened to know that two of the women who were murdered by this serial killer are from Long Plain First Nation," shared **Chief Kyra Wilson** of the Long Plain First Nation. "I share condolences and send my love to the families and all those who are impacted by today's news. Clearly, there are not enough resources to keep our women, girls, two spirit, and gender-diverse people safe in this province. Our First Nation will need support in the days, weeks, and months ahead as many of our members will be impacted by this tragic news."

"Today's announcement is going to be triggering for so many people. I urge all those impacted by this news to seek out supports. Reach out to one another and seek out mental health and wellness supports should you need them," shared Grand Chief Daniels.

If you require immediate emotional support, please call the national, independent toll free 24/7 support line at **1-844-413-6649** to speak to a counsellor. The service is available in English, Anishnaabemowin (Ojibway), Cree, Inuktitut, and French.

At the request of one of the impacted families, a sacred fire is being lit at Astum Api Niikanaahk close to the Thunderbird House in Winnipeg. A vigil is also being planned for this evening.

SCO has committed to supporting those grieving the loss of their loved ones through support from our Mobile Crisis Response Team and our Survivors' Healing Program and MMIWG2s+ Liaison. SCO continues to urge all levels of government, as well as individuals, to do what they can to implement the 231 Calls for Justice.

In 2021, SCO surveyed southern First Nations citizens about priorities for the Calls for Justice. You can review the survey report [here](#).

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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.

For media inquiries:

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