

## Head Office

Swan Lake First Nation 195-300 Alpine Way, Headingley, MB R4H 0E1

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[www.scoinc.mb.ca](http://www.scoinc.mb.ca) Facebook: @SCOIncMB



Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.  
Celebrating 25 Years of Service

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### Winnipeg Sub-Offices

1572 Dublin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB R3E 0L4

202-600 Empress Street

Winnipeg, MB R3G 0R5

### Brandon Sub-Office

2B 136-11<sup>th</sup> Street

Brandon, MB R7A 4J4

Honourable Nello Altomare

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning

Government of Manitoba

168 Legislative Building, 450 Broadway

Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0V8

Email: [mineecl@manitoba.ca](mailto:mineecl@manitoba.ca)

May 2, 2024

## RE: An Open Letter on the Conduct of School Trustees

Aniin Minister Altomare,

Residential school denialists, and those who spread misinformation, ignorance, and hate speech have no place in our public systems and especially within our schools. It is regrettable that in 2024, I am compelled to write these words to address the unacceptable behaviours displayed by elected school trustees in two school divisions within the territory now known as southern Manitoba. There is no public forum where displays of this magnitude of ignorance should be tolerated.

Anti-indigenous racism and discrimination against our 2SLGBTQQIA+ relatives cause significant mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual harm for those who experience it. It is our job to call out this violence, and to use all means necessary to end it. On behalf of the 34 Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations, and more than 87,000 citizens I represent, I am asking you as Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to urgently address this.

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The Mountain View School Division allowed a Trustee 30 minutes during a board meeting to spread denialism, racist ideologies, and misinformation in a public forum. His presentation titled: "Racism, Anti-Racism, Nice Until it Isn't", was rife with fallacies. Through his words, he has clearly failed to meet his duties as a Trustee as outlined in the Public Schools Act. The subsequent silence and compliance of the entire board calls into question the ability of the current Trustees to fulfill their obligations and duties. Everyone who is witness to racism and discrimination in positions of leadership has a responsibility to speak up and address it in the moment to stop the harms from being perpetuated.

The Hanover School Division is the subject of a formal complaint by the Hanover Parent Alliance for Diversity about ongoing discrimination against 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff and rising anti-Indigenous sentiment within its elected Trustees. We understand that divisional staff show a reluctance to implement Indigenous education initiatives. Recent public motions of the Hanover School Board on employment and hiring policies and sex education set a dangerous precedent and also pose a risk of violating the Human Rights Code.

These examples clearly fail to adhere to the Public Schools Act and contravene Manitoba's Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With, Indigenous Education Policy Framework, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and Manitoba's Path to Reconciliation Act. I was pleased to hear the department of Education and Early Childhood Learning is launching an investigation into the issues at Mountain View School Division, however there is much more to be done. As such, we are asking for the immediate removal of the Mountain View School Division Trustee, and an investigation into the conduct and complicity of all Trustees at Mountain View School Division and Hanover School Division.

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The outcomes of these investigations, and the conduct expectations for school Trustees, must be shared with the broader community to ensure accountability for the officials in question. I look forward to the actions Manitoba will take to rectify these recent issues and prevent any further harms from occurring to students and their families, staff, and communities. SCO is diligent in our advocacy on behalf of our Nations and welcomes further discussion with you and the department to improve educational and health outcomes for First Nations children in the provincial school system, as children cannot learn in an unsafe environment.

In Pursuit of Balance,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ogema Makwa', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Ogema Makwa

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels

C: Chiefs Executive Committee  
Kevin Chief, SCO Community Ambassador  
Brian O'Leary, Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood Education