SCO
Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.

# Rooted in Nationhood:
# Building a Strong Future

## IMPACT REPORT 2025-26





Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.





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# ACRONYMS

- **AFN**: Assembly of First Nations
- **CAF**: Canadian Armed Forces
- **CHAT**: Chiefs Health Action Table
- **CFS**: Child and Family Services
- **CIRNAC**: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- **CIS**: Certificate of Indian Status
- **CJWs**: Community Justice Workers
- **DOTC**: Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council
- **FNSOs**: First Nation Safety Officers
- **FNVP**: First Nations Veterans Program
- **HIV**: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- **HT**: Health Transformation
- **ID**: Identification
- **IHEF**: Indigenous Health Equity Fund
- **ISC**: Indigenous Services Canada
- **IRTC**: Interlake Reserves Tribal Council Inc.
- **ISET**: Indigenous Skills and Employment Training
- **MBTI**: Manitoba Building Trades Initiative
- **MCSC**: Manitoba Construction Sector Council
- **MKO**: Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak
- **MCRT**: Mobile Crisis Response Team
- **MMIWG2S+**: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirit, and Gender-Diverse People
- **NIHB**: Non-Insured Health Benefits
- **RHAs**: Restorative Healing Advocates
- **SCED**: Southern Chiefs' Economic Development
- **SCIS**: Secure Certificate of Indian Status
- **SCO**: Southern Chiefs' Organization
- **SFNHA**: Southern First Nations Health Authority
- **SFNWA**: Southern First Nations Water Authority
- **SFNNC**: Southern First Nations Network of Care
- **SSCY**: Specialized Services for Children and Youth
- **STBBIs**: Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections
- **VAC**: Veterans Affairs Canada
- **WRTC**: West Region Tribal Council
- **YMCA**: Young Men's Christian Association







# IN MEMORIAM

The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) remembers respected leaders who made lasting contributions to our Nations: **Elder William Campbell** of Ebb and Flow First Nation; former Chief **Jim Bear** of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation; former SCO Youth Chief and **Constable Evan Lilley** of Dakota Tipi First Nation; and **Elder Norbert Tanner** of Waywayseecappo First Nation.

**Jim Bear** of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation passed in August 2025. A dedicated leader, former Chief, and strong advocate for First Nations, his impact reached across our Nations through his work in leadership and business, and his commitment to advancing social justice. Jim touched many lives, and his work will continue to guide those who follow.

**Elder William Campbell** of Ebb and Flow First Nation began his journey to the spirit world in May 2025. A cherished Knowledge Keeper, his guiding presence, wisdom, and gentle spirit left a lasting impact on those who knew him. In 2021, he graduated from the first-ever cohort of the Restorative Justice Certificate Program delivered by SCO and Assiniboine Community College. Elder Campbell was dedicated to supporting First Nations people involved in the justice system, and his commitment to helping others will live on.

**Constable Evan Lilley**, SCO's first male Youth Chief, began his journey to the spirit world in September 2025. A citizen of Dakota Tipi First Nation and a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Evan was elected Youth Chief on March 31, 2019. He was a role model and a source of inspiration to many. His commitment to protecting others and serving his community will not be forgotten.

**Elder Norbert Tanner** of Waywayseecappo First Nation passed in March 2026. A respected Knowledge Keeper, teacher, and pow wow dancer, he had a strong and lasting impact on his community. Elder Tanner played an important role as part of Waywayseecappo's pow wow committee and generously shared his wisdom and kindness with those around him.

SCO stands with all those who mourn these losses. These leaders are remembered for their service, their strength, and their commitment to our people. SCO keeps their spirits in our thoughts and prayers. May they all rest in peace.



**Jim Bear**




Elder William Campbell



Constable Evan Lilley



Elder Norbert Tanner

# SCO AT A GLANCE

SCO is proudly sharing key highlights from our programs for 2025-2026:

- **Childhood Claims Navigator**: Assisted with 106 Child and Family Services (CFS) Settlement claims and engaged with more than 200 First Nations members.
- **CFS Program**: Created templates and toolkits to support First Nations-led planning, coordination agreements, and a prevention-first approach for our member Nations.
- **Environment**: SCO worked toward the development of a First Nations-owned Water Authority, contributed to federal policy reforms, led emergency management planning and training across our 33 member Nations, and supported our northern relatives during the 2025 wildfire season.
- **First Nations Disability Program**: Supported 278 people from 23 SCO Nations, 3 northern communities, and 18 other communities through navigation services, cultural programming, and workshops. Programming included moccasin-making, cedar baths, a Henson Trust session, and support for youth initiatives in sport and the arts.
- **First Nations Veterans Program**: Hosted 65 Veterans at the 3rd Annual Veterans Summit, delivered 53 Veterans Affairs Canada claims, and supported 52 Veterans with Canadian Armed Forces Class Action applications. The program also helped achieve *Bill 210: Indigenous Veterans Day Act* and delivered ongoing cultural and wellness programming.
- **Harm Reduction Program**: Supported 3703 citizens across 32 First Nations, distributing 821 Narcan kits and 8033 harm reduction supplies, and delivering 28 training sessions to 1162 people, including community members and frontline workers.
- **Jordan's Principle**: Processed 9000 requests with representation from 166 First Nations across Canada and all 63 Manitoba First Nations served. SCO also supported 93 high school graduates with graduation costs and provided health, developmental, and educational supports, including adaptive equipment, communication devices, medication, dental care, and therapy-related supplies.
- **Mobile Crisis Response Team**: Responded to 243 intake calls, supported 3446 people, and referred 211 citizens to additional supports and services as a continuum of care. The team also helped our northern relatives impacted by the Manitoba wildfires.
- **Justice Program**: Completed 26 Gladue reports. Our First Nation Court Workers provided services to 3410 people. SCO distributed 582 backpacks with essential items to women leaving correctional facilities.
- **Non-Insured Health Benefits Navigator**: Provided services to 91 per cent of SCO Nations and 26 non-SCO Nations, visited 21 communities, and had 1338 in-person client contacts through outreach events, health fairs, and community engagements.
- **Residential School Project**: Hosted SCO's 5th Annual Orange Shirt Day Healing Walk and Pow Wow, engaging about 20,000 people in the Healing Walk and 7500 attendees at the Pow Wow.
- **Status Card and Identification Program**: Helped 7155 clients with renewals, replacements, and new registrations—5144 were adults and 2011 were children.



# GRAND CHIEF WELCOME AND MESSAGE

Aniin, boozhoo, and hello!

On behalf of the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO), welcome to this year's Impact Report.

It reflects the collective work of our Nations, our leadership, and our organization as we continue to advance the priorities set by the SCO Chiefs-in-Summit. It reflects the progress we have made together and the path we are continuing to build for our citizens.

Across every department and initiative, when First Nations lead, we deliver results.

Over the past year, SCO has continued to provide services, strengthen partnerships, and create new opportunities that benefit our citizens. From housing and health to justice, economic development, and cultural revitalization, our work is grounded in the direction of our Chiefs and the needs of our Nations. We continue to advocate for systemic change—ensuring that our citizens, including future generations, are not denied their rights, identity, and belonging. We are building systems, infrastructure, and pathways that support long-term success.

This report highlights measurable outcomes, but behind every number is a story of a family supported, youth empowered, and a Nation strengthened.

Our growth as an organization is significant and purposeful. Each step forward reflects our commitment to self-determination and to ensuring First Nations have the capacity, resources, and authority to serve our own people—now and for generations to come. We are setting standards, leading innovation, and demonstrating what First Nations-led service delivery looks like at a national level.

This work is not done alone. Our partnerships with First Nations, all levels of government, and organizations across sectors continue to be critical. These partnerships are rooted in respect, equity, and the recognition of the importance of First Nations jurisdiction and leadership.

As we look ahead, our focus is to continue delivering results for our citizens, to expand opportunities for our Nations, and to ensure that First Nations people—today and in future generations—are full partners in shaping the future of this province and beyond.





## Departmental impact: Expanding services and reach

In the 2025-2026 fiscal year, SCO's programs have continued to expand services and reach more SCO citizens.

As Grand Chief, I am honoured to serve the Chiefs, Councils, Elders, citizens, youth, Knowledge Keepers, Veterans, Survivors, families, and communities of the 33 Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations that SCO represents.

Every year, this report gives us an opportunity to reflect on the work we have carried out together, the challenges we continue to confront, and the future we are building for our children and grandchildren.

I acknowledge our ancestors, whose strength, resistance, and vision continue to guide us. I acknowledge our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, who carry our languages, ceremonies, laws, and teachings, and who remind us that our Nations have always had the knowledge needed to care for our people.

I also acknowledge the Survivors of residential schools, day schools, Indian hospitals, the Sixties Scoop, and the child welfare system. Your truths continue to shape our responsibility. Your courage continues to move our Nations forward.

SCO's work is grounded in service, advocacy, and transformation. Across our programs, our teams supported thousands of citizens, stood beside families during crisis and healing, advanced First Nations-led systems, and helped create opportunities that reflect the priorities of our Nations.






## Standing with our citizens and families

Many of the accomplishments in this report begin with a simple commitment: meeting our people where they are.

Through the **Status Card and ID Program**, SCO helped 7155 clients with renewals, replacements, and new registrations. These services help citizens access benefits and rights connected to Treaty, health care, education, tax exemptions, border crossing, harvesting, and government identification. I acknowledge the staff who continue to bring this support directly to Nations, schools, post-secondary institutions, community organizations, and conferences. Their work removes barriers and helps citizens access documents that affect daily life.

**SCO's NIHB Program** continued to help citizens navigate essential health benefits. The program made 1304 direct contacts, served citizens from 30 of 33 SCO Nations, assisted members from 26 non-SCO Nations, and completed a total of 1338 in-person client contacts through outreach. During the wildfire evacuations, the NIHB Team also helped displaced citizens maintain access to medication, equipment, vision care, and other essential health supports.

Our **Jordan's Principle Team** continued to serve First Nations children and families despite major federal funding cuts and new operational restrictions. Even with reduced staffing and scaled-back supports, the team supported more than 3000 client files and processed 9000 requests representing 166 First Nations across Canada, including all 63 Manitoba First Nations. These numbers tell only part of the story. Behind every file is a child, a family, and a need that should never be delayed or denied. SCO will continue to advocate for Jordan's Principle to be honoured in its full spirit and intent.

The **Childhood Claims Navigator** also played a meaningful role in helping citizens understand and navigate federal and provincial settlement processes. In 2025-2026, the program assisted with 106 CFS Settlement claims and engaged with more than 200 First Nations members. This work supports healing and recognition for those impacted by systems that separated First Nations children from their families, Nations, cultures, and communities.










## Second-Generation Cut-Off Rule

A major focus of advocacy during the year was SCO's second-generation cut-off campaign, calling on Members of Parliament to end discriminatory provisions within the *Indian Act* that keep First Nations people from passing status to their children and grandchildren if they choose a non-status partner.

This policy continues to separate families, limit opportunities for future generations, and weaken First Nations identity and citizenship. SCO continues to call for the removal of the second-generation cut-off rule, its replacement with a one-parent rule, and the elimination of all discriminatory terms within the *Indian Act*. This work is essential to ensure that the progress we are making today extends to our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

"The second-generation cut-off is one of the clearest examples of cultural genocide. It has separated families, undermined our Nations, and denied children their rightful place in their Nations."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## Responding to crisis with care and culture

During the 2025 wildfire season, SCO responded quickly, collaboratively, and with deep care for our northern relatives who were displaced from their homes. SCO staff stepped forward to support evacuated relatives in Portage la Prairie, Brandon, Niagara Falls, Winnipeg, and other locations. Our **Mobile Crisis Response Team** responded to 243 intake calls, supported 3446 people, and referred 211 citizens to additional services and supports. During the evacuation response, the team provided wellness checks, emotional support, donations, cultural foods, and trauma-informed care alongside First Nation Safety Officers (FNSOs), health partners, and local organizations.

Our **Community Safety and Policing Team** also helped coordinate safety personnel during the evacuation response. In Brandon, SCO led a multi-agency response FNSOs, the Mobile Crisis Response Team, Brandon Police Service, Manitoba Justice, the Canadian Red Cross, and other partners. Our culturally grounded model helped create safer, more dignified supports for our northern relatives and showed the strength of First Nations-led safety approaches.

I was proud to see SCO honoured with the Order of the Buffalo Hunt in recognition of this work. That honour belongs to our Nations, our partners, our staff, and everyone who showed up for our relatives in a time of great need.



## Advancing justice, healing, and safety

SCO continued to strengthen justice services rooted in dignity, accountability, healing, and culture.

The **First Nation Court Workers Program** supported 3410 people, helping citizens and families navigate court systems and connect with legal and cultural resources. **The Impacts of Colonization Report Pilot Project** continued to grow, receiving 26 reports during the fiscal year and moving toward a fully independent service that uplifts the sacred stories and healing plans of our citizens. The **Post-Sentence Transition Program** distributed 582 backpacks to women leaving correctional facilities, helping ensure citizens re-enter community with dignity, basic supplies, and information on available supports.

Our **Community Justice Workers** supported 195 referrals through restorative justice processes. Their work helps people take accountability while also connecting them to supports such as housing, addictions services, anger awareness, cultural resources, and community programming. The **Empowering Victims and Overcoming Harm Program** launched in July 2025 to support people impacted by harm, including those affected by domestic and intimate partner violence.

SCO completed a *Self-Administered Policing Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan*, giving Nations practical information on policing options, governance, costs, timelines, and pathways toward greater control over community safety. We also hosted our first FNSO recertification training, supporting 23 Nation-employed FNSOs with training in de-escalation, use of force, and tactical first aid.

SCO also reaffirmed its commitment to community safety. Following a tragic incident in Hollow Water First Nation in September 2025, SCO recognized the role of first responders while continuing to advocate for First Nations-led approaches to safety. SCO continues to keep the Survivors of this tragedy in our thoughts and prayers.

First Nations must lead First Nations safety. Our Nations know what our citizens need. Our systems must reflect culture, prevention, healing, accountability, and care.



## Protecting health and wellness

### Health equity remained a central priority throughout 2025-2026.

SCO's **Health Transformation Team** advanced work in governance, partnerships, and community engagement. This included progress on the Interim Health Plan and the incorporation of the Southern First Nations Health Authority, a key step toward First Nations-led health systems. Work also continued to improve cancer care, along with ongoing efforts to address anti-First Nations racism in health care through the Anti-Racism Strategy and the development of a First Nations Health Ombudsperson Office. At the same time, SCO strengthened partnerships and supported the re-establishment of regular engagement with Southern First Nations Health Directors to help guide priorities and build capacity in our Nations.

Our **Harm Reduction Program** reached 3703 community members, distributed 821 Narcan kits and 8033 harm reduction supplies, delivered 28 training sessions, trained 1162 people, and served 32 First Nations. These efforts save lives, reduce stigma, build local capacity, and support culturally safe conversations about wellness. The team also helped develop a culturally relevant human immunodeficiency virus stigma reduction toolkit in partnership with Nine Circles Community Health Centre, the University of Manitoba, and the Cree Nation Tribal Council.

This work takes courage. Stigma, racism in health care, limited treatment services, and the ongoing drug toxicity crisis continue to place our people at risk. SCO continues to advocate for culturally safe health systems, treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and community-led wellness supports.

Our **First Nations Veterans Program** also continued to grow as a model of excellence in Veteran advocacy. With additional funding from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), the program expanded support for Veterans, submitted 53 VAC claims, assisted 52 Veterans with Canadian Armed Forces racism and discrimination class action applications, and hosted the 3rd Annual Veterans Summit with 65 Veterans in attendance. SCO also successfully advocated for the passing of *Bill 210: The Indigenous Veterans Day Act*, permanently recognizing November 8 as Indigenous Veterans Day in Manitoba.

I honour our First Nations Veterans, including women and unhoused Veterans who deserve culturally safe, trauma-informed, and consistent support. Our Veterans served with courage, and they have earned dignity, recognition, and care.





## Honouring families, Survivors, and sacred responsibilities

SCO's **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirit, and Gender-Diverse Peoples (MMIWG2S+) Support Program** continued to stand with families, Survivors, and community members impacted by the national emergency of MMIWG2S+. The program provided wrap-around support through system navigation, advocacy, resource sharing, education, prevention, emotional support, and cultural support. It also continued to support awareness events, including the Annual Women's Memorial March of Manitoba, the Walk for Justice, MMIWG2S+ Awareness Day, and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.

The program developed a presentation for young people on relationships, with a cultural component that can be adapted for schools and students. Prevention, education, and support for youth are essential parts of ending violence and building safer futures.

SCO's **Residential School Research Project** continued to assist Survivors and families with Indian hospital, boarding home, and day school claims. The team also helped with record searches related to burial sites, sanatoriums, and residential schools, as well as Sixties Scoop files and genealogical research. One of the year's most powerful moments was SCO's 5th Annual Orange Shirt Day Healing Walk and Pow Wow, where an estimated 20,000 people joined the Healing Walk and more than 7500 attended the Pow Wow. The team also co-hosted a researchers' gathering with Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and held its first Youth and Elders Engagement Gathering, "They Give Knowledge to Each Other."

These gatherings remind us that truth, healing, and intergenerational learning remain central to our path forward.

## Revitalizing language and culture

SCO supported Nation-led language and cultural camps in Ebb and Flow First Nation and Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation. Ebb and Flow's Youth Language and Cultural Camp welcomed young people and their families into a supportive, land-based environment to learn Ojibway, connect with Anishinaabe culture, and celebrate their roots.

At Sandy Bay's Eagle's Nest Language Camp, participants learned Ojibway along the lakeshore, bringing language learning onto the land and into the community. These camps brought learners together with fluent speakers, Language Keepers, and community knowledge, helping strengthen identity, support healing, and keep our languages alive for future generations.

Our languages carry our teachings, histories, laws, and ways of understanding the world. Supporting Nations as they reclaim and pass on their languages is essential to the strength and future of our people.



## Strengthening our Nations through children, youth, and language

Our children and youth remain at the heart of SCO's work.

The **SCO Youth Council** had a year of growth, advocacy, and leadership. New Youth Chiefs and Youth Council members were elected on March 31, 2025. Youth leaders encouraged civic participation during the federal election, represented First Nations youth at provincial and national events, participated in awareness walks, promoted Movement is Medicine, supported cultural events, and visited Interlake Reserves Tribal Council communities to hear from youth.

A Chiefs Resolution passed in April 2025 to create a new budget for the Youth Council, creating a stronger foundation for future youth advocacy, travel, engagement, and leadership development across SCO territory.

SCO's **CFS** Team also advanced the *Waakaabit Woksape* Jurisdiction Initiative, supporting First Nations-led CFS through legal tools, regulation templates, community toolkits, coordination agreement analysis, engagement tools, and language revitalization planning. An Indigenous Language Initiative began with O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation, Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation, and Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve.

The care and protection of our children must reflect our own laws, languages, cultures, and traditional governance. SCO will continue to support Nations as they reclaim jurisdiction and build prevention-first systems rooted in who we are.

Through our Healthy Living Movement is Medicine campaign, SCO invested $100,000 to support summer basketball camps for youth in our Nations. Grounded in the teaching that Movement is Medicine, the camps brought opportunities for physical activity directly into First Nations communities. They gave young people places to develop their basketball skills, build confidence and teamwork, connect with positive role models, and experience the sense of belonging that comes through sport and community.







## Building opportunity through economic reconciliation

This year also brought visible progress on *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn*, the redevelopment of the former Hudson's Bay building in downtown Winnipeg. This historic project is an act of reclamation and renewal. A building tied to Canada's colonial history is being transformed under First Nations leadership into a place grounded in culture, housing, employment, and opportunity.

Once complete, *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* will include 200 affordable housing units for First Nations tenants, Veterans, 173 market units, and spaces that support First Nations culture, identity, and community in the heart of downtown Winnipeg.

**Miikahnah Connect** played a key role in connecting First Nations workers to temporary labour opportunities on major projects, including *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* and the redevelopment of Portage Place. The platform placed more than 350 workers on several projects, helping bridge training and employment while opening pathways to long-term work. These are real opportunities for workers, families, and Nations.

In February 2026, SCO took part in Team Canada's trade mission to Mexico, the largest trade mission in Canadian history. The goal was to connect with industry leaders and explore partnerships in areas like clean energy, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and innovation. I was proud to be one of the three Grand Chiefs in Canada selected to join the mission, helping represent First Nations and support economic reconciliation through business.

Economic reconciliation must be visible in jobs, contracts, housing, ownership, and decision-making. SCO will continue to ensure First Nations citizens and businesses are part of the major projects shaping our territories.

## Protecting lands, waters, and future generations

SCO's **Environment Program** advanced major work in water, emergency management, stewardship, climate, waste management, and governance.

The Southern First Nations Water Authority remains a priority. Chiefs have repeatedly supported a First Nations-owned and operated Water Authority. SCO continues to work toward governance structures, service standards, and sustainable funding models that reflect First Nations authority over water and wastewater services.

SCO also supported emergency management planning across the 33 member Nations, completing 17 assessments to identify risks and hazards and 6 emergency management plans. More than 30 participants completed training in areas such as incident command system and ground search and rescue. The guardians and climate leadership work advanced monitoring, signage, harvesting rights, and First Nations participation at advisory tables connected to mining, energy, green space, forests, water, and environmental protection.

Our land and water responsibilities come from who we are as Anishinaabe and Dakota peoples. SCO will continue to protect our sacred waters, traditional territories, and the rights of our Nations.



## Looking ahead

Communication remains an important part of SCO's advocacy and accountability to our citizens. Through the second season of *Fireside Chats with Grand Chief Jerry Daniels*, SCO used its weekly program on NCI FM to connect directly with listeners across Manitoba. Conversations with Chiefs, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community advocates, SCO citizens, and other leaders highlighted important current and historical issues, shared positive stories from our Nations, and provided information about SCO's advocacy, programs, services, events, and opportunities.

The 2025-2026 year showed the strength, resilience, and determination of SCO and our Nations. We supported children and families. We stood with Survivors. We honoured Veterans. We responded to crisis. We advanced justice, safety, health, environment, housing, employment, and youth leadership. We challenged systems that continue to fail our people, and we built solutions grounded in First Nations knowledge and self-determination.

Thank you to the Chiefs, Councils, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Youth Council, Veterans, Survivors, families, SCO staff, and partners who carried this work forward. I also extend gratitude to the Chiefs' Executive Committee and the Chiefs' Finance and Personnel Committee for their continued guidance, wisdom, and support.

As Grand Chief, I am committed to protecting Treaty and inherent rights, advancing the priorities of our Nations, and ensuring our citizens are supported wherever they live. We will continue to demand accountability from governments. We will continue to strengthen our own systems. We will continue to build a future where our children and grandchildren can live with safety, dignity, language, culture, opportunity, and pride.

In unity and hope,

**Ogema Makwa**
Grand Chief Jerry Daniels
Southern Chiefs' Organization



"There is an urgent need to grow First Nations representation in all sectors and at all levels as it is essential in many fields such as health care, education, child welfare, economic development, and policing. SCO is leading the way with scholarships and initiatives that create opportunity for our youth, but governments must step up with the resources required to achieve this change. Everything we do is to create opportunity and increase capacity of our Nations to lead the way in transforming the future."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

# MEMBER FIRST NATIONS AND CHIEFS

| FIRST NATION | CHIEF |
|---|---|
| Berens River First Nation | **Chief Hartley Everett** |
| Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation | **Chief Tréchelle Bunn** |
| Black River First Nation | **Chief Sheldon Kent** |
| Bloodvein River First Nation | **Chief Lisa Young** |
| Brokenhead Ojibway Nation | **Chief Gordon Bluesky** |
| Buffalo Point First Nation | **Chief Andrea Camp** |
| Canupawakpa Dakota Nation | **Chief Charlene Higheagle-Moore** |
| Dakota Plains Wahpeton Nation | **Chief Don Smoke** |
| Dauphin River First Nation | **Chief Lawrence Letander** |
| Ebb and Flow First Nation | **Chief Wayne Desjarlais** |
| Gambler First Nation | **Chief David Ledoux** |
| Hollow Water First Nation | **Chief Larry Barker** |
| Keeseekoowenin First Nation | **Chief Dwayne Blackbird** |
| Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation | **Chief Tony Travers** |
| Lake Manitoba First Nation | **Chief Cornell McLean** |
| Lake St. Martin First Nation | **Acting Chief Brad Beardy** |
| Little Grand Rapids First Nation | **Chief Clinton Keeper** |
| Little Saskatchewan First Nation | **Chief Hector Shorting** |
| Long Plain First Nation | **Chief David Meeches** |
| Minegoziibe Anishinabe | **Chief Derek Nepinak** |
| O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation | **Chief Kerwin Chaboyer** |
| Pauingassi First Nation | **Chief Roddy Owens** |
| Peguis First Nation | **Chief Dr. Stanley Bird** |
| Pinaymootang First Nation | **Chief Kurvis Anderson** |
| Poplar River First Nation | **Chief Darcy Bruce** |
| Rolling River First Nation | **Chief Wilfred McKay** |
| Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation | **Chief Gary Roberts** |
| Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation | **Chief EJ Fontaine** |
| Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation | **Chief Trevor Prince** |
| Skownan First Nation | **Chief Cameron Catcheway** |
| Swan Lake First Nation | **Chief Jason Daniels** |
| Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve | **Chief Barry McKay** |
| Waywayseecappo First Nation | **Chief Murray Clearsky** |

"When we are open, transparent, and clear with each other, we can accomplish great things and extraordinary outcomes for our Nations. When our Treaty partners see us as strong and united, our resurgence will continue as well."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

# SCO YOUTH CHIEFS

**Billy Bird**, Peguis First Nation

**Lacy Bird**, Black River First Nation

# CHIEFS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND CHIEFS FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE



**Chief Cornell McLean**,
Lake Manitoba First Nation



**Chief EJ Fontaine**,
Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation



**Chief Larry Barker**,
Hollow Water First Nation



**Chief Cameron Catcheway**,
Skownan First Nation



**Chief Trevor Prince**,
Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation

# YOUTH COUNCIL

The 2025-2026 year was a period of growth, advocacy, and leadership for the SCO's Youth Council.

Youth leaders from across southern First Nations came together to strengthen youth representation, advocate for Nations' priorities, and create meaningful opportunities for engagement throughout Manitoba and across Canada.

Our work has focused on building connections, increasing visibility, and ensuring youth voices are heard in spaces that impact our Nations.

## MEMBERSHIP

### Youth Chiefs:

**Billy Bird**, Peguis First Nation

**Lacy Bird**, Black River First Nation

### Youth Councillors:

**Teane Bunn**, Birdtail Sioux First Nation – Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council (DOTC) representative

**Tyshaundrea Desjarlais**, Ebb and Flow First Nation – West Region Tribal Council (WRTC) representative

**Tristan Guttormson-Kent**, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation – Southeast Resource Development Council representative

**Kaelei Knutson**, Long Plain First Nation – DOTC representative

**Avery Letandre**, Little Saskatchewan First Nation – Interlake Reserves Tribal Council Inc. (IRTC) representative

**Tristan Malcolm**, Ebb and Flow First Nation – WRTC representative

**Dion Traverse**, Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation – IRTC representative

### Federal election youth engagement

In April 2025, the SCO Youth Council played an active role in encouraging Indigenous youth aged 18-30 to participate in the federal election.

Youth Councillors emphasized the importance of youth voices and civic participation, reinforcing that their votes matter and directly impact the future of their Nations.

Youth Chief Billy Bird was part of a national media story about Indigenous youth voting in the election. The Youth Chiefs were also interviewed on SCO's Fireside Chats, where they spoke about youth leadership, voting, and the importance of First Nation representation in decision-making processes.







## National representation and advocacy

During the King's Royal Visit to Ottawa, in May 2025, Youth Chief Lacy Bird and IRTC Youth Councillor Avery Letandre represented First Nations youth voices on a national level, speaking on behalf of future generations and bringing visibility to the priorities of First Nations youth.

In August 2025, Youth Chief Billy Bird travelled to Halifax to take part in the Assembly of First Nations Clean Drinking Water Summit. He contributed to discussions on national clean drinking water guidelines and advocated for safe, sustainable water systems for First Nations.

The Youth Council also attended the AFN Annual General Assembly in Winnipeg, where members connected with Chiefs, Councillors, youth delegates, and First Nation leadership from across Canada.



## Community walks and awareness campaigns

Throughout the year, the Youth Council took part in awareness walks and campaigns, including:

- Jordan's Principle Awareness Walk
- MMIWG2S+ awareness events
- Missing and murdered Indigenous men and boys awareness initiatives
- Moose Hide campaign event focused on ending violence and promoting healing

These events reinforced the Youth Council's commitment to advocacy, awareness, and standing alongside families and communities impacted by injustice and violence.



"Reconciliation requires learning. When young people understand the cultures and knowledge systems of the first peoples of this land, it builds respect, reduces prejudice, and strengthens the future for everyone."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## Health, wellness, and community engagement

The Youth Council continued to promote wellness initiatives and community engagement across Manitoba.

Youth Chief Billy Bird took part in the Manitoba Marathon, helping share the message that "Movement is Medicine" and encouraging First Nations youth to prioritize physical, emotional, and mental wellness.

Youth Chiefs also attended the grand opening of Explore Indigenous at The Forks in Winnipeg, led by Indigenous Tourism Manitoba, to celebrate Indigenous businesses, culture, and economic development.

The Youth Council also supported the inaugural Rez Dog Networking Conference. It was Canada's first major conference focused on emergency supports for dogs and animals living on reserve, raising awareness about emergency preparedness and animal welfare in First Nations.

## Community outreach across First Nations

Throughout the summer, Youth Chiefs and Youth Councillor Avery Letandre travelled to several IRTC Nations to engage with youth. These visits focused on hearing youth concerns, identifying gaps in supports, and discussing how the Youth Council can better advocate for First Nations youth priorities.

Youth Chief Billy Bird also attended pow wows and community events in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Long Plain First Nation, O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation, Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation, and Waywayseecappo First Nation.

The Youth Chiefs were invited to attend the opening of a Treaty One gas station in Winnipeg, highlighting the importance of economic growth and business development.










## Justice and systems awareness

In August 2025, members of the Youth Council visited the Manitoba Law Courts alongside the SCO Justice Program staff to learn more about the systemic injustices facing Indigenous youth.

Discussions focused on incarceration patterns, barriers within the justice system, and the importance of advocacy and prevention initiatives.

This experience strengthened the Youth Council's understanding of the challenges many First Nations youth continue to face within justice systems across Canada.

## Cultural revitalization and youth empowerment

The SCO Youth Council helped host a Youth Pow Wow Special during the summer months, welcoming more than 400 youth dancers and attendees.

The event celebrated culture, identity, and youth leadership, while creating a safe and empowering space for young people to connect through ceremony, dance, and community.

The Youth Council also participated in the SCO Elders and Youth Gathering in November 2025, strengthening intergenerational connections and learning opportunities between Elders and youth leaders.

## Governance and sustainability

The SCO Youth Council took part in SCO Chiefs-in-Summits, ensuring youth perspectives were included.

A key accomplishment was establishing a new Youth Council budget through a Chiefs Resolution passed in April 2025. This milestone created stronger sustainability for future youth initiatives, advocacy work, travel opportunities, and community engagement across SCO Nations.

## Looking forward

SCO's Youth Council reflects the strength, resilience, and leadership of First Nations youth across southern Manitoba.

Through advocacy, cultural engagement, political participation, and community outreach, the Youth Council continues to build pathways for future generations while ensuring youth voices are present in decisions that impact First Nations.

The Youth Council is committed to empowering First Nations youth, strengthening relationships, and creating meaningful change for generations to come.



# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER MESSAGE

The 2025-2026 fiscal year was a time of strong advocacy, partnerships, and continued progress for SCO. The organization remained focused on strengthening our Nations, supporting our citizens, and advancing shared priorities grounded in Nationhood.

I am honoured to serve as SCO's Chief Executive Officer and to build on the work that has taken place over the past year.

I want to recognize and thank Howard Burston, Deanna Peyachew, and Ryan Bear, who served as Acting Chief Executive Officer during this period. I am grateful for their leadership, service, and contributions to SCO. I also thank Grand Chief Jerry Daniels and the SCO Chiefs for their continued guidance and leadership.

SCO's achievements reflect both the demand for services and our commitment to meeting the needs of our Nations.

Our staff are the strength of this organization. Their dedication, knowledge, and commitment drive our work forward every day. Each person brings unique skills and perspectives that support our shared mandate to protect, preserve, promote, and enhance the inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions of First Nations peoples.

SCO continued to advocate on critical issues impacting our Nations, including the ongoing national emergency of MMIWG2S+, improvements to child welfare and mental health supports, and the need for all levels of government to meet their obligations to First Nations.

In April 2025, SCO launched a multi-media "Rock the Vote" public awareness campaign to encourage participation in the federal election and to honour the sacrifices of our ancestors who fought for the right to vote. The campaign highlighted ongoing challenges facing First Nations, including gaps in infrastructure, housing, and social services, as well as disruptions in Jordan's Principle.

We stood alongside First Nations impacted by devastating wildfires in northern regions over the summer of 2025 and into the fall. Families were displaced and First Nations faced significant disruption. SCO supported significant coordination efforts and worked with partners to help ensure safety, care, and recovery for our northern relatives.

SCO continued to bring people together through gatherings and events that reflect our shared commitments to healing, remembrance, and reconciliation. We hosted the 5th Annual Orange Shirt Day Healing Walk and Pow Wow in Winnipeg on September 30, 2025, bringing thousands of people together to honour Survivors and impacted families, and to affirm that every child matters.

In October 2025, we were proud to host *Binasi: An Economic Reconciliation Forum*, which welcomed Indigenous leaders and partners from across Turtle Island and the United States of America to build relationships and support the future of First Nations economic collaboration.

Our organization now represents 33 southern Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations and more than 92,000 First Nations citizens.

We continued to expand supports for citizens, including the launch of the Childhood Claims Navigator Program. It provides culturally grounded assistance to First Nations citizens navigating compensation processes under federal and provincial settlements.

Partnerships are central to our work. SCO strengthened relationships with Treaty partners and organizations to advance economic reconciliation and community well-being. This included work on our *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* redevelopment and continued progress of our Portage Place Housing Tower project in partnership with True North Real Estate Development. SCO also took part in the Team Canada trade mission to Mexico.

Due to funding cuts from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and new operational policies, SCO's Jordan's Principle Program had to scale back significantly this fiscal year. This included reducing staff and ending most educational supports.

As we look ahead, our focus is clear. We will continue to advocate for First Nations rights, expand programs and services, and deliver results for our citizens and Nations. I look forward to working with Grand Chief Daniels, SCO Chiefs, our staff, and our partners as we continue this work.

While challenges remain, so too does our collective strength, resilience, and determination.

In the spirit of Nationhood,

## Jolene Mercer

**Chief Executive Officer**

# "ROCK THE VOTE" CAMPAIGN



















Leading up to the federal election in April 2025, SCO launched a public education and awareness campaign to encourage southern First Nations to take part in the democratic process.

SCO encouraged our Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations relatives to "rock the vote" and cast their ballots at advance polls or on election day. The campaign reminded people of the importance of honouring the sacrifices of ancestors who fought for First Nations people to have the right to vote.

In addition to encouraging participation, SCO highlighted key issues affecting First Nations, including gaps in critical infrastructure, housing and social services, and disruptions to service delivery related to Jordan's Principle.




Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
HONOUR OUR ANCESTORS BY VOTING


SMUDGE
PRAY
VOTE!


FIRST NATIONS VOTES MATTER


FIRST NATIONS VOTES MATTER
MY ANCESTORS FOUGHT FOR MY RIGHTS!


FIRST NATIONS VOTES MATTER


SCO ROCK THE VOTE!


MY ANCESTORS FOUGHT FOR MY RIGHTS!


MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!
VOTE ON APRIL 28


MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!
VOTE ON APRIL 28

# CHILDHOOD CLAIMS NAVIGATOR

In 2025-2026, SCO's Childhood Claims Navigator successfully assisted with 106 federal First Nations Child and Family Services (CFS) Settlement claims and engaged with more than 200 First Nations members.

The program connected with communities through information booths and presentations across southern Nations, taking a community-centered approach to support First Nations citizens through the settlement process.

## Addressing systemic harm

For decades, First Nations children living on reserve across our provinces and in the Yukon were removed from their homes at disproportionately high rates, often placed in non-Indigenous care, and denied culturally appropriate services. Chronic underfunding of the CFS programs resulted in inadequate prevention services, leading to children being removed rather than families being supported to remain together.

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's ruling recognized that this systemic discrimination violated the rights of First Nations children and perpetuated intergenerational trauma. The resulting settlement agreement, valued at about $23.34 billion, was reached to provide compensation to affected people and to acknowledge the harm caused.

In response, SCO created the Childhood Claims Navigator Program to provide Nation-to-Nation support for First Nations children and families impacted by the class action settlements.

The Navigator supports First Nations citizens who may be eligible for compensation through the federal First Nations CFS and Jordan's Principle Settlement or the provincial Children's Special Allowance Settlement.

The program also offers help to ensure people have access to accurate information and application guidance, while also strengthening relationships among First Nations, service providers, and community organizations to support coordinated services.

## Accomplishments

The program made progress in supporting First Nations people and families navigating the claims process. Key achievements include:

- Assisting with 106 federal First Nations CFS Settlement claims
- Engaging with more than 200 First Nations members
- Hosting information sessions, walk-in clinics, and community presentations across southern Nations

**The program provided**:

- One-on-one support with applications and assistance with completing claim forms for the federal settlement for those in the Removed Child and Removed Family Classes
- Referrals to Deloitte, the Claims Administrators for the First Nations CFS and Jordan's Principle Settlements
- Systems navigation and connections to relevant resources

## Looking ahead

Through compassionate guidance, resource navigation, and individualized support, the program will continue helping people and families understand the claims process and access the compensation to which they are entitled, supporting pathways toward healing, recognition, and well-being.



"While the Settlement and claims process provide an important pathway for Survivors to access recognition and support, it is also important to acknowledge the discomfort many feel with attempts to quantify profound and lifelong harms through fixed monetary amounts."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

# CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM

## *WAAKAABIT WOKSAPE* JURISDICTION INITIATIVE

SCO continues to advance its vision for First Nations-led Child and Family Services (CFS) through the *Waakaabit Woksape* Jurisdiction Initiative.

The CFS team made progress in developing legal tools, supporting language revitalization, and advancing advocacy for long-term system change, despite delays in federal funding.

This work supports our First Nations in rebuilding child and family systems that reflect our laws, languages, and ways of caring for children and families.

## KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The *Waakaabit Woksape* Knowledge Keeper Advisory Committee plays an important role in the initiative. This group of respected leaders guides the work by ensuring tools, resources, and discussions are grounded in culture and tradition. In addition to regular meetings, committee members participate in solstice ceremonies and feasts with SCO staff.

### 2025-2026 members:

- **Frank Abraham** – Black River First Nation
- **Elder Dr. Harry Bone** – Keeseekoowenin Ojibway Nation
- **Donna Pratt** – Dakota Plains Wahpeton Oyate
- **Emery Stagg** – Dauphin River First Nation
- **Rose Lacquette** – O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation
- **Shirley Roulette** – Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation
- **Laura Pratt** – Sioux Valley Dakota Nation








# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Anishinaabe and Dakota regulation templates:

Translated regulation templates that support Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations in drafting regulations to support a shift toward a "prevention-first" approach.

## Toolkit for Nations:

Developed a guide to support Nations in using the Family Law and Regulation templates. The toolkit provides step-by-step guidance, including jurisdiction options, key considerations, and flow charts.

## Coordination agreement tracking and analysis:

Developed a workbook that tracks the status of Coordination Agreements across Canada and provides comparative analysis on agreement contents and funding. The workbook is updated regularly.

## First Nations engagement toolkit:

Developed a toolkit that documents the experiences of First Nations citizens who are unable to live in their communities due to barriers such as housing, health care, and education. It provides step-by-step guidance for community members on collecting data.

## Jurisdiction and coordination agreement tools:

Developed and translated a package of tools developed with legal consultants to support the creation of work plans and funding plans required for negotiations. The tools include step-by-step guidance for developing work plans, implementation options, key considerations, and flow charts.

## Indigenous Language Initiative:

SCO's CFS team worked with three Nations: Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation, O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation, and Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve, to develop community-specific language development.



# ENGAGEMENT

To maintain strong connections and a shared understanding of CFS, the team hosted and participated in a range of meetings and engagement sessions.

## External engagement and representation

The team took part in national and regional events to share lessons learned and to advocate for stronger supports for First Nations-led child welfare systems. These included:

- **Technician Round Table** in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
- **Southern First Nations Network of Care Annual General Meeting** in Winnipeg
- **Our Children Our Way** in Vancouver
- **Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Assemblies** in Winnipeg and Ottawa

SCO's participation in technical and advisory tables ensures southern First Nations have a voice in shaping national and provincial child welfare policy.





## Looking ahead

SCO's CFS Team is preparing for the next phase of the *Waakaabit Woksape* Initiative. With expanded tools and continued leadership engagement, the initiative will focus on:

- Supporting community-specific law development using finalized templates and toolkits
- Helping Nations plan and negotiate coordination agreements
- Engaging more youth in decision-making and service design
- Continuing to advocate for funding models and legislative changes that reflect First Nations priorities
- Hosting gatherings to share lessons learned, report on progress, and strengthen Nation-to-Nation collaboration

SCO's work is grounded in a commitment to traditional governance, cultural knowledge, and community resilience. With continued support, the *Waakaabit Woksape* Initiative will help ensure the care and protection of children reflects the strengths, knowledge, and values of our Nations.









# COMMUNITY SAFETY AND POLICING PROJECT

SCO's Community Safety and Policing Project works to advance First Nations–led safety solutions that reflect our Nations' values, priorities, and lived realities.

By advocating for equitable investment and supporting self-determined policing options, SCO helps member Nations strengthen safety today while building long-term systems rooted in culture, accountability, and community care.

## Accomplishments

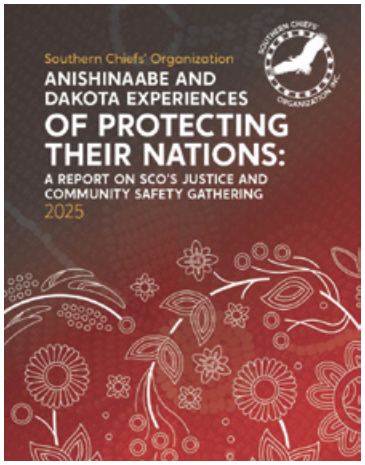
**Supporting self-determined policing**

In 2025-2026, SCO completed the *Self-Administered Policing Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan*, a major step forward for First Nations seeking greater control over policing in their Nations. Developed with expert support and grounded in Nation engagement, the study outlines all available policing options for SCO member Nations. It describes the requirements, costs, timelines, and governance considerations for each option, allowing leadership to make informed decisions based on their priorities.

Importantly, the study reflects what Nations identified as priorities: policing that is equitable, effective, culturally grounded, and able to address both day-to-day operations and deeper community safety concerns. The work draws on years of policing and community safety data and provides practical tools that identify pathways to governance authority and sustainable funding. This study supports First Nations in leading decisions about safety in ways that move beyond colonial systems.

## Listening to Nations' voices

**Nation voices are central to SCO's work.**




SCO published the report *Anishinaabe and Dakota Experiences of Protecting their Nations*, which captures what was shared during the Justice and Community Safety Gathering held in February 2025. The report reflects input from community members, leadership, service providers, Elders, and youth, and identifies seven key themes. These include the need to remove systemic barriers, expand restorative justice approaches, and ensure safety services respond to community needs rather than imposed models. The report also calls for First Nations-led Justice Centres, stronger support for First Nation Safety Officers, and holistic, family-centred approaches focused on healing, prevention, and wellness.

SCO continued this work by gathering perspectives from youth and Elders at additional events and by hosting a Leadership Forum in March 2026. At the forum, Chiefs and Councillors were presented with the Policing Feasibility Study and invited to help guide next steps.

"Every evacuation is traumatic, and our northern relatives deserve to feel safe in places when they are far from home. This effort showed what happens when First Nations lead—with culturally safe officers trusted by the people, partnerships with local police and governments, and an approach rooted in reconciliation. It is also evidence that we need a permanent, regional First Nation Safety Officer Program, not piecemeal measures."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## Leadership during the 2025 wildfire emergency

During the 2025 wildfire season, tens of thousands of northern First Nations members were forced from their homes. In response to requests for support from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) and the Province of Manitoba, SCO assisted citizens at rural evacuation sites.

Community Safety and Policing staff helped coordinate safety personnel, highlighting the critical role of FNSOs. In Brandon, SCO led a multi-agency safety response, coordinating FNSOs from multiple Nations alongside SCO's Mobile Crisis Response Team, the Brandon Police Service, Manitoba Justice, the Canadian Red Cross, and local partners.

This culturally-grounded approach reduced calls for police service, addressed neighbourhood concerns, and created a safer, more dignified environment for our evacuated relatives. SCO staff across the organization were redeployed to support evacuation efforts across the province.

In recognition of this leadership and service to First Nations, SCO was honoured with the Order of the Buffalo Hunt by Premier Wab Kinew.





## Strengthening First Nation Safety Officers

Since the FNSO program began in 2015, there has been limited access to recertification and advanced training. Through SCO's self-determined policing work, new training, equipment, and mentorship supports were developed in partnership with Canada and Manitoba.

In March 2026, SCO hosted its first FNSO training, welcoming 23 Nation-employed FNSOs for 2 days of recertification in use of force, de-escalation, and tactical first aid. All participants returned to their Nations recertified, connected to a growing peer network, and supported through ongoing mentorship from SCO, strengthening community-based safety capacity.





## Looking ahead

In 2026-2027, SCO will bring the *Policing Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan* to Nation leadership to seek direction on next steps toward greater jurisdiction, funding access, and policing authority. SCO will provide proposal support tailored to each Nation's chosen path and continue expanding training opportunities for FNSOs in partnership with Manitoba Justice.

SCO is also advancing culturally grounded responses to substance use. In 2025-2026, SCO took part in a province-led engagement on safe sobering options and was selected to deliver services at Winnipeg's Protective Care Centre. Beginning in July 2026, SCO will provide care using trauma-informed, culturally respectful approaches, extending First Nations–led services into urban safety and health services.

Together, this work reflects SCO's commitment to First Nations–led safety solutions that protect our people, respect our Nations, and strengthen our future.

"This report is one step toward justice for our Nations. It shares the experiences and voices of our citizens. I want to thank our Elders, leaders, youth, and justice experts for their input and hard work along with our SCO staff members and The Firelight Group for assisting us with this report. It shows what community-led justice can look like when it's guided by our own laws and teachings."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SCO focuses on economic development that creates benefits for First Nations. This includes supporting employment, building skills, and creating spaces that serve the needs of our citizens.

The *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* project reflect this approach. SCO is leading the redevelopment of a major downtown building to create housing, jobs, and space for First Nations culture, and services. Meanwhile, Miikahnah Connect helps link trained workers with job opportunities.

Combined, these initiatives support long-term economic growth and increased participation for First Nations people.

## It is Visible: *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn*

In 2025-2026, significant milestones were reached on the *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* project, the transformation of the former Hudson's Bay building in downtown Winnipeg.

Led by SCO, this work is an act of reclamation and renewal. A site once tied to Canada's colonial history is being reshaped into a space grounded in First Nations leadership, values, and vision, creating opportunities for SCO member Nations and the broader Winnipeg community.

This work reflects a path toward economic reconciliation, with a focus on First Nations employment, skills development, and long-term prosperity. Through First Nations-led planning and design, the building will carry forward culture, language, and identity, ensuring the space is functional and connected to the people it serves.

Once complete, the project will include 200 affordable housing units for First Nations tenants, 173 market units, and a range of amenities to support First Nations cultural expression and practice in downtown Winnipeg.

> "*Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* means 'it is visible,' and through this project, we are making reconciliation visible. Our vision is to create a place of cultural renewal, housing, and economic opportunity—one that will also provide a permanent and dignified home for the totem pole in the years ahead."
>
> **~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**





## Accomplishments

**Construction milestones**

After several months of interior demolition and decanting, a 190-foot tower crane, with a maximum lifting capacity of 44,000 pounds, was installed on Memorial Boulevard in March 2025. This milestone was marked with Grand Chief Jerry Daniels inviting southern Chiefs along with federal, provincial, and municipal dignitaries for a tour and media event at the construction site.

The crane, operated by a member of Dauphin River First Nation, made it possible to remove a section of the concrete roof to install the atrium skylight. Work began in April 2025 and concluded in November 2025, with the final piece of concrete lifted out at that time. In total, 1335 concrete blocks were removed, weighing about 13.5 million pounds. This high-risk work was completed on time and without any safety incidents. All materials were repurposed.

By the end of November 2025, the team began installing atrium scaffolding to support the glulam trusses for the skylight. The scaffolding took two months to complete. The glulam installation was finished in February 2026, ahead of schedule and without any safety incidents. This marked another key milestone, as it is the first new construction visible to the public from above.

The glulam wood is black spruce harvested in Quebec and fabricated by Cornerstone Timberframes in rural Manitoba. In total, 36 pieces were installed, each measuring 46 feet long and weighing about 7000 pounds. Work on the skylight is continuing with the installation of support steel, window frames, and glazing.

While the atrium opening and glulam installation were major milestones this fiscal year, a wide range of other construction activities continued throughout the building. This includes ongoing demolition and abatement, removal of escalators and stairs, window removal, suite wall framing, ceiling framing, drywall installation, wood flooring preparation, and concrete infill and repair.

## First Nations employment

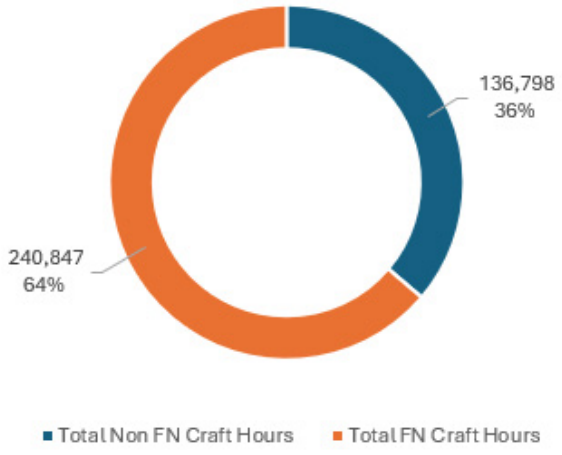
First Nations employment is a priority for the *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* project.

Miikahnah Connect has been, and continues to be, an important resource in providing employment and training opportunities for First Nations. Many participants have moved into full-time roles because of Miikahnah's efforts to connect people with meaningful work.

In addition, First Nations businesses have been awarded contracts, and First Nations workforce participation is a key evaluation criterion for all work that is tendered.

*Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* is building First Nations capacity and creating pathways for self-determination. This work will continue throughout the project.

At its peak, First Nations representation reached 82 per cent. As of March 2026, it is over 60 per cent.




## Championing the project

SCO hosted numerous tours of the site over the past year, demonstrating the scale of the project and its economic and social impact. Guests have included the **Honourable Rebecca Chartrand**, Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs; the **Honourable Gregor Robertson**, Minister of Housing and Infrastructure of Canada; the **Honourable Terry Duguid**, Member of Parliament; the **Honourable Bernadette Smith**, Manitoba's Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness; **His Worship Mayor Scott Gillingham**, City of Winnipeg; a delegation from Prairies Economic Development Canada; and executives from the Royal Bank of Canada.

SCO is establishing a strong presence in downtown Winnipeg and is building relationships and partnerships with organizations such as the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone, True North Real Estate Development, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), University of Winnipeg, City of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Art Gallery, and CentreVenture.

## Looking ahead

Future milestones include removing the tower crane and marking the 100th anniversary of the opening of the building in fall 2026. Interior work will include window installation, electrical and mechanical systems, new stairs, new elevators, and the installation of First Nations artwork.

This historic, First Nations-led project represents an important step in reclaiming space, culture, and economic opportunity. The *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* project is expected to be completed in late 2028.

# WEHWEHNEH BAHGAHKINAHGOHN PROJECT

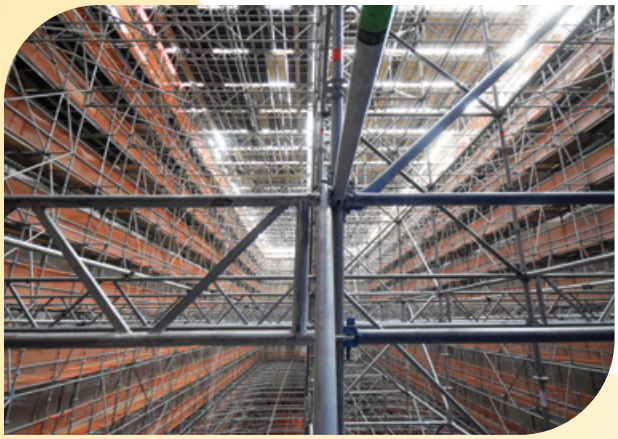




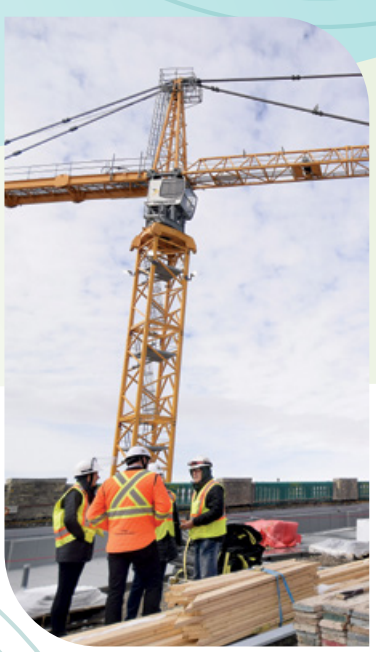


# WEHWEHNEH BAHGAHKINAHGOHN














LAST
PIECE

# MIIKAHNAH CONNECT

In 2025-2026, Miikahnah Connect supported Indigenous workforce development by connecting job seekers with temporary labour opportunities.

SCO created Miikahnah Connect in 2024 to collaborate with Southern Chiefs' Economic Development LP (SCED), to help connect work-ready First Nations citizens with employment opportunities.

The platform does not provide training. Instead, it works with people who have already completed training through partners such as Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET), Manitoba Construction Sector Council (MCSC), and Manitoba Building Trades Initiative (MBTI). Miikahnah Connect matches these qualified workers with employers seeking skilled Indigenous employees.

The platform also supports workers relocating from their home communities to Winnipeg for work.

By creating a bridge between training and employment, Miikahnah Connect helps workers enter the labour market while supporting employers in meeting staffing needs and Indigenous hiring goals while providing a pathway to continuing, long-term permanent employment for workers who perform well.

## Accomplishments

**Supporting Indigenous employment on major projects**

Miikahnah Connect supported Indigenous workforce participation by placing workers on major construction and infrastructure projects. This provided employment, site experience, and income for First Nations workers, while demonstrating the value of Indigenous participation in project delivery.

The platform placed more than 350 workers across several projects, with the majority working on the *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn* project and Portage Place redevelopment.

Miikahnah Connect has been effective in securing meaningful Indigenous participation and creating opportunities that provide lasting benefits for Indigenous people.

## Strengthening workforce pathways

Miikahnah Connect supported workforce readiness by connecting employers with people who had already completed training through ISET, MCSC, and MBTI.

By focusing on job placement, the platform helps workers move from training into employment more quickly. It also provides the hands-on experience many workers need to move into stable, long-term careers.

## Building employer and industry relationships

A key focus in 2025-2026 was building relationships with employers, contractors, and project teams committed to increasing Indigenous workforce participation.

These relationships support ongoing collaboration in recruitment, workforce planning, and project-specific hiring. As more projects include Indigenous participation requirements, Miikahnah Connect continues to meet this demand.

## Advancing community and economic development

Miikahnah Connect supported SCED priorities by connecting workforce readiness to employment opportunities.

This work supports economic development by helping community members access jobs and income, while supporting long-term workforce capacity.

## Increasing visibility and awareness

Miikahnah Connect increased its visibility through outreach, meetings, and relationship-building. Membership in the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce helped promote the platform and strengthen employer connections.

A growing awareness encourages more employers to use the platform and more workers to see it as a pathway to employment and advancement.

## Looking ahead

Miikahnah Connect will continue to strengthen relationships with employers, contractors, and partners to expand opportunities for First Nations workers.

The platform will focus on connecting work-ready people with temporary opportunities that can lead to longer-term employment. Priorities include aligning with major projects, responding to employer demand, supporting economic development goals, and working with partners who share these objectives.

Miikahnah Connect will continue to expand its role in Indigenous recruitment, workforce access, and economic participation across Manitoba.



# BINASI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM

SCO and SCED hosted *Binasi: An Economic Reconciliation Forum* on October 28 and 29, 2025, at the RBC Convention Centre in Winnipeg, Treaty One Territory.

The two-day event brought together Chiefs, entrepreneurs, youth, and economic development representatives from SCO member Nations, along with Indigenous and non-Indigenous business leaders from across Canada and the United States.

Attendees took part in discussions on advancing economic reconciliation, expanding First Nations-led enterprises, and strengthening Indigenous leadership in shaping the economic future of our territories.

The forum featured keynote speakers with experience in business development and partnership. **Jim Ludlow**, President of True North Real Estate Development, spoke about the importance of collaboration and the private sector's role in advancing economic reconciliation. **Mary J. Smith**, Chief Operating Officer of Four Winds Casinos, shared insights on economic empowerment through gaming and maintaining cultural connections while building business success. **President David Chartrand** of the Manitoba Métis Federation spoke about Indigenous-led business growth and the value of partnership in strengthening Indigenous economies.

Over the two days, attendees participated in panels, networking sessions, and discussions focused on advancing First Nations economic sovereignty and collaboration.














SCO
Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
Southern Chiefs Economic Development
BINASI
Economic Reconciliation Forum

# ENVIRONMENT

In 2025-2026, SCO's Environment Program delivered a wide range of initiatives to support environmental protection and community priorities.

Key areas of work included progress toward establishing a First Nations-owned and operated Water Authority, developing emergency management programming, expanding community engagement through the Guardians Program, conducting source water testing, advancing climate leadership, and participating in national discussions.

## Accomplishments

**Developing the foundations for a Southern First Nations Water Authority**

SCO continued to advance work on a First Nations-owned Water Authority, following mandates from Chiefs-in-Summit. Leadership has supported this initiative since 2021 and reaffirmed their commitment in January 2026.

SCO has made foundational progress toward the development of a new model of water and wastewater service delivery.

SCO was mandated to negotiate a framework agreement with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to establish governance structures, service standards, and sustainable funding models to support the future transfer of services to the Southern First Nations Water Authority.

## Redesigning the Addition to Reserve Policy

SCO took part in Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's (CIRNAC) multi-year Addition to Reserve Policy redesign. SCO submitted recommendations to streamline processes, reduce administrative barriers, and support economic reconciliation. Several recommendations are reflected in CIRNAC's *What We Heard* report.

## Emergency management planning and support

SCO is leading the development of emergency management plans across our 33 member Nations. In 2025-2026, 17 Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments and six Emergency Management Plans were completed.

SCO also coordinated training, in partnership with ISC and provincial agencies, including Incident Command System levels 100, 200, and 300, as well as Ground Search and Rescue. More than 30 participants completed this training.

In partnership with MKO, SCO supported our northern relatives during the 2025 wildfire season by providing Mobile Crisis Response Team and FNSO's services for people displaced to southern Manitoba.



"Our Nations stand united in moments of crisis, and SCO is committed to ensuring that evacuees receive compassionate, dignified, and culturally grounded care while they are far from home. We are humbled by the trust Grand Chief Settee and MKO have placed in us."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**



## Indigenous ministerial arrangements

SCO contributed to national discussions under the *Canadian Energy Regulator Act*, focusing on delegated authorities, capacity building, and implementation processes to support First Nations participation in energy project regulation.

This initiative has the potential to strengthen First Nations' regulatory authority.

## National Advisory Committee on waste management

SCO contributed to policy development focused on shifting on-reserve waste management funding from proposal-based funding to core funding. SCO also took part in a subcommittee addressing illegal dumping, which resulted in a policy paper recommending stronger regulatory mechanisms for federal review.

## Guardians and climate leadership

SCO advanced environmental monitoring with Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and Rolling River First Nation through fish and soil monitoring initiatives. Traditional territory signage was developed in 15 Nations to recognize First Nations jurisdiction. Canadian Firearms Safety Courses were also delivered in three Nations to support hunting rights.

SCO continued to advocate for First Nations inclusion through participation in advisory bodies, including the Manitoba Mining Advisory Council, Energy Efficiency Advisory Group, Manitoba Nature Agreement Working Group, Winnipeg Greenspace Bylaw co-development process, Hydro Integrated Resource Planning Technical Advisory Council, and the Improved Forest Management Protocol Focus Group.







## Agricultural Crown Land Leases – Cattle to Bison Project

Since 2023, SCO has secured and begun assessing 10,000 acres of agricultural Crown Land in southern Manitoba. This supports a funded cattle-to-bison initiative focused on advancing food sovereignty and economic development through partnerships.

## Looking ahead

SCO's Environment Program will continue to focus on community-driven development, policy advocacy, and building capacity.

Ongoing participation in national policy processes, including the Addition to Reserve Policy redesign, Indigenous Ministerial Arrangements, and waste management initiatives, will support systemic change and strengthen First Nations governance authority.

SCO will continue to expand emergency management capacity by completing Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments across member Nations and expanding training opportunities to strengthen preparedness and resilience in response to climate-related emergencies.

Environmental stewardship will remain a priority, with continued expansion of environmental monitoring and climate adaptation efforts. The *Adapting to Our Changing Land Project* will assess climate impacts on traditional land use and practices, including hunting and harvesting. The *Water Knowledge Integration Project* will analyze surface water trends, assess risks, and map potential impacts from industrial and land-use activities. These initiatives will support informed decision-making and the protection of traditional territories.

SCO will also continue advancing sustainable economic development through projects such as the cattle-to-bison initiative. This aligns economic development with food sovereignty and responsible land stewardship.

SCO will continue efforts to secure funding to support key initiatives, including the Water Authority and evolving programs.

As collaboration and advocacy is central to this work, SCO plans continued participation in regional and national advisory groups.

Through these efforts, SCO will continue advancing First Nations priorities related to resource development, environmental protection, and policy reform while adapting to changing environmental, policy, and economic conditions in support of our member Nations.



# FIRST NATIONS DISABILITY PROGRAM

SCO launched the First Nations Disability Program in October 2024. This program provides disability support and navigation services for First Nations people living both on and off reserve. The program helps people access disability services while offering culturally grounded support and assisting them in navigating barriers within federal and provincial systems.

The program supports people living with disabilities, as well as caregivers, families, and service providers working with First Nation clients. Supports include navigation and coordination, advocacy, application assistance, workshops, and information sessions. The program also works to identify service gaps, advocate for change, and build collaborative partnerships. In addition, the program has created opportunities for inclusive, culturally-based workshops and activities for participants.

Networking expanded over the fiscal year. Our Program Navigator participated in working groups, such as Children's disABILITY Services, and has contributed to advocacy initiatives, including Barriers to Accessing Residential Supports and the Children's Coalition.

## Challenges for people living on reserve with disabilities

People with disabilities who live on reserve face multiple, overlapping challenges that impact access to care and quality of life. These include limited access to health care and specialized services, particularly therapies, assessments, and mental health supports.

Social assistance budgets do not reflect the provincial amounts available through Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance supports for people living with a disability. Geographic isolation and transportation barriers can also make it difficult to attend appointments off reserve.

There are also jurisdictional gaps between federal and provincial systems. This can delay or prevent access to essential services and funding. Housing shortages and a lack of accessible infrastructure further limit independence and safety for people living with disabilities.

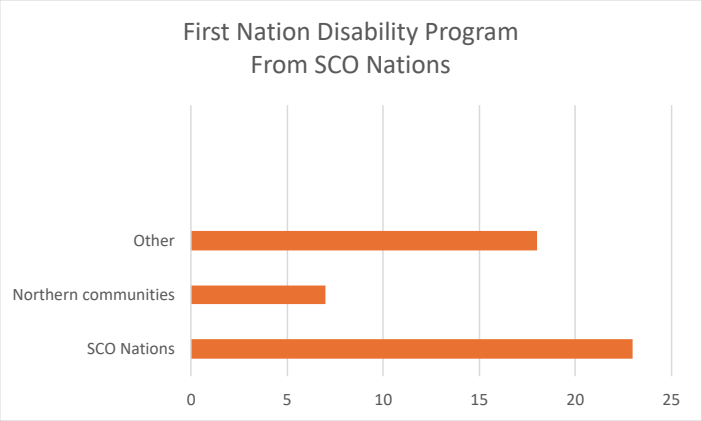
Culturally-appropriate services are often limited, and opportunities to take part in cultural practices or community programs may not always be available. Families and caregivers frequently experience burnout due to a lack of respite and coordinated supports. There are also increasing situations where grandparents are caring for grandchildren who show signs of emerging developmental needs and require additional supports.

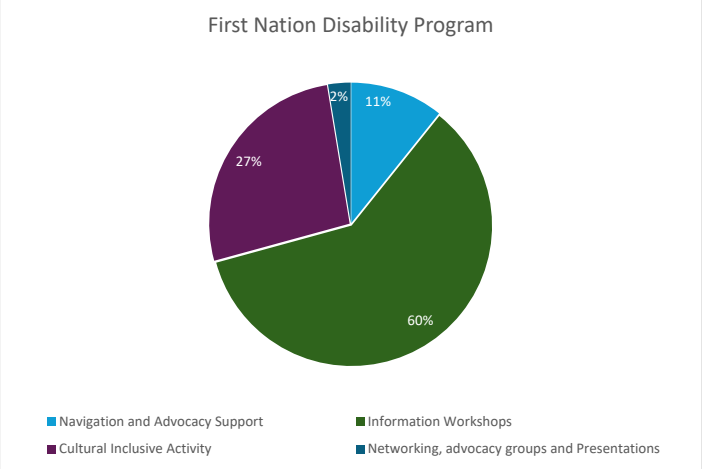
Overall, these gaps highlight the need for equitable, culturally grounded, and community-driven disability services on reserve.

## Accomplishments

The program supported 29 people through navigation services, 162 people through information workshops, 72 people through cultural activity workshops, and 15 people through networking, advocacy, and working group events.

The program reached 23 SCO member Nations, 3 northern communities, and 18 additional people from out-of-province, non-status, and Métis communities.




- Supporting a youth with fundraising efforts to help them take part on the summer Paralympic team in powerlifting
- Supporting Frances Sinclair-Kaspick of Peguis First Nation with the premiere of her music video, "Leave the Door Open"
- Hosting a four-day moccasin workshop with Rhonda Twoheart from Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation, who guided participants through the step-by-step process of making beaded moccasins
- Hosting cedar bath ceremonies during the spring and summer, providing participants with opportunities to take part in cultural practices and ceremonies
- Hosting a Henson Trust workshop to provide information on how families can leave assets for a loved one living with a disability without impacting their government benefits

## Looking ahead

SCO's First Nations Disability Program has made important contributions to supporting our citizens living with disabilities by providing advocacy, navigation, education, and connections to services.

The program will continue to provide fair, culturally appropriate, and accessible disability supports for First Nations people.











# FIRST NATIONS VETERANS PROGRAM

The First Nations Veterans Program (FNVP) at SCO is the first of its kind in Canada. It was created to address critical gaps in support for First Nation Veterans.

The program is grounded in the Medicine Wheel, a framework that reflects the interconnected nature of well-being. At the heart of this framework is the First Nation Veteran, surrounded by the four quadrants of well-being: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Throughout 2025-2026, the FNVP continued to grow and strengthen its role in supporting First Nation Veterans. With additional funding from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), the program expanded its reach to provide culturally appropriate support, recognition, and holistic care.

From assisting with VAC claims to hosting culturally grounded healing circles, the FNVP supports First Nations Veterans throughout their journey by providing advocacy, connection to services, and opportunities for healing and recognition.

## Accomplishments

This year marked the FNVP's highest level of direct service delivery and advocacy.

The program successfully submitted 53 VAC claims and provided trauma-informed, one-on-one support to 52 Veterans completing applications for the Canadian Armed Forces Racism and Discrimination Class Action.

- **Legislative victory**: The FNVP successfully advocated for the passing of *Bill 210: The Indigenous Veterans Day Act*. This permanently recognizes November 8 as Indigenous Veterans Day in Manitoba.
- **Supporting female Veterans**: The FNVP hired a dedicated Coordinator to support the unique needs of women Veterans. The Coordinator provides culturally safe support for military sexual trauma claims and helps organize women-focused events.
- **Hosted Third Annual Veterans Summit**: The FNVP hosted its largest summit to date, with 65 Veterans attending under the theme, "Look How Far We've Come."
- **Direct community impact**: The program provided Christmas hampers to five Veterans and offered hands-on support to help a Veteran move off base and into their first home.
- **Commemoration**: The FNVP supported descendants of a Peguis First Nation Veteran in attending the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Japan Day in Ottawa and presented 12 poppy quilts to Veterans across Manitoba.

## Honouring a commitment to our Veterans

FNVP Program Manager Justin Woodcock received several honours in recognition of his work supporting Veterans. He also represented SCO at several events in our Nations and beyond throughout the year.

- **Carrying the Eagle Staff**: Justin proudly carried the eagle staff at pow wows in Lake Manitoba First Nation, O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation, and Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation.
- **Circle of Honour Medallion**: Justin received the Circle of Honour Medallion from the Province of Manitoba.
- **Speech from the Throne**: In May 2025, Justin joined Grand Chief Daniels in Ottawa to witness His Majesty King Charles III deliver the Speech from the Throne.
- **King Charles III Coronation Medal**: Justin received a King Charles III Coronation Medal from the Honourable Anita Neville, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.









## Cultural connection and monthly events

Throughout the year, the FNVP hosted monthly events that supported peer connection, cultural revitalization, and community belonging for Veterans.

Events included ribbon skirt and shirt workshops, hand drum making, a rattle-making workshop, a Christmas ornament workshop, men's and women's healing circles, and an Eagle Staff protocol gathering.

## Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and leadership

The FNVP extends deep gratitude to the leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who guided the program's work and ceremonies throughout the year:

- **17 Wing Defence Indigenous Advisory Group**
- **17 Wing Command Team Master Warrant Officer Robert Brown**, Indigenous Advisor to the Commander of the Canadian Army
- **Chief Lawrence Letander,** Assembly of First Nations Veterans Council
- **Sergeant Brent Thompson**, Skownan First Nation
- **The late Wanbdi Wakita**, Elder and Dakota Sioux Valley Veteran
- **Ceremonial Eagle Staff Carriers of SCO, Indigenous Veterans Manitoba Inc., and the Winnipeg Police Service**

"First Nation Veterans fought for this country with honour, courage, and selflessness even when Canada did not stand for them. Just as we honour our Elders, Survivors, and youth, we must also honour our Veterans. Recognizing Indigenous Veterans Day through Bill 210 is a necessary act of respect and reconciliation. I call on every Member of the Legislature to unite in honouring their sacrifice and ensuring Indigenous Veterans are remembered with the dignity they earned. Our Veterans deserve support from all elected representatives."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## Looking ahead

In 2026-2027, the FNVP will continue supporting Veterans wherever they are on their journey, including their physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being.

Upcoming initiatives include a Veteran Blacksmithing Workshop and a Veteran Portrait event. The FNVP is also coordinating a major Indigenous Reconciliation Gathering at 17 Wing in June 2026 to celebrate culture and support relationship-building between the Canadian Armed Forces and First Nation peoples.

The FNVP is also proud to serve as the official Manitoba representative on the Bold Eagle Board. In this new leadership role, the program will host presentations across SCO Nations to highlight how the Bold Eagle Program can support and create opportunities for youth.

Looking ahead, the FNVP is planning an initiative to support unhoused Veterans and address the needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness. SCO believes that First Nations Veterans deserve to live with dignity and have access to safe housing. By helping bridge the gap between Veterans and VAC, the FNVP is working to connect Veterans with the supports they need to find safe and stable housing.







"First Nations from southern Manitoba have historically answered the call with tremendous courage. During both World Wars, our Veterans enlisted at among the highest rates per capita in Canada, despite enduring systemic inequities. Their service remains a powerful testament to our role as partners and defenders of this land in times of global conflict."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**







# HARM REDUCTION PROGRAM

SCO's Harm Reduction Program is designed to improve health and wellness outcomes for First Nations through culturally responsive, community-based harm reduction strategies. The program focuses on increasing access to life-saving supplies, providing relevant health education, and strengthening connections to culturally safe care systems.

In 2025-2026, the program distributed 821 Narcan kits, both initial kits and replacements. A total of 8033 harm reduction supplies were distributed, such as safer use supplies and materials to prevent sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs).
The program reached 3703 community members.
It delivered 28 training sessions, such as train-the-trainer and community sessions, and trained 1162 community members and frontline workers.
Overall, the program served 32 First Nations.

## KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

### Improving access to harm reduction services

The program increased access to essential harm reduction supplies, such as Narcan kits and safer use materials. This wider distribution has helped reduce the risk of opioid-related overdoses and limit the spread of STBBIs. Increased service use and repeat visits show growing trust and improved access in Nations.

During evacuations due to forest fires in the summer of 2025, the SCO Harm Reduction Team worked with community partners to support people affected by the fires. The team provided safer sex supplies, safer use supplies, Narcan, and training.

### Enhancing community health and wellness

By incorporating land-based healing and traditional practices, the program supports a holistic approach to wellness. Participants report better mental health, stronger cultural connections, and improved overall well-being. These approaches also help strengthen community resilience and social cohesion.

SCO's Harm Reduction Team continues to start important conversations about stigma, substance use, and mental health in First Nations. These conversations have been reported to continue in the community after the team has left.






## Reducing stigma and increasing awareness

Public education efforts have helped shift attitudes toward harm reduction and sexual health. Evaluation results show reduced stigma and a greater willingness to access services.

Staff worked with Nine Circles Community Health Clinic, the University of Manitoba, and the Cree Nation Tribal Council to develop a Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Stigma Reduction Toolkit for use across the province. The toolkit includes a culturally relevant bingo game that shares information about HIV while helping reduce stigma. The goal is to increase STBBI testing rates and reduce HIV in First Nations across Manitoba. The toolkit became available in Canada on April 1, 2026.

The team also presented at the Fentanyl Awareness Day event in September 2025 at the Manitoba Legislative Building. The event focused on raising awareness about toxic substances and how to prevent harm.

## Building capacity and empowering community

Through train-the-trainer models and community-based education, the program has built local capacity and supported community leadership. This approach helps ensure harm reduction efforts are sustainable and community led.

## Evaluation insights

Program evaluation findings show that the program is meeting its main goals:

- Increased distribution and use of harm reduction supplies
- Improved access to culturally safe services
- Positive participant feedback on mental wellness and cultural connection
- Enhanced community capacity through training and education

These results show clear progress in reducing harm and improving health outcomes for First Nations.

## Ongoing challenges

Despite these successes, several systemic and structural barriers continue to impact program effectiveness:

- Persistent stigma: Stigma and misinformation about harm reduction remain common. These continue to limit access to services and supplies.
- Anti-Indigenous racism in health care: Experiences of anti-Indigenous racism continue to affect the quality, safety, and access to care. This creates barriers for people seeking support.
- Toxic and unpredictable drug supply: The drug supply is becoming more toxic, increasing the risk of overdose and placing added strain on people, families, and community resources.
- Gaps in treatment services: Access to treatment remains limited. There are gaps in culturally appropriate options such as counselling, therapy, safe consumption services, and medications for substance misuse. These gaps make it harder for people to access support and achieve long-term recovery.

## Looking ahead

SCO's Harm Reduction Program is making clear and measurable progress in improving access to care, reducing harm, and strengthening community capacity. Its culturally grounded approach is a key strength that supports both immediate health outcomes and long-term community wellness.

However, continued progress will require ongoing investment and systemic change. Key priorities moving forward include:

- Expanding access to culturally appropriate treatment and recovery services
- Addressing systemic racism in health care
- Increasing harm reduction education to reduce stigma
- Strengthening community-led approaches and long-term funding stability

Ongoing support for the SCO Harm Reduction Program is essential to build on successes and advance health equity for First Nations.

# HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

In 2025-2026, Health Transformation (HT) advanced key work in governance, partnerships, and community engagement, including progress on the Interim Health Plan and incorporation of the Southern First Nations Health Authority.



"These initiatives are critical to addressing anti-First Nations racism and ensuring accountability within the health care system. We must confront systemic racism directly to close the 11-year gap in life expectancy between First Nations citizens and others in this province and build a health system that works for our people."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Governance

HT is advancing an Interim Health Plan based on community engagement completed in 2021–2022. The plan is required under the Agreement-in-Principle. It was further validated through engagement with 5 Nations in summer 2025, along with ongoing input from health directors. Each year, SCO will update the plan to reflect priorities.

SCO reached a major milestone in November 2025, with the incorporation of the Southern First Nations Health Authority (SFNHA). This followed a Chiefs-in-Summit resolution made in September 2025 supporting its establishment.

In January 2026, our Chiefs-in-Summit passed resolutions to guide negotiations for a Trilateral Framework Agreement and updated the mandate of the Chiefs Health Action Table (CHAT). CHAT will provide strategic direction, support the development of the SFNHA, and advocate for key health priorities.

### CancerCare Manitoba partnered project

SCO, CancerCare Manitoba, and the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer are partnered to improve cancer control and outcomes for citizens of SCO member Nations.

This ongoing collaboration supports the implementation of recommendations from the *Vision for a Healthier Future: Improving Cancer Control and Outcomes for SCO Member Nations* report. It aligns with the priorities and objectives outlined in the recently refreshed *Roadmap to Cancer Control for Manitoba*.

The project will focus on three key deliverables: Developing an on-demand tool, developing a business case for Nation-based support training, and creating a peer support framework.

## Anti-racism strategy

HT launched our Anti-Racism Strategy in April 2023. It focuses on gathering experiences about the health inequities and racism faced by community members face within the health care system. This work is ongoing, with the team completing 292 interviews and a report being finalized.

SCO is also making progress toward establishing an independent First Nations Health Ombudsperson Office dedicated to listening to and supporting citizens as they navigate the health care system.

## Elders and Knowledge Keepers Committee

HT is grateful to the Committee for its passion, guidance, and unwavering commitment to First Nations health:

- **Doug Hanska**, Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation
- **Dennis Sinclair**, Hollow Water First Nation
- **Beverly Rita/Bone/Jones**, Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation
- **Olga Ross**, Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation
- **Mary Maytwayashing**, Lake Manitoba First Nation
- **Robert Maytwayashing**, Lake Manitoba First Nation
- **Glenn Cochrane**, Peguis First Nation
- **Gloria Lalman**, Peguis First Nation
- **Ivy Canard**, Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation
- **Shirley Roulette**, Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation
- **Georgina McKay**, Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve

HT also extends heartfelt condolences to the family of Elder and Veteran Wanbdi Wakita of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, who has passed away. He was a member of the Committee.

His contributions continue to inspire and strengthen the path towards health transformation.

## Indigenous Education Awards

SCO, the Business Council of Manitoba, and Province of Manitoba partnered to deliver Indigenous Education Awards to support students from SCO member Nations who are pursuing careers in health care and related fields.

This partnership began in the 2025 academic year and will continue annually until 2030, with up to 30 awards provided each year to students from SCO member Nations, for a total of 150 awards and $450,000 in support.

The Indigenous Education Awards provide up to $3000 per student to support their educational journey. Recipients can use the funding to support their needs, including tuition, books, and living expenses, while pursuing post-secondary education at a recognized college or university in Manitoba.

SCO looks forward to continuing this partnership and supporting more students as they pursue careers that strengthen the health and well-being of their Nations.



# ENGAGEMENT, ADVOCACY, AND PARTNERSHIPS

## Service delivery organizations

In 2025-2026, the HT Team continued regular engagement with ISC to stay informed about services delivered to Nations. The team also began outreach with leadership from service delivery organizations, including Prairie Mountain Health, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Southern Health–Santé Sud, to continue strengthening relationships based on reciprocity, shared priorities, and knowledge exchange.




## Southern First Nations Health Directors

HT signed a formal Letter of Understanding with the First Nations Health Managers Association to support the development of a Manitoba Network for Southern First Nations Health Directors.

SCO also continued community engagement with leadership and health directors to help inform the HT Framework negotiation process.

Monthly engagement with southern First Nations health directors has been re-established, focusing on shared priorities and supporting the development of collective authority. These meetings promote information sharing, networking, and knowledge exchange to strengthen capacity and support the delivery of quality health services in Nations.

## Looking ahead

SCO will continue ongoing engagement with Nations and Tribal Councils to ensure the health transformation process reflects our Nations priorities.

HT's negotiations with the federal and provincial governments will continue, along with relationship building with service delivery organizations and other First Nation organizations that provide health services and connect with our citizens.

A formal communications strategy and engagement process is being developed to promote understanding and transparency as work moves forward to operationalize the SFNHA.

The HT Team will continue work to establish an independent First Nations Health Ombudsperson Office to support citizens as they navigate the health care system.

SCO also looks forward to continuing its Indigenous Education Awards to support more students as they pursue careers that strengthen the health and well-being of our Nations.



# JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

The Jordan's Principle Program supported health, medical, and disability-related needs for over 3000 client files.

The team processed 9000 requests, with representation from 166 First Nations across Canada, including all 63 First Nations in Manitoba.

While SCO's Jordan's Principle mandate has always aligned with ISC and Canadian Human Rights Tribunal guidelines on the spirit and intent of services, the program focused on health and disability-related requests. SCO worked to address these requests in house, as much as possible, to avoid delays or gaps in accessing needed services, resources, and assistance for First Nations children living on or off reserve.

Due to ISC funding cuts for 2025-2026 and new operational policies, SCO's Jordan's Principle Program significantly reduced operations, including staffing and most social and educational supports.

Our team of four continued to support requests across the province, including Health and Disability Services (formerly Children's Hospital, Health Sciences Centre, and CancerCare Manitoba) and the Specialized Services for Children and Youth (SSCY) Centre.



## Accomplishments

SCO's Jordan's Principle Program contributed to graduation fees, regalia, and formal wear for 93 high school graduates this fiscal year. These supports helped youth celebrate their accomplishments with pride.

The program supported youth with educational adaptive equipment and supplies, including wheelchair ramps, wheelchair swings, chill-out chairs, communication devices, and apps. SCO also fulfilled requests from occupational therapists First Nations Health Ombudsperson Office to support developmental milestones.

The program supported youth and families with AngelSense location devices to improve safety. It also supported diabetes camps and awareness initiatives for youth living with diabetes, helping provide the education and resources needed to support their health and well-being.

The program provided support for medication coverage not funded by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program or other third-party providers, as well as dental treatment not covered by NIHB.

SCO's team also provided families with help with submitting requests to the regional office. This service helped First Nations youth and their families access the resources and assistance they need.

SCO's Jordan's Principle Program provided a $1000 donation to the Indigenous-led youth initiative "A Village in Motion: Pathways to Belonging." The initiative connects youth with Elders, mentors, and community members to support cultural pride, confidence, and a sense of belonging through inclusive spaces and art.

The program also donated 31 scientific calculators to Ebb and Flow First Nation students.

"Our expectations are simple: approvals must be timely with stable funding, services must be culturally appropriate and delivered close to home, and First Nations must be involved in decision making. While we welcome the federal commitment, announcements alone do not help children. Right now, too many First Nations children in southern Manitoba are still waiting."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**









## Looking ahead

While funding for the program is an ongoing challenge, SCO's program continues to adapt and respond to changing needs while providing services to the children and families it supports.

**Initiatives and future goals, dependent on available funding, include**:

- Participation in planning and advocacy tables, such as the Jordan's Principle Technical Advisory Group and the Children's Coalition of Manitoba
- Sharing knowledge and best practices with other providers
- Offering services on demand to school divisions for First Nations children and youth with disabilities and unmet medical needs
- Providing services to Children's Hospital and the SSCY Centre for First Nations children and youth



# JUSTICE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

SCO's First Nation Justice Programs and Services strengthen pathways for healing, restoration, and cultural connection for citizens navigating the criminal court system. Through a range of programs and services, SCO supported thousands of people, along with families and Nations. These programs work to reduce barriers, uplift people, and ensure First Nations citizens receive compassionate and culturally grounded guidance throughout their healing journeys.

## Overview of services

The **First Nation Court Worker Program** provides an important connection for SCO citizens and their families involved in court processes. Court Workers help bridge communication, ensuring people have timely access to legal supports and culturally relevant First Nation resources. They also connect families with supports. The program strengthens SCO's broader healing-centred approach. Court Workers support citizens, ensuring they have guidance and support while navigating unfamiliar systems.

SCO fully implemented the **Gladue Reports (Impacts of Colonization reports) Program** in 2024. The reports help courts better understand the background of a First Nations person. They support more restorative, healing-focused options instead of incarceration. Families have asked that Gladue reports be renamed. SCO will soon refer to these as "Impacts of Colonization" reports.

The **Post-Sentence Transition Program** supports people as they transition from correctional environments back into community life. The program helps carry out healing plans, providing culturally grounded reintegration supports. A key part of the program is the Backpack Initiative, which provides women leaving correctional facilities with essential items to support their dignity.

The **Community Justice Program** contributes to safer communities. It supports people involved in the justice system, guiding them through the restorative justice process and connecting them with supports. CJWs work closely with partners while building relationships within First Nations. CJWs help people understand the impact of their actions while building skills to make positive choices. Their work supports long-term stability and reducing repeat involvement in the justice system. They help bridge gaps between systems.

The **Empowering Victims and Overcoming Harm Program** launched in July 2025 to strengthen support for people impacted by harm. Restorative Healing Advocates (RHAs) work with people impacted by crime, particularly those affected by domestic violence and intimate partner violence. RHAs help people understand their options and make informed decisions. Their work includes emotional support, safety planning, advocacy throughout criminal justice processes, system navigation, referrals to resources, and preparation for participation in restorative justice processes. Participation is always voluntary.

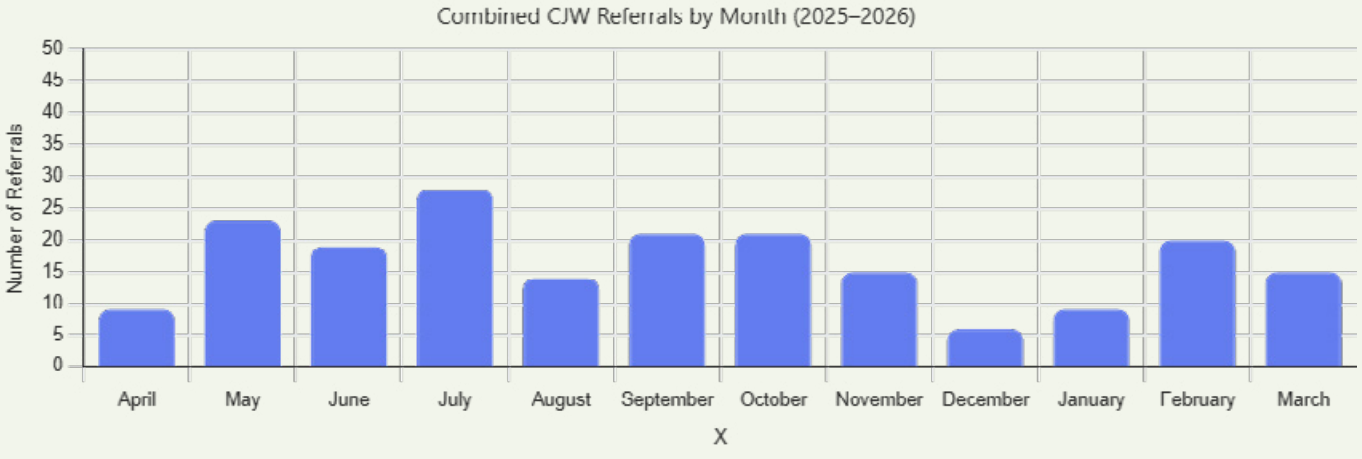
RHAs empower people as they move forward. The program addresses a gap within the justice system. It ensures people impacted by harm have support throughout the process. RHAs support people in participating in processes that are informed, respectful, and grounded.

"Our citizens keep telling us the same thing—our people have the answers. Our ancestors had systems of law, governance, and community care that kept us strong for thousands of years. We need to return to that. The solutions must come from us, shaped by our cultures, guided by our knowledge, and led by our people."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## Accomplishments

- **First Nation Court Workers** provided services to 3410 people sharing knowledge, strengthening relationships, and discussed culturally-grounded approaches to better support Indigenous people navigating court systems
- The court ordered 26 **Impacts of Colonization (Gladue) Reports**, of which 15 were completed by SCO. The remaining 11 were returned to the court for various reasons, including non-participation and the cancellation of the report by the court.
- Continued progress in completing high-quality reports
- Standardized training and positive feedback from courts
- Confirmation of five-year funding
- The **Post-Sentence Transition Program** distributed 582 backpacks
- Continued developing and updating community resource materials
- Created standardized processes to strengthen service delivery
- 17 people accessed the **Post-Sentence Transition Program**, and 3 files were closed
- The **Community Justice Program** Team developed an anger awareness program called "**Holding the Fire**" and started developing two new programs called "**Fuel and Fire**" to explore the connection between anger and substance use and "**The Ripple Effect**" to support shoplifting prevention
- CJWs supported 195 referrals, working alongside people, families, and communities navigating the justice system
- CJWs accessed ongoing training



## Looking ahead

A goal across all service areas is to strengthen partnerships, relationships, and community engagement, while improving processes to better benefit citizens. Another goal is to support ongoing staff development to build capacity.

The **First Nation Court Workers Program** continues to strengthen its healing-centred approach. SCO will increase awareness of the program and its role.

For the **Gladue/Impacts of Colonization reports**: SCO is working towards a fully independent service. The transition to the new name, Impacts of Colonization Reports, better reflects the purpose and spirit of the work. The program is expanding capacity. Collaboration on a new intake system will increase program autonomy and efficiency. The program is working toward completing reports at any stage of the court process, allowing for earlier access to supports.

The **Post-Sentence Transition Program** continues refining services, focusing on restoring connection, strengthening identity, and supporting citizens as they rebuild their lives.

The **Community Justice Program's Restorative Justice Program** is improving client engagement; expanding access to programming; supporting CJWs in building stronger connections with community resources; and continuing to improve consistency. The overall goal is to strengthen program consistency, increase access to supports, and continue reducing repeat involvement in the justice system.

The **Empowering Victims Program** aims to ensure people impacted by harm have consistent, accessible, and culturally grounded support. Priorities include increasing awareness of the RHA role; continuing to develop clear processes for engagement; supporting and, where appropriate, facilitating community-based healing circles and ceremonies; expanding training opportunities; and enhancing collaboration with CJWs.





"As First Nations people, we have core Indigenous rights, Treaty rights, and basic human rights. Our rights to self-determination, safety, health, culture, and identity are not optional. They belong to us. SCO will continue holding governments accountable to recognize and respect these rights."

**~Grand Chief Daniels**



# MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

SCO's Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) and Mental Wellness provides crisis response services to SCO member Nations.

In 2025-2026, the MCRT responded to 243 intake calls, supported 3446 people, and connected 211 citizens with additional supports and services.

The MCRT continued to provide crisis response services to SCO's 33 member Nations throughout the year.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Training and capacity building

The MCRT pursued education and training opportunities to strengthen the team's knowledge and increase capacity-building opportunities for SCO member Nations.

Three team members enrolled in MKO's Capacity Enhancement Community-Based Crisis Team Development training. Three additional team members completed the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation's Community Crisis Response Training.

Since the start of the program, the MCRT has worked alongside SCO's programs to provide mental health support.

The team attended SCO events throughout the year, including the SCO First Nations Veterans Summit, SCO Youth and Elder Gathering, and SCO Water Authority Gathering.





## Evacuation support

The Team, along with other SCO staff and partner organizations, responded to urgent needs during the northern Manitoba wildfire evacuations in spring 2025.

In May 2025, the MCRT worked with MKO, Peguis First Nation, and Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation to support our northern relatives.

Peguis First Nation opened the first shared living space, where the MCRT provided wellness checks, emotional support, and donated supplies.

As more of our northern relatives arrived in Winnipeg, the MCRT continued support at the Seven Oaks Sportsplex site. In June 2025, Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation opened another site, where the MCRT provided mental health support for two weeks.

Additional sites opened in Portage la Prairie. Hotels were used for temporary housing in Portage la Prairie and Brandon from June to August.

SCO staff led support at both locations, with the MCRT stationed in Portage la Prairie and Brandon for the remainder of the evacuation.

The team provided mental health wellness checks and safety checks alongside FNSOs from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and Long Plain First Nation, as well as Prairie Mountain Health's Mental Health Team.

In addition to daily wellness checks, the MCRT organized clothing, supply, and food drives. The team worked with local partners to collect healthier cultural foods in response to requests from Elders. These efforts strengthened partnerships and relationships with organizations throughout the Western Region.

Due to limited shelter options in Manitoba, many of our northern relatives were relocated to Niagara Falls, Ontario. The MCRT provided additional support in Niagara Falls in August and September.

Following the evacuation response, Prairie Mountain Health invited the MCRT to take part as a panelist at their Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine Knowledge Exchange Days in November. The session focused on coordinated mental health and substance misuse responses for our northern relatives. The MCRT highlighted the importance of proactive, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate approaches when supporting our northern relative's safety and well-being.

## Significant deployments

The MCRT supported several "Every Child Matters" events in SCO member Nations in the fall.

The team provided support at the 5th Annual Orange Shirt Day Healing Walk and Pow Wow in Winnipeg and the 4th Annual Reconciliation Run at the site of the former Birtle Indian Residential School to Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation.

The MCRT attended the final Every Child Matters Unity Ride. This included Feeding the Children ceremonies at residential school sites between Birtle and Brandon. The team gifted organizers a star blanket in recognition of their work and contributions over the years.

ISC invited the MCRT to provide cultural and emotional supports at the 2025 National Wellness and Healing Gathering hosted by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Ottawa in December.







## Looking ahead

SCO's MCRT will continue providing crisis response, mental health supports, and culturally grounded services to our southern First Nations citizens.







"The urgency of this moment cannot be overstated. We are witnessing the human consequences of delay. Families are navigating repeated mental health emergencies. Individuals in crisis are facing long wait times, forced travel far from home, or the absence of culturally appropriate care. Our people cannot afford further delay."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

# NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program continues to support SCO citizens in accessing essential health services.

Through client support, advocacy, and community engagement, the program has strengthened its presence across communities and urban centres. The program has made progress in service delivery, relationship building, and system navigation, with a continued focus on reducing barriers and improving access to NIHB benefits.




## Accomplishments

**Service delivery and client support**

In 2025-2026, the NIHB Program provided 1304 direct contacts. Medical transportation was the most accessed benefit, accounting for 34.4 per cent of requests. This remains one of the most complex and frequently accessed NIHB benefits.

Support included coordinating travel arrangements, addressing delays or denials, resolving logistical challenges, and advocating on behalf of clients to support timely access to care.

The program also provided guidance across a range of NIHB benefit areas, offering individualized support to clients navigating complex or urgent situations.

**Benefit areas accessed included:**

- Medical supplies and equipment: 16%
- Pharmacy: 14%
- Other (paramedical, status cards, etc.): 14%
- Dental: 8%
- Vision: 7%
- Mental health: 4%
- Jordan's Principle: 2%

The program provided services to 30 of 33 SCO member Nations and assisted 26 non-SCO Nations.

## Community engagement and outreach

A key focus of the program has been increasing awareness and accessibility within Nations. To date, the NIHB Team has visited 21 of 33 SCO member Nations, building relationships with citizens and local health leaders.

Community visits included meeting with health centre staff, gathering information on upcoming events, and sharing program resources.

In addition to community visits, NIHB Navigators completed a total of 1338 in-person client contacts through outreach events and engagement opportunities. These included information booths at Vision Quest, community health fairs, the Orange Shirt Day Healing Walk and Pow Wow, and presentations for professionals, such as social workers and service providers.

This outreach has helped increase awareness of services and ensure citizens feel comfortable accessing support. By meeting citizens where they are, the program continues to better understand community-specific needs and respond effectively.







## Collaboration and HT

The NIHB Program has become an active participant within SCO's HT Team, contributing to broader discussions and initiatives related to health services. This collaboration has strengthened relationships with partners and supported a more coordinated approach to addressing health service challenges.

Quarterly meetings with health directors have also improved communication and collaboration. These meetings provide opportunities to share updates, discuss emerging issues, and work together on solutions.

During the wildfires in the summer of 2025, the NIHB Team supported northern evacuation efforts by providing outreach and service coordination for our northern relatives relocated to Brandon, Portage la Prairie, and Winnipeg. Navigators helped people access NIHB benefits during a time of crisis, including medical equipment, pharmacy services, vision care, and other essential supports.

This work required coordination with health care providers, pharmacies, and support agencies, as well as direct advocacy to address urgent and complex needs and support continuity of care.

## Looking ahead

### The NIHB Program will continue expanding outreach and strengthening collaboration.

A key priority is engaging with all SCO member Nations, with the goal of visiting each one to provide information on the NIHB Program and available supports.

The program continues to evolve as a responsive, client-focused service that addresses immediate needs and systemic barriers. Through continued outreach, advocacy, and collaboration, the program will continue working to improve access to NIHB benefits for SCO citizens.



# PATHWAYS TO HEALING PROGRAM

In 2025-2026, the Pathways to Healing Program carried out activities to help end and respond to the national emergency of MMIWG2S+ and support Survivors of the residential school system.

## MMIWG2S+ Support Program

The MMIWG2S+ Support Program provides wrap-around services for SCO citizens, Survivors, and families impacted by the MMIWG2S+ crisis. Services include system navigation, advocacy, resource sharing, awareness, education, prevention, and emotional and cultural support.

SCO is a founding partner of *Giganawenimaanaanig*, which works to advance the implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice. The 2025-2026 fiscal year marked the beginning of a renewed relationship between *Giganawenimaanaanig* and SCO, focused on strengthening relationships and shared commitments.

Throughout the year, the program continued frontline work with impacted families and Survivors, providing support during court proceedings, vigils, searches, and other community-led responses. The program also supported awareness and prevention efforts through events including the Annual Women's Memorial March of Manitoba, the Walk for Justice, MMIWG2S+ Awareness Day, and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.



## Accomplishments

A key accomplishment was the development of a youth prevention presentation for young women ages 12 to 18. The presentation focuses on healthy and unhealthy relationships, recognizing warning signs, and supporting friends experiencing unhealthy relationships. It includes a cultural component that can be adapted to meet the needs of schools and students.

From November 25 to December 10, 2025, SCO marked the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" with a social media campaign to help citizens understand gender-based violence, recognize warning signs, and learn about available supports. The campaign reached nearly 70,000 people across SCO platforms.

SCO strengthened its relationship with EmpowerMen through its partnership with *Giganawenimaanaanig*. Through this connection, SCO learned from both organizations, which work to prevent human trafficking, address sexual exploitation, and support vulnerable people. The relationship also supports education for young men on healthy relationships and prevention.

The MMIWG2S+ Support Program became a referral agency for Oyate Tipi, supporting citizens in completing applications to access household goods at no cost. This work helps provide essential items to SCO members experiencing need.

"Six years is a long time for progress to happen for the Calls for Justice. We cannot delay implementation of the Calls for Justice any further. On behalf of the Chiefs of southern Manitoba and the Nations we represent, I call on all levels of government to work with us on an urgent basis to address the ongoing violence perpetuated against our relations."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

## Looking ahead

A key priority is advocating for continued and stable funding for MMIWG2S+ supports, ensuring Survivors, families, and Nations have access to culturally grounded services.

Southern Manitoba continues to experience the impacts of the MMIWG2S+ emergency, with First Nations women, girls, two spirit, and gender-diverse relatives experiencing disproportionate rates of violence.

Continued investment in programs like SCO's MMIWG2S+ Support Program is necessary to support prevention, advocacy, and healing.

## Residential School Research Project

In 2025-2026, the Residential School Research Project supported clients with completing and submitting claims for the Federal Indian Hospital Settlement, Indian Boarding Home Class Action, and Day School. This work was done both in the office and through community visits.

The project also gathered records related to residential schools, burials, sanatoriums, boarding homes, Indian hospitals, day schools, the Sixties Scoop, and genealogical research.

"Anishinaabe and Dakota women, girls, two spirit, and gender-diverse people are sacred. They are loved and valued. They are essential leaders, protectors, and caregivers for our SCO member Nations. The national emergency of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, two spirit, and gender-diverse people has left an ongoing mark on our Nations."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**







## Accomplishments

SCO planned and hosted the 5th annual Orange Shirt Day Healing Walk and Pow Wow. An estimated 20,000 people participated in the Healing Walk, and more than 7500 attended the Pow Wow.

SCO co-hosted its second annual Researchers Gathering with MKO in Norway House Cree Nation. Indigenous community researchers from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Ontario came together to present their work, share challenges, and discuss ways to support one another.

The project also hosted its first Youth and Elders Engagement Gathering, titled *They Give Knowledge to Each Other*. Elders and youth discussed the Water Authority, the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, repatriation and rematriation of ancestral remains, *My Records, My Choice*, the second-generation cut-off, and community safety. The gathering created space for intergenerational dialogue on past, present, and future issues.

SCO took part in *My Records, My Choice* to support Survivors of residential school in making informed decisions about their personal records created through the Independent Assessment Process and Alternative Dispute Resolution processes. SCO provided information sessions in SCO Nations, guidance, and help navigating their options. With these records scheduled for destruction on September 19, 2027, the team helped Survivors and families understand their choices and make decisions about their records.

## Looking forward

Staff aim to visit all 33 SCO member Nations to support clients completing claims for the Federal Indian Hospital Settlement and present information on the *My Records, My Choice* initiative. The goal is to ensure Survivors have access to information and support to share their experiences if they choose.

SCO is also supporting the planning of a Birtle Residential School reunion in partnership with the Birtle Indian Residential School Council.








"Every Child Matters is not just a slogan—it is a sacred responsibility. It calls on all of us to confront the truths of this country's history, to honour the Survivors who carry those truths, and to make sure every generation is raised with dignity, safety, and pride in who they are.

~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels





# SCO 5TH ANNUAL ORANGE SHIRT DAY HEALING WALK AND POW WOW



On September 30, 2025, Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the heart of downtown Winnipeg came alive with a sea of orange shirts.

An estimated 20,000 people came together Survivors, families, leaders, youth, and allies—to remember, to honour, and to walk in the spirit of truth and healing.

SCO was proud to host the 5th Annual Healing Walk and Pow Wow.

It was a day to honour the children who never returned home and to stand beside the Survivors who continue to carry those memories. It is also a day to raise awareness of the truth and create opportunities for non-Indigenous people to learn about what happened in Canada's recent history.


























# STATUS CARD AND ID PROGRAM

The Status Card and Identification (ID) Program acts as a "Trusted Source" on behalf of ISC. The program supports First Nation citizens with the renewal, replacement, and first-time application of Secure Certificate of Indian Status (SCIS) cards.

The SCIS is important for accessing benefits connected to Treaty rights and federal programs. These include the NIHB Program, Jordan's Principle, education funding, hunting and harvesting rights, certain tax exemptions, and border crossing. The SCIS is also accepted as a valid form of government-issued photo ID.

Through a memorandum of understanding with ISC, program staff review SCIS and new registration applications to ensure they are complete and include all required documents. The program also provides guidance on accepted forms of ID, certifies copies of original documents, and submits completed applications to ISC for processing. All services are provided at no cost.

The program also offers mobile clinics in urban centres, organizations, and southern First Nations to improve access to services.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2025-2026, the Status Card and ID Program assisted 7155 clients with renewals, replacements, and new registrations. Of these, 5144 were adults and 2011 were children.

In addition to in-office appointments and walk-in services, the team expanded outreach and built strong partnerships with community organizations. This work helped increase access to services for citizens who may not be able to attend SCO offices.

The program delivered services through visits to the following First Nations, urban clinics, conferences, and partner organizations:

"No child of a status First Nation parent should be excluded from belonging, or stripped of their ability to reconnect, carry on culture, or access rights and services."

**~Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

### First Nations

- Berens River First Nation
- Birdtail Sioux First Nation
- Brokenhead Ojibway Nation
- Buffalo Point First Nation
- Canupawakpa First Nation
- Dakota Plains Wahpeton Oyate
- Dauphin River First Nation
- Ebb and Flow First Nation
- Fisher River Cree Nation
- Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation
- Lake Manitoba First Nation
- Lake St. Martin First Nation
- Little Saskatchewan First Nation
- Long Plain First Nation
- O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation
- Pinaymootang First Nation
- Pauingassi First Nation
- Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation
- Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation
- Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation
- Tootinawaziibeeng Treaty Reserve
- Waywayseecappo First Nation

## Urban clinics (outside Winnipeg)

- Brandon
- Dauphin
- Portage la Prairie/Keeshkeemaquah
- Selkirk

## Organizations (Winnipeg)

- Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre
- Andrews Family Centre
- Annual Treaty Day Event - RBC Convention Centre
- Chalmers Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
- Elwick Community Village
- Gilbert Park Resource Centre
- Huddle Ka Ni Kanichihk
- 1JustCity
- Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre
- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc.
- Makoon Transition Inc.
- Ndinawe Youth Safe Haven
- New Directions
- North Point Douglas Women's Centre
- Norwest Co-op
- Oak Table
- Oshii-Giizhig
- Pimicikamak Wellness Centre
- Southeast Child & Family Services
- Spence Neibourhood Association
- St. Boniface Hospital Indigenous Market
- Turtle Island Community Centre
- Wahbung Abinooji
- *Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn*

## Urban Jordan's Principle (Winnipeg)

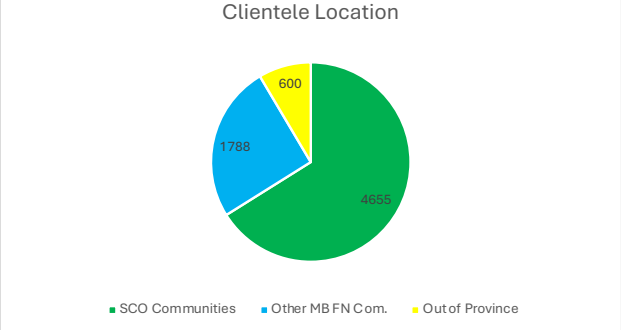
- Berens River First Nation Jordan's Principle
- Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Jordan's Principle
- Dakota Wakanyeza Owichakiyapi Tipi First Nation Jordan's Principle
- Tataskweyak Cree Nation Jordan's Principle

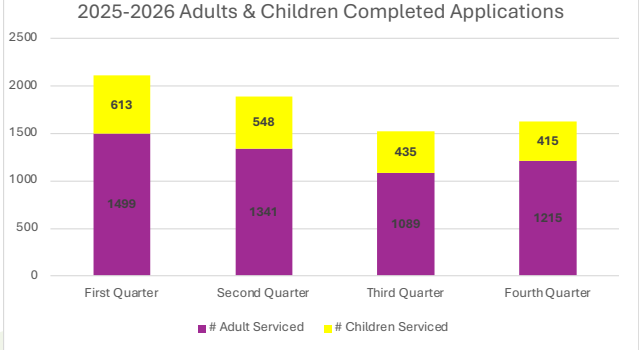
## Conferences

- Dakota Tiwahe Child and Family Services Gathering
- Dauphin Health Conference
- Family Violence Prevention Conference
- Interlake Reserves Tribal Council Jordan's Principle Conference
- Sandy Bay Child and Family Services Gathering
- Southeast Child and Family Services Men's Gathering
- Youth Council Gathering
- Youth Justice Forum

## Ongoing community partnerships

- Brandon University
- City of Winnipeg - Millenium Library
- Lord Selkirk School Division
- Manitoba Housing
- New Directions
- Peguis Child and Family Services
- Red River College Polytechnic
- Selkirk Huddle
- Seven Oaks School Division
- Southeast Collegiate
- St. James-Assiniboia School Division
- Technical Vocational High School
- University of Manitoba – Migizii Agamik – Bald Eagle Lodge
- University of Winnipeg
- West Region Child & Family Services
- Winnipeg School Division
- Yellowquill University College



## Key challenges

The program challenges include, but are not limited to:

- Clients with expired or no form of government-issued ID
- ISC has limited the use of the Certificate of Indian Status card (CIS), the red laminated Band-issued cards when applying for the SCIS card for the first time
- ISC will not accept the CIS card as a standalone ID when a client has never applied for the SCIS
- ISC's Public Enquiries National Call Centre: SCO staff continue to field calls and complaints from member citizens about the lengthy wait times when accessing the national call centre for updates on their SCIS applications

## Looking ahead

SCO's Status Card and ID Program will continue to expand service delivery to western Manitoba. This includes addressing the high demand in the City of Brandon and surrounding First Nations.

Many First Nation citizens have shared concerns about limited access to in-person support from ISC when completing applications. The program helps address this gap by providing hands-on assistance and improving access to services, including expanded service delivery in Brandon





## Jonathan Hooker: Supporting Reconnection Through Status Registration

SCO supported Jonathan Hooker, a Survivor of the Sixties Scoop, in applying for his SCIS card.



Jonathan was taken from Mosakahiken Cree Nation (Moose Lake) in 1975, at 18 months old, and adopted by a family in New Zealand. Like many children affected by the Sixties Scoop, he grew up away from his family, community, and culture.

The Sixties Scoop, which took place from the 1950s through the 1980s, saw thousands of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children removed from their families and placed in non-Indigenous homes across Canada and abroad.



Fifty years later, after taking an ancestry test, Jonathan was connected with a half-sister, which led to his return to Manitoba to reconnect with the family he never knew.

With support from SCO, MKO, and the Anish Corporation, Jonathan and his wife were able to make the journey.

The SCO team assisted Jonathan with applying for his status card, supporting him through the application process and helping him take an important step in reclaiming his identity and reconnecting with his roots.

Jonathan was joined by his wife, Charmaine Flynn-Hooker, and family members during his visit.

The Sixties Scoop caused long-term disconnection for many First Nation families. SCO continues to support Survivors in reconnecting with their families, Nations, and cultures.

# Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
## Consolidated Financial Statements
*March 31, 2026*

To the Members of Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.:

## Opinion

We have audited the consolidated financial statements of Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc. (the "Organization"), which comprise the consolidated statement of financial position as at March 31, 2026, and the consolidated statements of operations consolidated statement of changes in net assets and consolidated statement cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the consolidated financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of the Organization as at March 31, 2026, and the results of its consolidated operations and its consolidated cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

## Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor’s Responsibilities for the Audit of the Consolidated Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the consolidated financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

## Other Matter

The Organization prepares two sets of financial statements. One is prepared on a consolidated basis and the other is prepared on a non-consolidated basis, as explained in the accompanying notes in each set of financial statements. This Independent Auditor's Report refers only to the consolidated financial statements as explained in the *Opinion* paragraph above.

## Other Information

Management is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, but does not include the consolidated financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The annual report is expected to be made available to us after the date of the auditor's report.

Our opinion on the consolidated financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the consolidated financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the consolidated financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

When we read the annual report, if we conclude that there is material misstatement therein, we are required to

### Responsibilities of Management for the Consolidated Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the consolidated financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Consolidated Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these consolidated financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the consolidated financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the consolidated financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the consolidated financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Organization to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. We are responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the group audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Winnipeg, Manitoba

July 23, 2026

MNP LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants

# Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
## Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
*As at March 31, 2026*

| | 2026 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|
| **Assets** | | |
| **Current** | | |
| Cash | **77,123,043** | 52,786,645 |
| Accounts receivable *(Note 3)* | **5,934,588** | 6,482,391 |
| Prepaid expenses and deposits | **492,891** | 648,956 |
| | **83,550,522** | 59,917,992 |
| **Construction holdback asset** *(Note 4)* | **3,828,948** | - |
| **Investments** *(Note 5)* | **350,000** | 350,000 |
| **Capital assets** *(Note 6)* | **79,214,996** | 26,103,396 |
| | **166,944,466** | 86,371,388 |
| **Liabilities** | | |
| **Current** | | |
| Accounts payable and accruals | **11,059,767** | 8,432,607 |
| Due to Province of Manitoba *(Note 7)* | **5,717,026** | 5,717,026 |
| Deferred contributions *(Note 8)* | **18,959,443** | 34,735,556 |
| Due to Government of Canada *(Note 9)* | **110,789** | 110,789 |
| Construction holdback payable *(Note 10)* | **3,828,948** | 453,504 |
| | **39,675,973** | 49,449,482 |
| **Deferred capital contributions** *(Note 11)* | **42,635,918** | 27,296,196 |
| **Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation construction loan** *(Note 12)* | **5,000,000** | 5,000,000 |
| **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation construction loan** *(Note 13)* | **74,264,500** | - |
| | **161,576,391** | 81,745,678 |
| **Contingencies** *(Note 14)* | | |
| **Net Assets** | | |
| Unrestricted | **4,244,274** | 3,501,909 |
| Invested in capital assets *(Note 15)* | **1,123,801** | 1,123,801 |
| | **5,368,075** | 4,625,710 |
| | **166,944,466** | 86,371,388 |

**Approved on behalf of the Executive Committee**

**Committee Member** | **Committee Member**

**Committee Member** | **Committee Member**

**Committee Member** | **Committee Member**

# Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
## Consolidated Statement of Operations
*For the year ended March 31, 2026*

| | ***2026*** | *2025* |
|---|---|---|
| **Revenue** | | |
| Province of Manitoba | **206,577,612** | 179,639,295 |
| Government of Canada | **12,581,911** | 24,653,055 |
| Other | **3,483,262** | 2,357,525 |
| | **222,642,785** | 206,649,875 |
| **Expenses** | | |
| Community programming and support services *(Note 16)* | **31,698,705** | 28,819,699 |
| Economic development initiatives | **1,252,702** | 182,418 |
| Family service administration | **3,656,793** | 3,223,218 |
| Family services agency funding | **175,631,782** | 163,776,345 |
| Family services education and training | **350,043** | 251,498 |
| Family services programming | **9,310,395** | 9,275,249 |
| | **221,900,420** | 205,528,427 |
| **Excess of revenue over expenses** | **742,365** | 1,121,448 |

## Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
### Consolidated Statement of Changes in Net Assets
*For the year ended March 31, 2026*

| | *Unrestricted* | *Invested in capital assets* | *2026* | *2025* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Net assets, beginning of year** | **3,501,909** | **1,123,801** | **4,625,710** | 3,504,262 |
| **Excess of revenue over expenses** | **742,365** | **-** | **742,365** | 1,121,448 |
| **Net assets, end of year** | **4,244,274** | **1,123,801** | **5,368,075** | 4,625,710 |

# Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.
## Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows
*For the year ended March 31, 2026*

| | ***2026*** | *2025* |
|---|---|---|
| **Cash provided by (used for) the following activities** | | |
| **Operating** | | |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | **742,365** | 1,121,448 |
| Changes in working capital accounts | | |
| Due from agencies | **-** | 334,445 |
| Accounts receivable | **547,803** | 2,793,390 |
| Prepaid expenses and deposits | **156,065** | (32,756) |
| Accounts payable and accruals | **2,627,160** | 1,578,403 |
| Deferred contributions | **(15,776,113)** | 10,985,913 |
| Construction holdback payable | **3,375,444** | 453,504 |
| | **(8,327,276)** | 17,234,347 |
| **Financing** | | |
| Deferred capital contribution | **15,339,722** | 22,800,995 |
| Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation construction loan | **74,264,500** | - |
| | **89,604,222** | 22,800,995 |
| **Investing** | | |
| Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn property development costs | **(53,111,600)** | (19,053,166) |
| Decrease (increase) in restricted cash | **-** | 3,568,770 |
| Increase in construction holdback asset | **(3,828,948)** | - |
| | **(56,940,548)** | (15,484,396) |
| **Increase in cash resources** | **24,336,398** | 24,550,946 |
| **Cash resources, beginning of year** | **52,786,645** | 28,235,699 |
| **Cash resources, end of year** | **77,123,043** | 52,786,645 |

## 1. Incorporation and nature of the organization

Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc. (the “Organization”) was established in March 1999, is located in the Province of Manitoba, and provides various services to its 33 Members (33 southern First Nations) which are represented by the Chiefs of those 33 First Nations. The Organization is a not-for-profit organization incorporated without share capital. The Organization is exempt from income taxes under Section 149 of the Income Tax Act. In order to maintain its status as a registered not for profit organization under the Income Tax Act, the Organization must meet certain requirements specified within the Income Tax Act. It is the opinion of management that these requirements have been met.

## 2. Significant accounting policies

These consolidated financial statements are the representations of management, prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations and include the following significant accounting policies:

***Basis of accounting***

The Organization controls the following organizations:

**1) Southern First Nations Network of Care**

The Organization controls Southern First Nations Network of Care ("SFNNC") by virtue of the Organization's ability to appoint the Board of Directors of SFNNC. The First Nations of Southern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority was incorporated on November 24, 2003 under the Province of Manitoba through The Child and Family Services Authority Act, S.M. 2002, c. 35 excerpt section 20; the Act came into force by proclamation on November 24, 2003. On November 15, 2015, the legal name was changed to Southern First Nations Network of Care ("SFNNC"). SFNNC was established as a not-for-profit organization with the responsibility for administering and providing for the delivery of a system of child and family services to First Nations people who are members of the southern First Nations and other persons who are identified with those southern First Nations. SFNNC is a not-for-profit organization and as such is exempt from income taxes under The Income Tax Act.

**2) Southern Chiefs' Organization Reconciliation Foundation Inc.**

The Organization controls Southern Chiefs' Organization Reconciliation Foundation Inc. ("SCORF") by virtue of the Organization's ability to appoint the Board of Directors of SCORF. SCORF was incorporated on September 14, 2022 with charitable purposes.

**3) SCED Trust**

The Organization controls SCED Trust by virtue of the Organization's ability to appoint the Trustees of SCED Trust. SCED Trust was established for the welfare and benefit of First Nations (the "Beneficiaries") that are members of Southern Chiefs Organization Inc. SCED Trust has a controlling interest in several corporations and limited partnerships.

As outlined in the SCED Trust Agreement dated July 28, 2022, no benefit can accrue to the Organization as a result of the Organization's control of SCED Trust. SCED Trust is considered to be a not-for-profit organization for the purposes of reporting under ASNPO 4450.

These consolidated financial statements include the balances and transactions of the organizations listed above as well as their subsidiary organizations. Balances and transactions between these organizations have been eliminated upon consolidation.

***Cash***

Cash includes balances with banks and short-term investments with maturities of three months or less. Cash subject to external restrictions that prevent its use for current purposes is included in restricted cash.

***Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn property development***

The Organization is developing a property located at 450 Portage Avenue in Winnipeg. The property is known as Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn and is recorded at cost.

No amortization is recorded on the property development cost of Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn as the property is not yet available for use.

**2. Significant accounting policies** *(Continued from previous page)*

***Long-lived assets***

Long-lived assets consist of capital assets and property development. Long-lived assets held for use are measured and amortized as described in the applicable accounting policies.

When the Organization determines that a long-lived asset no longer has any long-term service potential to the Organization, the excess of its net carrying amount over any residual value is recognized as an expense in the consolidated statement of operations. Write-downs are not reversed.

***Revenue recognition***

The Organization follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Externally restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Restricted investment income is recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted investment income is recognized as revenue when earned.

Other revenue is recognized when services have been provided and collectability is reasonably assured.

***Measurement uncertainty (use of estimates)***

The preparation of consolidated financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the consolidated financial statements, and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period.

Accounts receivable, due from related organizations and advances to related organizations are stated after evaluation as to their collectability and an appropriate allowance for doubtful accounts is provided where considered necessary. Deferred contributions are based on management's analysis of the extent to which qualifying expenses have been incurred with respect to restricted contributions.

These estimates and assumptions are reviewed periodically and, as adjustments become necessary they are reported in excess of revenues and expenses in the periods in which they become known.

***Employee future benefits***

The Organization's employee future benefit programs consist of a defined contribution pension plan. The Organization's contributions to the defined contribution plan are expensed as incurred.

***Contributed materials***

Contributions of materials and services are recognized both as contributions and expenses in the statement of operations when a fair value can be reasonably estimated and when the materials are used in the normal course of the Organization's operations and would otherwise have been purchased.

***Leases***

A lease that transfers substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership is classified as a capital lease. At the inception of a capital lease, an asset and a payment obligation are recorded at an amount equal to the lesser of the present value of the minimum lease payments and the property’s fair market value. All other leases are accounted for as operating leases and rental payments are expensed as incurred.

**2. Significant accounting policies** *(Continued from previous page)*

***Financial instruments***

The Organization recognizes financial instruments when the Organization becomes party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument.

**Arm's length financial instruments**

Financial instruments originated/acquired or issued/assumed in an arm's length transaction ("arm's length financial instruments") are initially recorded at their fair value.

At initial recognition, the Organization may irrevocably elect to subsequently measure any arm's length financial instrument at fair value. The Organization has not made such an election during the year.

The Organization subsequently measures investments in equity instruments quoted in an active market and all derivative instruments, except those designated in a qualifying hedging relationship or that are linked to, and must be settled by delivery of, unquoted equity instruments of another entity, at fair value. Fair value is determined by published price quotations. Investments in equity instruments not quoted in an active market and derivatives that are linked to, and must be settled by delivery of, unquoted equity instruments of another entity, are subsequently measured at cost less impairment. With the exception of financial liabilities indexed to a measure of the Organization's performance or value of its equity and those instruments designated at fair value, all other financial assets and liabilities are subsequently measured at amortized cost.

Transaction costs and financing fees directly attributable to the origination, acquisition, issuance or assumption of financial instruments subsequently measured at fair value are immediately recognized in excess of revenues over expenses. Conversely, transaction costs and financing fees are added to the carrying amount for those financial instruments subsequently measured at cost or amortized cost.

**Related party financial instruments**

The Organization initially measures the following financial instruments originated/acquired or issued/assumed in a related party transaction ("related party financial instruments") at fair value:

- Investments in equity instruments quoted in an active market
- Debt instruments quoted in an active market
- Debt instruments when the inputs significant to the determination of its fair value are observable (directly or indirectly)
- Derivative contracts

All other related party financial instruments are measured at cost on initial recognition. When the financial instrument has repayment terms, cost is determined using the undiscounted cash flows, excluding interest, dividend, variable and contingent payments, less any impairment losses previously recognized by the transferor. When the financial instrument does not have repayment terms, but the consideration transferred has repayment terms, cost is determined based on the repayment terms of the consideration transferred. When the financial instrument and the consideration transferred both do not have repayment terms, the cost is equal to the carrying or exchange amount of the consideration transferred or received.

At initial recognition, the Organization may elect to subsequently measure related party debt instruments that are quoted in active market, or that have observable inputs significant to the determination of fair value, at fair value.

The Organization subsequently measures investments in equity instruments quoted in an active market and all derivative instruments, except those designated in a qualifying hedging relationship or that are linked to, and must be settled by delivery of, unquoted equity instruments of another entity, at fair value. Fair value is determined by published price quotations. Financial instruments that were initially measured at cost and derivatives that are linked to, and must be settled by, delivery of unquoted equity instruments of another entity, are subsequently measured using the cost method less any reduction for impairment.

Transaction costs and financing fees directly attributable to the origination, acquisition, issuance or assumption of related party financial instruments are immediately recognized in excess of revenues over expenses.

**2. Significant accounting policies** *(Continued from previous page)*

***Financial instruments*** *(Continued from previous page)*

**Financial asset impairment**

The Organization assesses impairment of all its financial assets measured at cost or amortized cost. The Organization groups assets for impairment testing when available information is not sufficient to permit identification of each individually impaired financial asset in the group; there are numerous assets affected by the same factors; no asset is individually significant, etc. Management considers whether the issuer is having significant financial difficulty; whether there has been a breach in contract, such as a default or delinquency in interest or principal payments; etc. in determining whether objective evidence of impairment exists. When there is an indication of impairment, the Organization determines whether it has resulted in a significant adverse change in the expected timing or amount of future cash flows during the year.

With the exception of related party debt instruments and related party equity instruments initially measured at cost, the Organization reduces the carrying amount of any impaired financial assets to the highest of: the present value of cash flows expected to be generated by holding the assets; the amount that could be realized by selling the assets at the statement of financial position date; and the amount expected to be realized by exercising any rights to collateral held against those assets.

For related party debt instruments initially measured at cost, the Organization reduces the carrying amount of the asset (or group of assets), to the highest of: the undiscounted cash flows expected to be generated by holding the asset, or group of similar assets, excluding the interest and dividend payments of the instrument; the present value of cash flows expected to be generated by holding the assets; the amount that could be realized by selling the assets at the statement of financial position date; and the amount expected to be realized by exercising any rights to collateral held against those assets.

For related party equity instruments initially measured at cost, the Organization reduces the carrying amount of the asset (or group of assets), to the amount that could be realized by selling the asset(s) at the statement of financial position date.

Any impairment, which is not considered temporary, is included in current year excess of revenues over expenses.

The Organization reverses impairment losses on financial assets when there is a decrease in impairment and the decrease can be objectively related to an event occurring after the impairment loss was recognized. The amount of the reversal is recognized in excess of revenues over expenses in the year the reversal occurs.

**3. Accounts receivable**

| | ***2026*** | *2025* |
|---|---|---|
| Accounts receivable - general | **4,192,245** | 5,853,301 |
| GST receivable | **1,842,402** | 734,966 |
| | **6,034,647** | 6,588,267 |
| Allowance for doubtful accounts (accounts receivable - general) | **(100,059)** | (105,876) |
| | **5,934,588** | 6,482,391 |

**4. Construction holdback asset**

Cash classified as restricted cash relates to the construction holdback account, which by requirement, is held in a separate bank account for the purpose of settling the construction holdback payable upon completion of the Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn property development.

| | ***2026*** | *2025* |
|---|---|---|
| Amount held in restricted bank account | **3,430,991** | - |
| Receivable from operating funds | **397,957** | - |
| | **3,828,948** | - |

**5. Investments**

As at March 31, 2026, the Organization held investments as follows:
- Guaranteed Investment Certificate, bearing interest at 4.05%, non-redeemable, maturing July 2026, for $350,000.

As at March 31, 2025, the Organization held investments as follows:
- Guaranteed Investment Certificate, bearing interest at 4.05%, non-redeemable, maturing July 2025, for $350,000.

**6. Property development**

During 2023, the land and building located at 450 Portage Avenue was contributed to the Organization. The recognized fair value of the contribution was $1. The Organization has named the project Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn and is in the process of redeveloping the building for charitable purposes.

| | ***2026*** | *2025* |
|---|---|---|
| Contributed land and building | **1** | 1 |
| Building improvements - in progress | **79,214,995** | 26,103,395 |
| | **79,214,996** | 26,103,396 |

**7. Due to Province of Manitoba**

The Province of Manitoba provided a working capital advance to the Organization in the amount of $5,717,026 (2025 - $5,717,026) to facilitate child and family services programs in Manitoba which would be conducted through agencies overseen by the Organization. The amount due to the Province of Manitoba has no fixed terms of repayment and is non-interest bearing.

**8. Deferred contributions**

| | ***2026*** | *2025* |
|---|---|---|
| Government of Canada | **16,335,150** | 26,662,986 |
| Province of Manitoba | **2,247,347** | 7,751,938 |
| Other | **376,946** | 320,632 |
| | **18,959,443** | 34,735,556 |

**9. Due to Government of Canada**

The Organization has recorded an amount repayable to the Government of Canada because the Government of Canada has required repayment of restricted contributions.

In each case, the Government of Canada has either:
- Deemed certain expenses of the Organization to be ineligible uses of funding provided, or
- Has recognized particular restricted contributions as unspent during a particular allowable time period.

The amounts due to the Government of Canada are non-interest bearing and terms of repayment have not been established.

**10. Construction holdback payable**

Construction holdback payables represent amounts withheld from contractors and subcontractors in accordance with construction agreements and are payable upon satisfaction of contractual requirements, including the expiration of applicable lien periods.

**11. Deferred capital contributions**

The deferred capital contributions relates to funding provided for the Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn property development. These amounts will be deferred and amortized into revenue at the same rate that the related capital asset is amortized.

**12. Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation construction loan**

The Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation (MHRC) has committed to providing a conditional funding allocation of $10,000,000 for the creation of 200 affordable housing units at Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn. $5,000,000 (2025 - $5,000,000) has been advanced in the form of a repayable loan.

The letter of commitment from MHRC indicates that, upon meeting certain conditions, the construction/development advance will be converted into a forgivable loan, with forgiveness of the advance occurring over a 20-year period commencing upon total completion of the construction and development phase.

**13. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation construction loan**

The Organization entered into an Affordable Housing Fund Loan Agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ("CMHC") to support the redevelopment of Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn. Under the agreement, CMHC committed a forgivable loan of $74,264,500 and a repayable loan of $105,743,182 for the Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn project. As at March 31, 2026, the Organization had received advances totaling $74,264,500 under the forgivable loan component. The forgivable loan is intended to support the construction and development of Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn and is subject to various affordability, accessibility, and energy efficiency requirements. Subject to continued compliance with the terms of the agreement, the forgivable loan is forgiven at a rate of 5% per year over a 20-year period commencing from the date occupancy is achieved.

**14. Contingencies**

The Organization is subject to funding recoveries according to their agreements with federal and provincial government departments. At year-end, it was not yet determined to what extent any funding amounts related to the year ending March 31, 2026 might be recovered by these departments.

The Organization is involved in certain legal matters. The likelihood and expected financial impacts of these matters are undeterminable at this time. There are no assets or liabilities recorded as at March 31, 2026 with respect to these matters.

**15. Invested in capital assets**

The Organization has received financing and funding contributions to offset the amount spent on the Wehwehneh Bakgahkinahgohn property development except for project costs to the amount of $1,123,800, which is an amount pursuant to an agreement made with Western Economic Diversification Canada, plus the initial recognized value of $1 of the contributed land and building.

**16. Community programming and support services**

As a primary function of the Organization's purpose and mandate, the Organization provides support to its Member First Nations in a variety of ways, including direct payments to facilitate programs, or other community contributions.

**17. Commitments**

The Organization has entered into various lease agreements with estimated minimum annual payments over the next 5 years as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 2027 | 577,398 |
| 2028 | 445,514 |
| 2029 | 199,173 |
| 2030 | 182,575 |

**18. Economic dependence**

The Organization receives a significant portion of its revenue from the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba. The Organization's ability to continue viable operations is dependent upon the continued financial commitments of the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba.

**19. Financial instruments**

The Organization, as part of its operations, carries a number of financial instruments. It is management's opinion that the Organization is not exposed to significant interest, currency, credit, liquidity or other price risks arising from these financial instruments except as otherwise disclosed.



**The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) represents 33 Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations and more than 92,000 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.**

Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.

scoinc.mb.ca

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