



JOINT STATEMENT FROM SCO AND MKO: REFLECTIONS ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS IN MANITOBA FOLLOWING LATEST DISCOVERY OF CHILDREN BURIED AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SITE

June 24, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Grand Chiefs of the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) and Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak (MKO) came together today to share their thoughts on residential schools and to reflect on ceremonies that were held recently on the grounds of the Brandon residential school.

In a shared display of sorrow and solidarity, MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee and SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels also expressed their collective grief over the discovery of 751 unmarked graves at the site of the Marieval Indian Residential School in what is now known as Saskatchewan.

"We knew there were going to be more discoveries such as this, however nothing truly prepares you emotionally, especially when we consider the sheer volume in this particular case," stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "I join my fellow First Nation leaders in expressing my deepest condolences to the families and communities of these little ones who were stolen away from them. I also want to reach out and honour the Survivors of the Marieval residential school and all Survivors across Turtle Island. This latest finding by our relatives at Cowessess First Nation further reveal this country's history of committing genocide against First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. All Canadians need to fully acknowledge this country's history of sexual, physical, emotional, and lethal abuses that our people were subjected to, just for being First Nation."

"On behalf of Northern First Nations in Manitoba, I send my condolences to the community of Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan regarding the horrific discovery of 751 unmarked graves at the site of the former Marieval Residential School. I also send condolences to all the First Nations families who will be impacted by this news and who may have loved ones buried at the site," shared MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee.

"I want to say Chi-Miigwetch to the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and Chief Bone for hosting us this past Monday and to all the Survivors in Brandon. They welcomed us this week, showing great strength and resilience. Now, all Survivors and their loved ones have once again been hit with news of the discovery of their loved ones and friends. It's clear we can no longer wait for change," added Grand Chief Daniels. "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) stated unequivocally in its final report six years ago that there were unmarked graves and unidentified remains associated with Indian Residential Schools. Now, as those warnings come to fruition, we need all levels of government and the Catholic Church to



immediately accept full responsibility for this genocide and to work with First Nations to release all records. It's time for the full truth to be laid bare for all to see, a truth that Indigenous Peoples have dealt with in the shadows for far too long.”

“Without truth, there can be no reconciliation,” stated Grand Chief Settee. “We continue to call on Canada to recognize the residential schools as an act of genocide. We also call on all governments to continue working with First Nations to support investigations into the unmarked burial sites we are expecting to find at *all* residential schools. Survivors, their families, and community members need continued access to culturally relevant healing programs. Last week, I was honoured to attend a healing ceremony in Brandon. I thank the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation for welcoming me and I know this will be one of many healing ceremonies that are needed for the thousands of community members we have lost to abuse, violence, and neglect at Canada’s residential schools.”

SCO and MKO leadership will continue to work with First Nations, partners, and affected families during this difficult time to finally find the many loved ones and Relatives who are buried in unmarked graves at former residential school sites in Manitoba.

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