

## **SOUTHERN CHIEFS' ORGANIZATION AND WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION PARTNER TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR FIRST NATION STUDENTS**

### **Jordan's Principle Coordinator will Address Service Gaps to Ensure First Nation Students have Equitable Opportunity to Achieve: Grand Chief Jerry Daniels**

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**ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB** — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) and Winnipeg School Division (WSD) have signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to help improve outcomes for First Nation students based in Winnipeg.

"First Nation children still carry the burden of intergenerational trauma resulting from the residential and day school systems, and we know they also continue to face barriers to accessing education, health care, and social services due to systemic racism," said Grand Chief Daniels. "The new Jordan's Principle Coordinator at Manitoba's largest school division will focus on ensuring First Nation students have equitable access to the full scope of services needed to ensure they achieve the best possible educational outcomes alongside their non-First Nation peers."

Jordan's Principle is named in memory of Jordan River Anderson, a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. Jordan was born in 1999 with multiple disabilities and stayed in the hospital from birth. When he was two years old, doctors said he could move to a special home for his medical needs. However, the federal and provincial governments could not agree on who should pay for his home-based care. As a result, Jordan never got to spend even one night at home and passed away at the age of five in the hospital.

In 2007, the House of Commons passed Jordan's Principle, a commitment to ensure First Nation children would get the products, services, and supports they need, when they need them. That commitment is still being brought to life.

"Since Jordan's Principle was introduced, our school division has accessed supports for our First Nation students in a variety of ways," said WSD Chief Superintendent and CEO Pauline Clarke. "The challenge has often been ensuring our First Nation students are recognized for their status in order to receive the supports of Jordan's Principle, and we believe this initiative will help address this and result in even more success for our students."

WSD's Inclusive Student Services, an established structure that provides students with a continuum of support, will continue to support First Nation students through this initiative, Clarke noted.

"This initiative is a first step in what SCO hopes will see Jordan's Principle staff in each school division across the province, which is a win-win for everyone involved in the education system," said Grand Chief Daniels. "We thank the Winnipeg School Division for partnering with SCO to bridge the educational gaps First Nation children experience."

SCO believes improved access to supports for success will increase graduation rates. Manitoba's four-year high school graduation rate is 81.9 per cent (2019 data). For non-Indigenous students the rate is 89.9 per cent and for Indigenous students it drops to 50.7 per cent.

The SCO JP Coordinator at WSD can be reached at [jpwsd@scoinc.mb.ca](mailto:jpwsd@scoinc.mb.ca) or 204-788-0203. SCO also has a Jordan's Principle Coordinator located at the Specialized Services for Children and Youth (SSCY) Centre to improve the coordination and integration of services for children and youth with disabilities and special needs. For more information on Jordan's Principle Services offered by SCO, please go to: [scoinc.mb.ca/jp-program/](http://scoinc.mb.ca/jp-program/)

-30-

*The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 81,000 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.*

*WSD is celebrating 150 years of learning this year and has 78 schools, 29,593 students and 4,573 full-time employees. Its purpose is to provide a learning environment that fosters the growth of each student's potential and provide equitable opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for meaningful participation in a global and diverse society.*

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