



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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BCAFN observes Canada Day 2021 by reflecting on the state of the Nation

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – June 30, 2021) – The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) will not celebrate Canada Day this year as mounting numbers of hidden graves of First Nations children are revealed at residential school sites. Instead, Canadians are encouraged to reflect and learn about the laws, policies and systems that were created and implemented to clear the land of the peoples who have lived on, and continue to inhabit, their territories since time immemorial. This is a time to come together, share dialogue and stories, and grieve for the loss of these precious and innocent lives.

“This is not a time of celebration as First Nations struggle with the evidence of the state’s genocidal intent and the lasting legacy of these ‘schools’. Each of us are on a truth finding and healing journey,” states Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “Canadians are encouraged to wear the orange ‘Every Child Matters’ t-shirts on July 1st to show solidarity and raise awareness about the lasting impacts of residential schools. Healing the Nation and continuing down the pathway to reconciliation will be no small task and we hope to continue with respectful reflection that will build a fire of inspiration, action and change.”

BCAFN is demanding immediate actions and accountability including an apology from the Catholic Church’s Pope Francis for its role in running residential schools. In addition, continued searches for children’s grave sites must go forward with the truth continuing to be revealed. Churches and governments must release all records related to residential schools. Each of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) 94 Calls to Action must be fully implemented.

For seven years the TRC provided time and space for individuals, families and communities to share their experiences of residential schools and released several reports based on 7,000 Survivor statements and 5 million documents from governments, churches and schools. TRC Commissioner Murray Sinclair estimates there may be as many as 25,000 graves of children buried at residential school sites across Canada. At least, 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children were forced into the residential school system.

Additional information:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission: <http://www.trc.ca>

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc: <https://tkemlups.ca>

Cowessess First Nation: <https://www.cowessessfn.com>

-30-

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