



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 22, 2024

BCAFN Congratulates City of Quesnel and Lhtako Dene Nation for Leading the Way on Reconciliation

(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George BC) - The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) is congratulating the Lhtako Dene Nation and the City of Quesnel for their work fighting against residential school denialism in Canada. When it came to light that the wife of Quesnel's mayor was distributing denialist literature, the council unanimously denounced the denialist book and supported the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"Residential schools killed thousands of Indigenous children, which is a hard pill to swallow for many non-Indigenous Canadians who continue to believe in national myths of fairness and justice," said Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "But the Church's own records confirm thousands of children never went home from these so-called schools. This is part of the history of this country, and denying these facts is extremely harmful to the progress we are making towards reconciliation," he continued.

Tkemplúps te Secwépemc first brought forward evidence of unmarked graves at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in 2021. Since then, First Nations across Canada have found evidence of approximately 1,900 unmarked graves at 16 other former residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found evidence of 3,213 deaths of children in residential school records, which they admit is unlikely to be a full accounting due to poor record keeping and many records not surviving.

"Residential school denialism needs to be called out when we see it. This is not a matter of opinion or free speech; it is hateful, harmful, and cannot be tolerated by Canadian society," said Regional Chief Teegee. "It is incumbent on our allies among non-Indigenous Canadians to speak up when they are confronted by this poison. The BCAFN applauds the work of the Lhtako Dene Nation and the city of Quesnel in stamping out denialism when confronted by it," he concluded.

Denialists often focus on errors in reporting or claim that students benefited from residential schools in an attempt to sow doubt about the reality of the extreme harms committed against Indigenous peoples by the residential school system. Survivors' stories, historical records, and the reports of staff at Indian Affairs, such as Peter Bryce, all confirm the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: the residential school system was an attempt at cultural genocide. That this attempt was not successful is a testament to the resilience of Indigenous peoples and the strength of those who were forced to attend these institutions.

Note: The Indian Residential Schools Survivor Society provides support for survivors and intergenerational survivors of residential schools. If you need support, please contact their 24-hour hotline at 1-800-721-0066.

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