



Historic Supreme Court of Canada decision says Canada and Churches are Jointly Liable for Residential Schools Abuses

***For Immediate Release
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Coast Salish Territory, BC – The leadership of First Nations Summit acknowledge the importance of the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Blackwater v. Plint*, commonly known as the Barney case, which was released this morning.

“Today’s Supreme Court of Canada decision is critically important for all First Nations victims of the horrendous atrocities suffered in the Indian Residential school system in Canada”, said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

“We commend the High Court for concluding that both the Church and Canada are vicariously liable for the wrongful acts committed. This decision will certainly have far reaching impacts for all victims with outstanding claims”, added Chief John. “We feel a critical part of the healing process the victims and their families continue to go through is a formal recognition that both Canada and the Church are to blame for the physical, mental, social and cultural abuses suffered in the Indian Residential School System”.

“It is our hope that this decision will encourage the Government of Canada and the Churches to move expeditiously to settle residential school claims in a fair, just and timely manner”, stated Chief John.

The Summit commended Mr. Barney and the other victims associated with the case for bringing forward the court action and seeing it through all the way to the Supreme Court. “Mr. Barney and the other victims in this case should be recognized for the strength, courage and determination they have shown in this 7 year court battle”, said Chief John.

Today, there are approximately 87,000 survivors and their families who continue to try to understand, heal from, and move beyond the devastating experiences brought about by the Indian Residential School system in Canada, 16 of which operated in British Columbia. It is generally accepted that the forced removal of children from their families was devastating for Aboriginal individuals, families, communities and cultures. As a direct result of horrific experiences in the Residential School system First Nation communities have experienced higher rates of violence: physical, domestic abuse (3x higher than mainstream society); sexual abuse: rape, incest, etc. (4-6x higher); lack of family and community cohesion; suicide (6x higher); addictions: drugs, alcohol, food; health problems: diabetes (3x higher), heart disease, obesity; poverty; unemployment; illiteracy; high school dropout (63% do not graduate); despair; hopelessness; and more.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

For Further Information:

Colin Braker

First Nations Summit: Office: 604.926.9903/Cell: 604.328.4094