

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

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Canada Day, an opportunity to learn about Indigenous issues and the negative effects of Canada's colonial history

(Xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) – Canadians and many across the globe have been shocked and saddened by recent confirmations, at what might be only the first of many former Indian Residential School sites, of unmarked burials containing the remains of hundreds of children. These burial confirmations are no surprise to Indigenous people, who have always known the sad and horrific reality that many Indigenous children taken away to residential schools, never returned home, while many others were victim to physical, mental, and sexual abuse. These horrific institutions were used as a means to strip the Indigenous identity, culture, and language out of the children who attended.

The burial confirmations have prompted much media coverage and dialogue regarding the devastating impacts these genocidal institutions had, and continue to have, on Indigenous peoples and communities across Canada and represent one of the darkest realities of Canada's history. This is an important reason many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people either have no interest or mixed feelings about celebrating Canada Day tomorrow. The First Nations Summit views Canada Day 2021 as an opportunity for Canadians to take some time to learn more about Indigenous issues and the negative effects of Canada's colonial history, including the Indian Residential School system.

"We cannot go forward until we recognize and acknowledge the truth about the wrongs of past. We encourage Canadians to take some time to read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) [94 Calls to Action](#), which are collectively a blueprint for reconciliation. It is unacceptable that six years following the release of the TRC final report, less than 15 Calls to Action have been fully implemented. We must stand together and demand all levels of government take the necessary steps to immediately implement all 94 Calls to Action," said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit (FNS) Political Executive. "The work of the TRC and the courageous testimony of the survivors and family members, who shared their truths of the depths and consequences of the multi-layered and intergenerational impacts of the Indian Residential School system, must not go in vain."

"Over the past few weeks we have seen Indigenous issues, especially those related to Residential Schools issues, at the forefront. If the rumors of a Summer or Fall federal Election are true, we must ensure Indigenous issues are at the forefront of every federal political party's campaign platform. Now is the time to let the party leaders know that the Canadian electorate will be asking if they will be taking all necessary steps to immediately implement the TRC Calls to Action, take immediate steps to stop denying the inherent Rights of Indigenous peoples, take immediate steps to stop fighting Indigenous Children in the Courts, and immediately implement the rulings of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The answers to these questions will provide the Canadian electorate with a clear indication of which parties support reconciliation and which do not," added Lydia Hwitsum of the FNS Political Executive.

"There are many ways individual Canadians, and well as, media, business and industry can play an active role in reconciliation efforts. Today's national radio initiative, *A Day to Listen: Amplifying Indigenous Voices* is a prime example. We commend the Downie Wenjack Fund (DWF), whose mission is to 'create a pathway towards reconciliation, and to improve the lives of Indigenous people by building awareness, education, and connections between all Canadians', for taking a lead role. The stories from Indigenous leaders, residential school survivors, elders, musicians, and teachers will undoubtedly lead to greater dialogue on reconciliation and implementation to the TRC Calls to Action," concluded Robert Phillips of the FNS Political Executive. "We hold our hands up to the participating stations and others from media, business, industry and individuals, who are also playing an active role in reconciliation.

Orange Shirt Day (September 30th) has become a way to recognize and remember the atrocities of Canada's Indian Residential School system and to acknowledge the tenet that "Every Child Matters". The First Nations Summit encourages all Canadians to wear orange on Canada Day as a symbol that you are willing to acknowledge the destruction and pain caused by Indian Residential schools and Canada's colonial history, as well as to remember the children who never went home.

For additional information please visit these online resources:

<i>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada:</i>	www.trc.ca
<i>Reconciliation Canada:</i>	www.reconciliationcanada.ca
<i>Indian Residential School Survivors Society:</i>	www.irsss.ca
<i>UBC Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre:</i>	www.irshdc.ubc.ca
<i>First Nations Education Steering Committee Education Resources:</i>	www.fnesc.ca/irsr/

Supports are available for residential school survivors and intergenerational survivors. Please reach out to one of the following if in need:

<i>IRSSS Toll-Free Line:</i>	1-800-721-0066
<i>24hr National Crisis Line:</i>	1-866-925-4419
<i>KUU-US Crisis Line:</i>	1-800-588-8717
<i>Tsow-Tun-Le Lum Cultural Support or Outreach Services:</i>	1-888-403-3123

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

For further information:

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