

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

September 30, 2022

FNLN Calls for Provincial Statutory Holiday September 30th for Commemoration and Healing

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) On the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR), the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) is deeply concerned that the Province of British Columbia has so far failed to designate September 30th a statutory holiday marking the profound horrors of residential schools, and the enduring needs for healing and honour of survivors, commemoration and widespread public education.

The ongoing recoveries of missing and unidentified graves at former Residential School sites have brought to public attention the immense trauma, violence, and abuse perpetrated against Indigenous children, as well as deep rooted systemic racism across Canadian institutions and public sectors. The Province of BC committed to engage residential school survivors and Indigenous partners and communities on designating the NDTR as a statutory holiday, and how September 30th should be observed each year in BC. As directed by First Nations leadership in BC through resolutions, the FNLN calls on BC to honour that commitment and carry out the crucial work of creating a new provincial statutory holiday in BC and to fully resource Indigenous healing supports and the creation of Indigenous-led education materials in the public sector and education institutions in alignment with their obligations under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, "BC's immediate response to the passing of the Queen was a prompt provincial memorial holiday, despite her being the head of the colonial institution that spearheaded and perpetuated the continued oppression, subjugation, forced assimilation and genocide of Indigenous people in these lands. The fact that BC has not afforded Indigenous people the same dignity and time for reflection and healing on September 30th is unconscionable. One day a year for Truth and Reconciliation is a bare minimum for the thousands of lives that were lost or have been impacted by residential and day schools, and the continued delay and denial for survivors' healing demonstrates the lasting inequity and blatant racism in this province."

"BC First Nations have for far too long faced the undue burden of intergenerational healing from the harms and atrocities committed against our children in the residential school system. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is an important opportunity for all Canadians to remember and recognize this horrific time in our history. The BC government should elevate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation from observance to a statutory holiday as an important commitment to continuing to walk down a path toward reconciliation," said Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit political executive.

"It's been nearly three years since the BC government adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a shared framework for reconciliation. However, the Province's continued failure to designate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday is a grave impediment to this progress. September 30th is a day to honour residential school survivors, their families, and their communities. As First Nations, we have been grieving and processing the history and ongoing legacy of Canada's horrific residential school system for many generations. One day out of the year dedicated to honouring



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survivors and sitting with their stories is not too much to ask. If the Province of British Columbia is genuinely committed to reconciliation, they must prioritize public commemoration of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a vital part of our society's reconciliation process," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee of the BC Assembly of First Nations.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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