Message from the Grand Chief

Message to Commemorate the First National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee (September 30, 2021) – The Government of Canada recently passed legislation making September 30 a federal statutory holiday called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. What began as Orange Shirt Day back in 2013, the purpose of this day is to bring awareness and allow all Canadians to learn more about a very dark part of Canada's history, the Indian Residential School system.

As Eeyouch, the impacts of intergenerational trauma residential schools have caused to our many relatives and fellow community members who are survivors is undeniable. The consequences of assimilation policies and trauma can still be felt to this day, as it has been tied to the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and the systemic discrimination that Indigenous peoples face across the country. As cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls sadly continue to rise and we commemorate the first anniversary of Joyce Echaquan's tragic death, we will continue to stand and call upon governments and organizations to go beyond just words and collaborate in establishing concrete actions to help address the deep scars left by past and present assimilation policies.

In Eeyou Istchee, September 30 will be a day to honour the children we have lost and the survivors who have returned home to us. It is a time to show our respect and compassion to those who endured the horrors of this tragic past. The Cree Nation is committed to providing support to our community members on their healing journey. We, as a Nation, also have a responsibility to the survivors of the two residential schools formerly located on Fort George Island and to the families of those children who never returned home to speak their truth. We stand in solidarity with survivors of residential schools and their families as they continue to look ahead to better days. The Cree Nation is behind you.

Without truth, there can be no reconciliation. Safe spaces to allow the truth to come to light and honour the resilience and grace of Indigenous peoples' are fundamental to change, to preparing better futures for our children. Recognizing the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation is one of many ways to honour our brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, mothers, fathers, and friends. On September 30, we encourage you to wear an orange shirt, to learn more about the legacy of residential schools and participate in different events to raise awareness organized across Eeyou Istchee.

Resources
Events in Eeyou Istchee: https://creehealth.org/orange-shirt-day-2021
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation: https://nctr.ca/