



**YUKON
REGION**

News Release
A Yukon that Leads

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region Official Statement on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation 2023

Whitehorse, Yukon – AFN Yukon Region and Acting Regional Chief Mary Jane Jim share reflections on Canada's 3rd National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

On this third year of observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we take a moment to acknowledge the painful truths associated with Indian Residential Schools. This day serves as a reminder of our collective commitment to actively engage in the process of reconciliation.

Today, as we observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which coincides with Orange Shirt Day, we express gratitude to Phyllis Jack Webstad for igniting the Orange Shirt Day movement through her advocacy. This day highlights the importance of acknowledging the truths shared by Survivors, Elders, and Indigenous communities. We wear orange shirts to honour every Indigenous child affected by the residential school system and work towards reconciliation, remembering those who suffered and those still affected by colonial traumas. Communities across Turtle Island join together in this commemoration.

In June 2023, Carcross/Tagish First Nation extended an invitation to the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children Project (YRSMCP) in the spirit of true reconciliation. This week, the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children Project (YRSMCP) released their report of the ground-penetrating radar (GPR) which identified 15 potential unmarked graves at the former Chooutla Residential School which was on the Carcross/Tagish First Nations traditional territory.

We want to acknowledge the Chooutla Residential School committee members who began this hard work – and heart work – of sharing the truths of residential schools' impacts on First Nation children and families within the Yukon. This comes on the heels of the findings of the 215 children buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in

2021, which prompted calls to action from across Canada. These calls to action put pressure the governments and churches who were responsible for funding and running residential institutions in order to hold them accountable for the traumas, harms, and deaths they caused.

Acting Regional Chief Mary Jane Jim shared, “before true reconciliation, we must uncover and fully understand the truth. The families of the children who tragically never returned home are entitled to the release of their family members' records, and the rest of the country must bear witness to them as well. For generations, Indigenous peoples have remained custodians of the truth of our shared histories with Canada. This truth has been passed down through the enduring voices of Elders, Survivors, and truth-tellers, who have bravely shared these histories despite the immense trauma and pain they invoke. These stories, steeped in poignant grief and resilience, must not be lost to time or indifference.”

“As we tread the path of truth and reconciliation, we must hold accountable the governments and churches that had a hand in these historical injustices. Accountability carries the weight of our past and the hope for a just future; it is a crucial step in honoring the courage and resilience of those affected and a pledge never to repeat such atrocities. As we remember, learn, and strive towards reconciliation, let us remember that truth is the foundation from which healing and understanding can grow,”

The AFN Yukon Region encourages all people to take time today to seek out ways to engage in reconciliation within their communities, learn the truth, and learn about the people whose land this country has been built upon.

Available support resources to those who need them:

Indian Residential School Survivors Society: 1 (800) 721-0066

National Residential School Crisis Line: 1 (866) 925-4419

First Nation and Inuit Hope and Wellness 24/7 Help Line: 1 (855) 242-3310

National Indian Residential School Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419

Kids Help Phone Line: 1 (800) 668-6868 or text 686868

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