



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

For immediate release
July 1, 2021

MKO Statement on Canada Day 2021: Grand Chief Garrison Settee Encourages Canadians to Stand in Solidarity with Indigenous People Across the Country

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is issuing the following statement on Canada Day as we continue to mourn the loss of thousands of children due to residential schools throughout the country.

Grand Chief Garrison Settee states:

“Yesterday, we heard yet another announcement of children being found in unmarked graves. This time there were 182 graves found close to the former St. Eugene Mission School in British Columbia. There will be more children found, including young people right here in Manitoba. On Canada Day, I’m asking all Canadians to stand in solidarity with Indigenous people as we continue to mourn the loss of our innocent children.

Many First Nations people would assert that Canada has a shameful relationship with its first peoples, including prolonged attempts to wipe us out in the name of religion. The discovery of the remains of thousands of children is triggering for so many of us as the majority of us are survivors or the children or grandchildren of survivors.

MKO stands in solidarity with all First Nations that are impacted by the loss of innocent children. Today we are asking all Canadians to take a moment to reflect on the fact that Indigenous peoples continue to be treated as second-class citizens in our own homelands. We have worse health outcomes than non-Indigenous people, more of us live in poverty, we are overrepresented in prisons and in the child welfare system, and the list goes on. Sadly, many First Nations do not have access to clean drinking water in the year 2021.

Many of our children still cannot access education in our own communities. Despite this, our people remain committed to becoming educated and they take the brave step of leaving home to get their grade 12 education and then to pursue their post-secondary studies. We need to see all children be able to get their grade 12 education in their home community.

Today I will celebrate the bravery and strength of these young people by attending a graduation ceremony in Chemawawin Cree Nation. I will be there to commend all the students who committed to finishing their education assistant program despite all the barriers they may have faced.

Meanwhile in Winnipeg, MKO staff will take part in the No Pride in Genocide event starting at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights at 12 noon. You will see people moving through Winnipeg and throughout the country wearing orange as a way to honour the children we have lost. We invite all

Canadians to stand with us and wear orange instead of red today.

It is important we continue to talk about and share our knowledge of the legacy of residential schools. The impact of the schools continues to affect all of us today. The healing work needs to continue.

MKO also encourages all Canadians to learn more about Canada's history with First Nations people. Read the reports from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and learn their 94 Calls to Action. Pick some of those Calls to Action and work on them in your communities—do what you can to make a difference. Share your knowledge with other people. Working together, we can build a much better country, one that we can all be proud to celebrate together.”

-30-

For more information:

Melanie Ferris, Communications Officer

Phone: 204-612-1284

Email: melanie.ferris@mkonorth.com

Web: <http://mkonation.com/>

