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National Chief Yakeleya Responds to Residential Schools Day Scholars Survivor and Descendant Settlement Agreement Being Reached with Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – June 09, 2021] – The Representative Plaintiffs in part of a class action lawsuit of *Gottfriedson v. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada* filed in 2012 by Tk'emlups te' Secwepemc and shíshá'lh Nation in B.C. announced that they have signed a settlement agreement with Canada on behalf of Day Scholars and their descendants.

Day Scholars attended residential schools but went home at night because they lived nearby. Day Scholars suffered the same destruction of language and culture as other students at residential schools, but were unjustly excluded from the original common experience payment as part of the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

“As the Assembly of First Nations Portfolio Holder for Residential Schools, I am proud of the strength and determination shown by Day Scholars and their descendants to not give up over the course of this process, which has gone on for far too long,” said National Chief Norman Yakeleya. “During the past 14 years, Day Scholars' lives have been lost while those who continued this fight have been retraumatized by this experience time and time again. After years of denial by the Canadian government of the cultural genocide these survivors faced, this settlement marks an important milestone -- it means that the losses suffered by Day Scholars and their descendants are finally being acknowledged”.

Yesterday's settlement includes \$10,000 for each eligible Day Scholar and provides \$50M for a Day Scholars Revitalization Fund to support healing, linguistic and cultural reclamation for Day Scholars and their descendants. All Day Scholars who were alive as of May 30, 2005 are included in the settlement. In cases where a Day Scholar has died since that time, their families or estates are able to apply on their behalf. Before compensation can begin, the Federal Court must first determine if this settlement is fair, reasonable and in the best interests of Class Members. A settlement approval hearing is scheduled to begin on September 7, 2021. There are currently 105 First Nation Bands suing for reparations and that part of the lawsuit will continue on its own after both sides agreed to split the class-action months ago. It's scheduled to go trial September 2022.

“I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that no amount of money can change the dark legacy of Canada's residential and day school systems, but it does demonstrate how far we've come,” continued Yakeleya. “Now, let's focus our collective efforts on how far we still have to go. As First Nations people, let us continue to reclaim our traditions, empower our descendants, and revitalize the culture that was stolen from us through these systems of oppression. Let us use the strength of those survivors no longer with us and honour their experience by letting today be a reminder that the federal government is still fighting survivors in court. In their honour, we must keep up the fight and ensure the momentum of this victory continues.” concluded Yakeleya.

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