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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DENE NATION CALLS FOR DECISIVE ACTION AGAINST RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL DENIALISM**

**[OCTOBER 15, 2026 -YELLOWKNIFE, DENENDEH] —** Dene Nation's position is that Residential school denialism is not an innocent disagreement about history. It is an attack on Survivors, their families, Indigenous Peoples, and the truth documented through testimony, investigations, and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Canada has already established a legislative precedent. The 2022 law criminalizing Holocaust denial recognizes that deliberate denial, distortion, and minimization of historical atrocities can promote hatred and endanger vulnerable communities. Dene National Chief George Mackenzie states, "If Canada can protect Jewish communities by restricting Holocaust denial, it must provide equal protection to Indigenous Peoples confronting denial of residential schools, hospitals, deaths, abuse, and the genocidal purpose of colonial policies."

At present, denying or downplaying residential school atrocities remains legal. Proposed amendments to section 319 of the Criminal Code—and a Senate amendment to Bill C-9 that would have addressed residential school denialism—were not adopted. This failure leaves Survivors and Indigenous communities without the protection Canada has deemed necessary in another context.

Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew stated on October 9, 2026 in a CBC interview that residential school denialism is "detestable but not illegal," and expressed opposition to criminalizing it through federal legislation like MP Leah Gazan's Bill C-254. Instead, he argued that the issue should be addressed through ongoing public education and combatting misinformation.

"Canada cannot demand reconciliation while permitting the denial of the institutions that caused profound and continuing harm," said Dene National Chief George Mackenzie. "Residential school denialism is an assault on Survivors and an attempt to erase Indigenous history. Equal justice requires equal protection. Parliament must act."

The federal government must recognize residential schools as a central fact of Canadian history and legislate clear consequences for wilfully denying, condoning, minimizing, or misrepresenting their documented harms in ways that promote hatred against Indigenous Peoples.

Chief Mackenzie calls on Parliament, provincial governments, educators, and all Canadians to support survivor-led education, truth-based public policy, accountability, and legislation that makes reconciliation meaningful rather than rhetorical.

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George Mackenzie,
Dene National Chief, Regional Chief AFN-NT Region

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