



# FORT MCKAY

## FIRST NATION

### Media statement

#### **Fort McKay First Nation will not celebrate Canada Day this year.**

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Fort McKay First Nation will not be celebrating Canada Day this year. On July 1st, Fort McKay will hold a community gathering to honour the 215 (and all) children who never made it home from residential schools, to support the survivors, and to heal as a community.

Around the world, Canada is recognized and respected. It is a refuge for those fleeing cultural and religious persecution. It is a peacekeeper. It is a multi-cultural mosaic where new Canadians and their cultures are welcomed and protected. This international reputation should make Canadians proud.

But there are chapters in this country's story – both historic and current – that do not reflect Canada's reputation. There was a clear and deliberate effort by leaders of Canada's government to eliminate Indigenous cultures, languages, and identity. The most elaborate part of this scheme was the century-long administration of the Canadian Indian Residential School Program. In these institutions, Indigenous children were separated and isolated from their families, cultures, and languages. Countless children faced physical, sexual, and mental abuse. Many children never made it home.

Generations of Indigenous peoples in this country have paid a human toll. The intergenerational trauma caused by the genocidal acts of residential schools is a reality for Indigenous peoples today – in communities without access to clean water or adequate health care and education, in memories repressed with substance use, in grief, and in unmarked graves of stolen children who were not allowed to go home. This reality should not make Canadians proud.

"We are not denying or dismissing Canada's global reputation as a safe and peace-keeping country. But with the ongoing efforts to locate, identify, and honour Indigenous children who died at former residential schools across this country, this is simply not a year to celebrate. This is a year to listen, to learn, and to act. Our Nation calls on all Canadians to listen to the experiences of Indigenous peoples, to learn about Canada's history and how it affects Indigenous peoples today, and to act with compassion to help make this a country of reconciliation."

- Chief Mel Grandjamb, Fort McKay First Nation



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Fort McKay First Nation's July 1st in-person event is only open to Fort McKay First Nation members and Fort McKay community members, but the gathering will be streamed on Facebook Live. This is the first time the community has gathered since the COVID-19 pandemic. The gathering will include Cree and Dene prayers, drumming, dancing, and cultural ceremonies.

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**Resources**

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)

[Indigenous Canada – a free course from University of Alberta](#)

[Historic and modern treaties in Canada, treaty rights, and the treaty relationship](#)