

National Day of Healing and Reconciliation

Mr. Speaker, next Thursday, June 11th, will mark the one year anniversary of the Government of Canada's apology to Aboriginal victims of the Indian Residential School System.

The Assembly of First Nations has called on provincial, territorial and national governments to celebrate this day annually, as 'the National Day of Reconciliation'. This reconciliation is currently honoured and recognized, across our country, on a variety of dates between May 26th, as recognized by the 15th Assembly, and June 21st, National Aboriginal Day.

The residential school experience is an indelible part of our history and our culture In the Northwest Territories. As northerners, we continue to work together to heal the many ills that were created during this chapter of our society.

As a Government, we are working to support this healing, through our work with the Residential Schools Interagency Committee.

Through the Department of Health and Social Services, we continue to provide trauma support, counselling, and referral to advanced psychological services. The Department of Justice funds community programs that support and encourage healing. Meanwhile, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment continues to work with former students to provide records related to their school years and the topic is now covered at age-appropriate levels at several points in the NWT's Social Studies and Northern Studies curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, as we reconcile the history of residential schools, it is important that our children understand the full legacy of these schools in the Northwest Territories. As communities, families and educators, we must not shy from discussions of this topic.

We need to work together to ensure that the children of tomorrow are confident and empowered, and that the cycle of misfortune that was created from the Residential School experience is now over.

Bishop Murray Chatlain's apology to NWT Dene last week and the appointment of new individuals to lead the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for residential schools are other important steps that have recently been taken in this journey.

This anniversary is an opportunity for us all to consider this part of our history and the much more positive future that we can build from the closure that was begun by the Prime Minister's apology, one year ago.

It will represent an opportunity for all Canadians, political and Aboriginal leaders, to join together and declare their broad commitment to acknowledge the past and work together for a better future. I encourage all NWT residents to recognize and embrace the National Day of Reconciliation as part of the journey of healing that we must all take together.