



*The following statement is distributed on behalf of the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils*

**For Immediate Release**



**Charlottetown, PEI – 9 September 2021**

## **Epekwitk Assembly of Councils Responds to Premier King's Announcement Proclaiming September 30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation a Statutory Holiday**

The Epekwitk Assembly of Councils is extremely pleased to see Premier King announce government's recognition of September 30<sup>th</sup> as a holiday - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, with Provincial government offices and schools being closed for the day out of respect for the importance of this day.

The Assembly is especially pleased to hear that the Premier will be seeking the support of the Hon. Peter Bevan Baker and Sonny Gallant, Leader of the Third Party, to co-sponsor an amendment to the *Employment Standards Act* to officially recognize September 30<sup>th</sup> as a provincial statutory holiday for Prince Edward Island, going forward.

This will make Prince Edward Island the first province to recognize the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation as a provincial statutory holiday and the Assembly is confident that Mr. Bevan Baker and Mr. Gallant will support this important step towards reconciliation.

The Assembly thanks Premier King and his government for their continued support and commitment to working with the First Nations of Epekwitk (PEI) in a way that is respectful and advances reconciliation. This announcement shows real, concrete action being taken by government.

This decision signals understanding and respect for the fact that this is a day of mourning and contemplation for many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across the country.

"This is an important day of sombre reflection, and it is encouraging to see Premier King's government recognize this, and for making the commitment to advance this recognition even further by co-sponsoring an amendment to make this a provincial statutory holiday for all Islanders. Not a day for celebration but a day to allow all Islanders to pause in respect of Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq and all Indigenous people of this country who continue to suffer the lasting impacts of the Residential Schools policy." said Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nation. "We must take time to look, listen and learn the hard truths that have been hidden for too long, and reflect on what that means for us today. Without truth, there can be no reconciliation and this announcement will dedicate a day annually for all Islanders to reflect and understand these truths so that we can all move forward together."

"The province has made the right decision to declare this day a statutory holiday, which gives Islanders an opportunity to contemplate the purpose of this day," added Chief Junior Gould of Abegweit First Nation. "It is my hope that people will take more than just the day on September 30<sup>th</sup> to think deeply and critically about the history of residential schools in our country and the ongoing devastating impacts."

-30-

For more information, contact:

Sean Doke at [sdoke@lnuey.ca](mailto:sdoke@lnuey.ca) or 902.330.4420