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**For Immediate Release**



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## **Epekwitk (PEI) Commemorates Inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**

Today, people in Epekwitk (PEI) and across Canada are observing the first ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This is a day to commemorate the impacts of residential schools, and a day of mourning and solemn reflection. It is crucial to raise awareness and honour the survivors of residential schools, their families, and communities.

For the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Premier Dennis King and Senator Brian Francis will be joined by Lennox Island First Nation Chief Darlene Bernard and Abegweit First Nation Chief Junior Gould to observe a moment of reflection at 12 noon before lowering the flags to half-mast at the provincial buildings.

All Epekwitnewaq (Islanders) and people from across the Nation are encouraged to observe a moment of silence at 12 noon and reflect on the colonial history and lasting impacts of residential schools in Canada.

The Epekwitk Assembly of Councils building will be lit in orange starting the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> through Oct. 1 in honour of all those affected by residential schools. The orange lights will be visible in the glass curtain wall on all three floors of the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils building.

“Today marks the first ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This is an important day of sombre reflection. It’s 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. Let’s use this day for all Islanders to reflect and understand these truths so that we can all move forward together.”

“As we mark two minutes of silence on National Truth and Reconciliation Day, Islanders have an opportunity to contemplate the purpose of this day and to learn more about the history of Residential schools, ask questions, do research and add their voices in support of Indigenous issues,” 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.”

"Today is about taking the time to listen and learn from Indigenous peoples in Prince Edward Island and Canada," said Premier Dennis King. "This may be the first year we recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation but the work that we must all do on reconciliation is year round. Everyone has a role to play when it comes to meaningful reconciliation, and I have every belief that Islanders will all do their part to support Indigenous peoples living in Prince Edward Island."