



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs  
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## **Statement by Grand Chief Arlen Dumas on Bill C-5 (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba** – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in recognition of Bill C-5 achieving royal assent. Following the news of the discovery of the 215 children found on the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds, Bill C-5 was expedited through third reading and unanimously passed in the Senate on its way to royal assent. The AMC acknowledges Minister Guilbeault and pays tribute to and acknowledges Senators Mary Jane McCallum and Senator Don Plett, and all Manitoba Senators for their support for Bill C-5. The Act creates a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a statutory holiday that will commemorate the victims and survivors of the Indian Residential Schools and will be observed on September 30<sup>th</sup> each year. The AMC recognizes September 30<sup>th</sup> as a solemn and somber day of mourning to honour the victims and survivors of the Indian Residential Schools.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, “Bill C-5: An Act to amend consequential legislation to create a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, achieved royal assent on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, as First Nations and the former Indian Residential School (IRS) students in Manitoba continue to grieve for the recently discovered souls who lost their lives as a result of attending residential schools. This national day of remembrance will ensure that the missing and murdered First Nations children are formally remembered and memorialized every year on what was is known as Orange Shirt Day.”

“This Act responds to two the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, as it amends the oath of citizenship to reflect First Nations’ Treaty Rights as a response to Call to Action #94. While the AMC appreciates these measures as immediate responses by the federal government to the tragic events in Kamloops, they represent only incremental steps towards justice for the victims and survivors of the residential schools. Much more needs to be done to address the increasing anger and frustration of First Nations and our Canadian allies. Government must pressure the Catholic Church for full reparations and a formal apology to the former IRS students and those affected inter-generationally by the role of the Catholic Church in the running of the residential schools. Another aspect that must be done is for Canada to finally take a transformative approach to how it deals with First Nations, and change its existing colonial laws and genocidal policies that led to residential schools in the first place, and continue to affect the economic and social wellbeing of First Nations women, children and families and nations.”

“The AMC has put Prime Minister on notice that that the honour of the Crown is at stake and that the government must conduct proper and meaningful consultations with the First Nations in Manitoba on the many other legislative measures that it is pushing through its parliament, including Bill C-15 (*An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*). We realize that this particular bill has now gone through 3<sup>rd</sup> reading, and we urge the Senate to put this work on hold while our leadership tackles this issue before them.”

“The AMC is working with First Nation leadership and our partners to determine how we go forward so that we can meaningfully assist First Nations to honour the spirits of those who did not survive residential school.”

“In closing, I note that this now national day on September 30<sup>th</sup> each year began as a grassroots movement of First Nation people. Phyllis Webstad, who is from the Stswecem’c/Xga’tem First Nation, was simply one voice that spoke out about her experience in residential school and her voice grew to a National day of recognition eight years ago. I remind everyone that it takes just one unwavering voice to stand in their truth; just one voice that calls out for others to join; which then becomes a set of voices that stand in unison and speaks out; which then becomes the voice of an entire country that now stands as in unison to demand change and action. This is a reminder to all, that a single grain of sand can tip the scales. To all First Nations and allies alike, please join that voice; join that call to action,” concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

Former students and others who may be re-traumatized by the unfolding events related to IRS student deaths may seek support through [Hope for Wellness Help Line](https://hopeforwellness.ca) at 1-855-242-3310 (toll-free) or the online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca) open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also, for immediate assistance to those who may need it, the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day at 1-866-925-4419.

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**About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.