



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 30, 2026

What September 30 Actually Asks of Us

VICTORIA, BC - "The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCA AFC) stands with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. What happened this weekend was not a protest; it was a targeted act of racist intimidation and residential school denialism. To mask your face and mock the search for the children who never returned home—on the very land where they were taken—is a profound act of dehumanization. This hatred did not appear out of nowhere; it is the result of years of denialism being given a platform. We are done with empty condemnation. We demand accountability and the absolute protection of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc's authority over their own healing. Our communities will not be intimidated into silence." — Annette Morgan (Nox Stikine), President, BCA AFC

September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It honours residential school survivors, their families and communities, and the children who never returned home.

The day responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 80. It also shares its date with Orange Shirt Day, inspired by Phyllis Webstad's story of having her orange shirt taken from her at residential school. Both exist because survivors spoke the truth and demanded that Canada listen.

This year, in the days before September 30, masked individuals displayed a banner reading "GOT BONES?" at Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, mocking the search for missing children and turning a community's grief into a public taunt.

For a community carrying the grief of residential schools and the responsibility of searching for its missing children, this act adds another burden: intimidation at a time meant for remembrance.

A Pattern Years in the Making

Residential school denialism did not begin with this banner. It has been promoted through political platforms, publications and public events, and repeated in everyday conversations.

Some politicians have faced consequences, including removal from party caucuses. Yet the rhetoric has continued, and new political platforms have given it further reach. Public condemnation has not been enough to stop the harm.

Denialism includes denying or minimizing the harm of residential schools, discrediting survivors, and treating documented abuse and deaths as though they remain an open question. This denial and this mockery draw on a worldview that has never fully accepted Indigenous peoples as entitled to the same dignity, rights, and grief as others. That worldview does not stay quiet when left unchallenged. It resurfaces specifically when Indigenous peoples gain ground, whether through land recognition, legislative progress, or simply having their documented truths taken seriously. Denial and mockery are how that resistance shows up in public.



The harm reaches beyond arguments about history. It targets living people, undermines survivors' testimony, and makes communities carrying out searches less safe.

Shared Responsibilities

For survivors, families and Indigenous communities, there is no obligation to reassure others or explain your grief. Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and every affected community have the authority to make those decisions.

While the actions of a few individuals can cause deep harm and ripple through our society, we see many people across this province who refuse to accept this hatred. This is not just an Indigenous issue; it is a challenge to the health of our society as a whole.

As the Honourable Murray Sinclair, former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, reminded us, we do not ask the United States to forget September 11 or ask Canadians to stop honouring those who died in the Second World War. Yet Indigenous people are repeatedly told to move past residential schools. Survivors, their families and the children who never returned home deserve the same respect for remembrance.

Non-Indigenous people have a responsibility to challenge denialism when it appears in their homes, workplaces and communities. That work includes learning the documented history, correcting false claims, and supporting survivors without asking them to defend their experiences again.

Governments also have responsibilities. Canada's Criminal Code already addresses the wilful promotion of hatred against an identifiable group, a provision used to prosecute Holocaust denial. MP Leah Gazan's Bill C-254 proposes extending that same protection to Indigenous peoples facing residential school denialism.

We can ask our Members of Parliament and the federal government to advance this legislation and explain what further action they will take to protect survivors and communities.

The Role of Law Enforcement

The RCMP must move beyond observation. We expect a transparent, thorough investigation that treats this incident with the gravity it demands. This was not a minor disturbance; it was targeted intimidation. We call on the RCMP to ensure this investigation results in tangible consequences and to fully respect Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc's authority over their own safety and commemoration.

Taking a Stand

"As an organization, we are taking a stand against extremist hate. It is absolutely unacceptable, and such wretched displays of ignorance should be condemned in our society." — Austyn Jackson

"This is more than an act of intimidation. It is a reminder that racism and hatred continue to threaten the safety and well-being of Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia. Our communities should never have to face intimidation because of who we are, where we come from, or the



BC Association of Aboriginal
Friendship Centres

BCAAFC

histories we carry. We stand firmly with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and with Survivors, families, and all Indigenous communities who are affected by this kind of hatred." — Celeste Hayward, Executive Director, BCAAFC

What We Can Build Together

September 30 offers an opportunity to turn remembrance into lasting support.

We can challenge a false claim. We can ask our elected representatives for action. We can contribute to community-led searches, survivor supports and Indigenous organizations. We can follow communities' guidance about the support they need.

Each action helps build a country where survivors are treated with dignity, communities can search for their children safely, and truth is met with care and responsibility.

That work belongs to all of us. September 30 can be a day when more people choose to take it up and carry it into the year ahead.