

Final Truth and Reconciliation national event to take place March 27-30 in Edmonton

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and the City of Edmonton announced today that the seventh and final TRC National Event will take place at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton, from March 27 to 30, 2014. The announcement was made at a news conference hosted by Mayor Don Iveson at Edmonton City Hall.

The Alberta National Event will feature a variety of activities: public and private statements to the Commission by those who have been affected by Indian residential schools and their legacy; dialogues on reconciliation; traditional ceremonies; Survivor gatherings; an education day for high school and junior high school students; cultural performances; films and more.

"Over a period of 116 years, thousands of Aboriginal children in Alberta were sent to Indian Residential Schools in order to be stripped of families, language, cultural identity and traditions," said TRC Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild. "This policy has been devastating to Aboriginal families and communities, and to relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. It's time for a new relationship rooted in mutual respect."

Everyone – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – is invited to attend. No registration is required and the event is free.

This is the TRC's seventh and final National Event. Alberta's capital city of Edmonton is home to more residential school survivors than any other population centre in the province.

"This is an opportunity for Edmonton to be at the forefront of a dialogue about how Aboriginal communities have been affected as a result of the Residential School System, and how we are all a part of the healing process," said Mayor Don Iveson. "I am not only proud to welcome the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on behalf of all Edmontonians; I am proud to be strengthening ties with Aboriginal peoples based on a mutual understanding of history and the way ahead."

One highlight of TRC National Events is the induction of TRC Honorary Witnesses. Today, the TRC announced that Wetaskiwin Mayor Bill Elliot will be among those to be inducted at the Alberta National Event. Previously inducted Honorary Witnesses include former Prime Minister Joe Clark and former Governor General Michaëlle Jean, both of whom will take part in the Alberta National Event.

"The term Honorary Witness refers to the ancient spiritual principle of preserving historic moments by bearing witness to them and communicating their truth and importance to others," said TRC Commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson. "We are very grateful that Mayor Elliot will join the ranks of the prominent public figures who have taken on the role of TRC Honorary Witness."

Program details for the Alberta National Event are available at www.trc.ca where the event will also be streamed live.

In preparation for the Alberta National Event, the TRC held public hearings last year in communities throughout Alberta: Red Deer, Slave Lake, High Level, Maskwacis (formerly Hobbema), Lethbridge, and Calgary.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an independent commission established as a result of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in the 130-year history of the residential schools in Canada, and to guide and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

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