



WHAT WE HEARD

ACKNOWLEDGING AND SUPPORTING THE
NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND
RECONCILIATION

RAPPORT SUR CE QUE NOUS AVONS ENTENDU

RECONNAÎTRE ET SOUTENIR LA JOURNÉE
NATIONALE DE LA VÉRITÉ ET DE LA
RÉCONCILIATION

Le present document contient la traduction
française du résumé.

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Trigger Warning

The GNWT recognizes that the ongoing conversation about Truth and Reconciliation is necessary yet difficult, and that residents may need support.

- Former residential school students can call 1-866-925-4419 for emotional crisis referral services and information on other health supports from the Government of Canada.
- Indigenous peoples across Canada can also go to The Hope for Wellness Help Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for counselling and crisis intervention. Call the tollfree Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 or connect to the online chat.
- In the NWT, the NWT Help Line offers free support. It is 100% free and confidential and has an option for follow-up calls. To talk to a trained responder, call the NWT Helpline at 1-800-661-0844.

Avertissement : sujet sensible

Le GTNO reconnaît que la conversation en cours sur la vérité et la réconciliation est nécessaire, mais difficile, et que les résidents peuvent avoir besoin de soutien.

- Les anciens élèves des pensionnats peuvent composer le 1-866-925-4419 pour obtenir des services d'aiguillage en cas de crise émotionnelle et des renseignements sur d'autres soutiens en santé offerts par le gouvernement du Canada.
- Les Autochtones du Canada peuvent également appeler la Ligne d'écoute d'espoir en tout temps pour obtenir des conseils et de l'aide en cas de crise. Il suffit de composer sans frais le 1-855-242-3310 ou de clavarder en ligne.

Aux TNO, la Ligne d'aide des TNO offre un soutien gratuit et confidentiel. Le service offre aussi la possibilité de faire des appels de suivi. Pour parler à un intervenant qualifié, téléphonez au 1-800-661-0844.

Executive Summary

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) conducted public engagement from February 9 to March 31, 2023, to solicit feedback on the best ways to acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The goal was to gather input from various stakeholders, including Indigenous governments, organizations, residents, and elders.

The engagement process used multiple channels to gather feedback. Indigenous governments received direct letters seeking their input, and existing forums like the NWT Council of Leaders were engaged to ensure representation. The GNWT promoted a public survey on its online engagement platform, "Have Your Say". The site received visits from 119 users, with 24 accessing resources and 16 completing the online survey.

Elders' perspectives were especially valued, and NWT Government Service Officers engaged with 44 elders using a discussion guide specifically designed for this purpose.

Public engagement identified the following key themes:

Education

Education emerged as a significant theme, with respondents calling for increased public awareness and educational efforts on the history and impact of residential schools. Suggestions included developing activities for classrooms, training for educators, and cultural awareness programs for GNWT workers. Elders echoed the need for education and awareness, emphasizing workshops to support survivors and their families.

Healing through Community Engagement

Respondents stressed the importance of community-based healing and suggested commemorating the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation at the community level. They proposed creating permanent monuments and meeting places to honor victims of residential schools. Elders supported community events to encourage healing, on-the-land activities, and events to honor children and survivors.

Strengthening Family Bonds and Personal Wellbeing

Feedback highlighted the significance of strengthening family bonds and personal wellbeing. Celebrating children and spending time together on the land were seen as healing activities. Elders underscored the need for continuous support for survivors and emphasized the importance of year-round commitment to healing, particularly regarding mental health support and addiction services.

Other Thoughts

Some respondents expressed anger, directing it towards the government, church, or lack of public interest. They emphasized that the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation should not be treated as just another holiday and that further actions beyond apologies were required.

Conclusion

The feedback received from various stakeholders during the engagement process demonstrated a strong call for more support, funding, education, and community-based healing initiatives to acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The GNWT acknowledges the significance of these themes and will use the feedback to inform its approach in recognizing and commemorating this important day, with a commitment to promoting healing, education, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities. The GNWT will work towards implementing the suggested actions to honor the survivors, commemorate the victims, and promote reconciliation and healing throughout the Northwest Territories.

Sommaire

Du 9 février au 31 mars 2023, le gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO) a mené des échanges avec le public afin de recueillir des commentaires sur les meilleurs moyens de souligner et de soutenir la Journée nationale de la vérité et de la réconciliation. L'objectif était de rassembler les commentaires de diverses parties prenantes, y compris ceux des gouvernements autochtones, des organisations, des résidents et des aînés.

Les commentaires ont été recueillis de diverses façons. Les gouvernements autochtones ont reçu des lettres les invitant à donner leur avis, et des forums existants, tels que le Conseil des dirigeants des TNO, ont été mis à contribution pour assurer une représentation adéquate. Le GTNO a fait la promotion d'un sondage public sur sa plateforme d'échanges en ligne, « Exprimez-vous ». Le site a été visité par 119 utilisateurs, dont 24 ont accédé aux ressources et 16 ont répondu au sondage en ligne.

Le point de vue des aînés est particulièrement précieux, et les agents des services gouvernementaux des TNO ont dialogué avec 44 aînés à l'aide d'un guide de discussion spécialement conçu à cet effet.

Les échanges avec le public ont permis de cerner les thèmes clés suivants :

Éducation

L'éducation s'est avérée un thème important, les répondants appelant à une meilleure sensibilisation du public et demandant que l'histoire et l'impact des pensionnats soient davantage intégrés aux programmes scolaires. Parmi les suggestions, citons l'élaboration d'activités pour les classes, la formation des éducateurs, et la mise sur pied de programmes de sensibilisation culturelle pour les travailleurs du GTNO. Les aînés ont souligné l'importance des efforts d'éducation et de sensibilisation, en mettant l'accent sur les ateliers de soutien aux survivants et à leurs familles.

Guérison par l'engagement communautaire

Les répondants ont souligné l'importance de la guérison à l'échelle communautaire et ont suggéré de commémorer la Journée nationale de la vérité et de la réconciliation à ce niveau. Ils ont proposé de créer des monuments permanents et des lieux de rencontre pour honorer les victimes des pensionnats. Les aînés ont manifesté leur soutien envers les événements communautaires visant à encourager la guérison, les activités sur les terres ancestrales et les événements visant à honorer les enfants et les survivants.

Renforcer les liens familiaux et le bien-être personnel

Les commentaires ont mis en évidence l'importance du renforcement des liens familiaux et du bien-être personnel. Des activités de guérison ont été mentionnées, comme célébrer les enfants et passer du temps ensemble dans la nature. Les aînés ont souligné le besoin d'un soutien continu pour les survivants et ont insisté sur l'importance d'un engagement tout au long de l'année en faveur de la guérison, notamment en ce qui concerne le soutien à la santé mentale et les services de traitement des dépendances.

Autres réflexions

Certains répondants ont exprimé leur colère à l'égard du gouvernement, de l'Église ou du manque d'intérêt du public. Ils ont insisté sur le fait que la Journée nationale de la vérité et de la réconciliation ne devait pas être considérée comme un simple jour férié et que, pour la célébrer, on ne devrait pas se borner à présenter des excuses.

Conclusion

Les commentaires reçus de diverses parties prenantes au cours du processus d'échanges ont révélé que les répondants souhaitent plus de soutien, de financement, d'éducation et d'initiatives de guérison au niveau communautaire pour souligner et soutenir la Journée nationale de la vérité et de la réconciliation. Le GTNO reconnaît l'importance de ces thèmes et s'appuiera sur les commentaires reçus pour définir son approche de la reconnaissance et de la commémoration de cette journée importante, en s'engageant à promouvoir la guérison, l'éducation et un engagement significatif auprès des communautés autochtones. Le GTNO s'efforcera de mettre en œuvre les actions suggérées pour honorer les survivants, commémorer les victimes et promouvoir la réconciliation et la guérison dans l'ensemble des Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

Introduction

In June 2021, the Government of Canada announced September 30 as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to commemorate the history and ongoing trauma caused by residential schools and to honour those who were lost, as well as the survivors, families and communities who continue to grieve.

Acknowledging the history and ongoing impact of residential schools upon Indigenous peoples is a vital part of our national journey towards reconciliation. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a small part of that work, but it is an important step on a lengthy path. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) committed to engaging with others on the best and most respectful ways to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The engagement period was open from February 9 through to March 31, 2023. Letters were sent directly to Indigenous governments seeking their input on the best way to acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The GNWT also engaged with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations through existing forums, such as the NWT Council of Leaders, to seek input on the best ways to acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and how to engage.

The GNWT launched a website to collect information from residents. The engagement online at the Have Your Say website began on February 9, 2023. The engagement was promoted via a public service announcement and recurring Facebook posts throughout the engagement period.

The webpage was visited by 119 users during the engagement period. Of that number:

- 24 users accessed resources on the page, such as the discussion guide; and
- 16 users completed the online survey

The GNWT engaged directly with elders to ensure that their views were reflected. As a part of their role in communities, Government Service Officers conduct weekly outreach with elders. The GNWT developed a discussion guide specifically for use with elders and distributed it to all GNWT Government Service Officers. Feedback from 44 elders was received.

What we heard

A common theme throughout all responses received was the need for more support and funding. The elders surveyed highlighted the need to provide recognition of residential school survivors, education, and awareness in the community, both for the legacy of residential schools as well as community events.

Theme 1 – Education

A strong, reoccurring theme throughout the online survey was that more education is needed, both in the public setting and in the education system. Online respondents wanted to see more public awareness of the day, that the Truth and Reconciliation Day was not simply another long weekend or statutory holiday. Comments included developing activities for the classroom, in-service training for instructors and cultural training for GNWT workers. Suggested courses include the UofA Indigenous Canada course and Dr Jane Simington's Trauma Response, Suicide Intervention and Grief Support Certifications.

Of the many respondents who spoke to the importance of education on this day, there were calls to: Educate the Canadian public on the history and ongoing impact of the Residential Schools as well as provide GNWT employees with the knowledge base to be compassionate when providing support and knowledge on different services available to residential school survivors and intergenerational survivors.

Online respondents also suggested sharing information through a classroom setting, providing educational materials/tools to schools prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Day as well as training for GNWT employees on the significance of the day. A more open discussion on Canada's role in colonization and the residential school system was suggested. Discussion around the real and current impacts residential schools have had on families was flagged as important.

Elder feedback included the need for more education and awareness of residential schools and the continued impact on Indigenous peoples. Elders also wanted to see more recognition of survivors and workshops to support survivors and their families, including workshops about grieving, showing emotions, suicide prevention, elder abuse and substance abuse. Other suggestions included posters in the community, sharing events from other communities and radio announcements for upcoming community events.

Theme 2 – Healing through community engagement

A place for community-based healing and a ceremony in every community was suggested by multiple online respondents. An emphasis was placed on events commemorating the Truth and Reconciliation Day being held at the community level. Communities should be the lead for the design of these events and be supported (both financially and in kind) by the government. Ceremonies should honor youth, elders and knowledge keepers. It is important there be access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed counselling services as part of the planning.

Permanent monuments and meeting places were proposed to provide a place where people can go to remember their loved ones who were victims of residential school.

Common throughout all elder respondents was the desire to see more community events honoring

survivors and cultural events to encourage healing. On-the-land activities for elders and survivors to connect with nature, their traditional lifestyle and learn healing methods was suggested. Family based activities was also suggested, as well as events to honor the children and survivors

Theme 3 – Strengthening family bonds and personal wellbeing

Online respondents commented on the importance of strengthening family bonds. Personal reflections and celebrating children were common response throughout the survey. Spending the day out on the land together with family was identified as particularly healing.

Clear feedback was provided by the elders indicating the need for more support for survivors, by way of programs and funding. Elders noted that healing is a year-round commitment, not just one day a year. There are many people suffering from addictions and require support to overcome the trauma of residential schools. Mental health supports are needed in the community.

Theme 4 – Other thoughts

A few of the online respondents expressed anger throughout the survey. At times, the anger was directed to the government, the church or the general public's lack of interest. Some comments included that it was time to move on, that the apologies from the church and government were not enough, and that the day should not be used as just another holiday.

Next steps

The feedback received during the engagement process demonstrated a strong call for more support, funding, education, and community-based healing initiatives to acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The GNWT acknowledges the significance of this feedback and will use it to inform its approach in recognizing and commemorating this important day.

As an immediate next step, the GNWT will continue to provide funding for Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to support events that commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation each year.

The GNWT has also committed to work with Dene, Métis, Inuvialuit and Inuit communities to establish a permanent memorial at Yellowknife, NT, for survivors of the residential school communities, as directed by the Truth & Reconciliation Committee Calls to Action. The GNWT opened a request for Expressions of Interest for a permanent memorial in July 2023 for all Indigenous artists, or Indigenous artist-led groups or collectives, who live in or are from the Northwest Territories or Nunavut. The call for expressions of interest is set to close on August 23, 2023.

As we continue to find the best ways to acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the actions suggested in public engagement to honor the survivors, commemorate the victims, and promote reconciliation and healing throughout the Northwest Territories provide us with a place to start.

Appendix A: survey questions

1. Did you do anything to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in 2022?

a. *If yes, what did you do to observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation?*

b. *If no, why did you choose not to mark the day this year?*

2. What kinds of activities would most meaningfully acknowledge and support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation?

3. What kinds of activities should be avoided?

4. What role, if any, should the GNWT play in future commemorations of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation?

With input from Indigenous governments and organizations, the GNWT wants to explore how it can best support the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in a respectful and considerate manner. While the GNWT is following the federal government's lead in making September 30th a paid holiday for GNWT public servants and teachers for this year, it has not been determined how the day will be recognized in future years.

5. If it is involved, what are the best ways the GNWT can support Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, communities, and individuals in acknowledging and supporting the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation?

Supporting education and increasing awareness of the history and impact of residential schools are essential to successful reconciliation, and the GNWT is committed to learning how this can be done in a respectful manner. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is an opportunity for all residents to consider what they can do to advance reconciliation in the Northwest Territories. It is also an opportunity to revisit the GNWT's role, its resources, and how they can best be used.

6. What learnings/lessons/messages should be shared that day? What are the primary lessons that the public and non-Indigenous peoples should take away from the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation?

7. In what ways other than direct funding can the GNWT help communities and residents mark the day? What existing resources or programs could be included? Or should they?

8. How should survivors (including intergenerational) be respected and supported on this day and in promotion of activities around the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to ensure they are not exposed to harm or trauma?

How can/should personal actions of reconciliation be encouraged? What can those look like (see for example the Fraser & Komarnisky 150 acts of reconciliation for Canada 150, developed by NWT residents)?