



KENORA JAIL INMATES TO MAKE STATEMENTS TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION AUGUST 8, 9

August 7, 2012 – The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) will make its first visit to a correctional institution on August 8 and 9, when it will hear statements from inmates at the Kenora Jail in northwestern Ontario.

“Canadian correctional institutions house a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal inmates,” said TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair. “The Commission is committed to ensuring that they have an opportunity to be heard concerning the impact the Indian Residential Schools have had on their lives.”

“There’s perhaps no other group of individuals in this country that better exemplifies the schools’ tragic legacy,” he added.

Justice Sinclair commended the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) for facilitating this statement-gathering visit. “We hope it begins a series of similar visits to correctional facilities in Ontario, and that other jurisdictions will follow Ontario’s example,” he said.

Madeleine Meilleur, Ontario Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, said the ministry recognizes the importance of providing Aboriginal inmates with opportunities for healing and reconciliation.

“The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is proud to support the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by making the Kenora Jail the first provincial facility in Canada to connect commissioners with Aboriginal inmates,” she said. “Telling their stories will give us greater insight into the cruel legacy of Indian Residential Schools, and may provide inmates with new hope to return to their communities as contributing members of society.”

Aboriginal inmates make up 92 per cent of the prison population of the Kenora Jail. Many are descended from children who were removed from their families and sent to Indian Residential Schools in the Kenora area: Cecilia Jeffrey; St. Mary’s; and McIntosh. The experience scarred generations of Aboriginal children and left a legacy of social problems, poor health and low educational achievement.

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The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established as a result of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its mandate is to tell Canadians about the 150-year history of the schools in part through the statements of those whose lives were affected by them, and to guide and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Media Inquiries:

Heather Frayne, Senior Communications Advisor
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
Office: 204.984.8292
Mobile: 204-297-4853
Email: Heather.Frayne@trc.ca

Brent Ross, Senior Media Relations/Issues Coordinator
Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services
Office: 416-314-7024.