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A major step forward in the Day Scholars Class Action was taken yesterday with the announcement of the appointment of a Ministerial Special Representative (MSR) for the purpose of negotiating a settlement. The Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, made the announcement appointing Thomas Isaac the MSR at the BC Assembly of First Nations Annual General Meeting.

Launched in 2012 by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and shíshálh Indian Bands, who were joined by the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee), the Day Scholars Class Action lawsuit seeks compensation on behalf of all Aboriginal Canadians who attended an Indian Residential School, but who did not sleep there. The case also seeks declarations regarding Canada's role in the failure to protect Aboriginal language and culture, and looks for compensation for the children of survivors, and the bands to which survivors belong.

Chief Fred Seymour "We are very pleased to see the appointment of Mr. Isaacs as the Minister's representative. We are hopeful that Canada will come to the table with an open heart and mind and seek a true resolution of this tragic part of our history."

Chief Calvin Craigan "When this Government was elected, it was with a mandate of resolution of the outstanding issues from the Indian Residential Schools. We hope that the appointment of Mr. Isaacs is a sign of Canada's commitment to achieving that resolution, and that he will honour the spirit of Canada's goal of reconciliation."

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come welcomes the appointment of Thomas Isaacs as the Ministerial Special Representative (MSR) for the purpose of negotiating a settlement in the Day Scholar Class Action and calls for discussions to begin quickly. "We look forward to working with Mr. Isaacs and we hope that we will be able to arrive at a settlement which will provide justice for the Day Scholars, their descendants and their communities."

The appointment of an MSR means that the lawsuit will take a new path forward, as both sides prepare their positions for negotiations. Any settlement that is reached will also have to be reviewed by his Honour, Justice Sean Harrington, who is overseeing the Class Action. While the process will take some time, both sides, as well as the court, are committed to moving quickly to find a solution before more survivors are lost to old age.

The Plaintiffs remain committed to a fair outcome for all survivors, their children and their bands, and will work hard to ensure that the voices of all those who attended the Indian Residential Schools, but who were not compensated under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement, are heard.

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