



## **Press Statement**

### **Lifelong Trauma: Wrongfully Imprisoned Indigenous Women Spent Childhood Lives in Residential School System**

Tuesday, June 15 (Ottawa, ON) –

The news that the bodies of 215 Indigenous children had been found in British Columbia shocked Canadians, but traumatized Indigenous survivors who were abused by Canada's Residential School System. It is even more outrageous then, that the two Keeseekoose First Nations women who have been wrongfully imprisoned for over 28 years, were first persecuted by the Canadian government when they attended residential schools in their childhood. Odelia and Nerissa Quewezance have been systematically oppressed by the Canadian government since they formed their earliest memories. When they became young adults, the residential schools they suffered in were substituted for federal maximum security prisons.

Statement from Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin:

"I have no words to describe the ordeal in which Odelia and Nerissa Quewezance have suffered through the majority of their lives. For the sisters to only know the worst of what Canada has to offer is truly despicable. This is two lives of trauma, and abuse which the Canadian government is responsible for at the highest levels. We demand action from the federal government, and provincial government of Saskatchewan on this heartbreaking case."

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) has sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister of Justice Lametti outlining the situation facing the Quewezance sisters and their troubling case. CAP believes it is important to draw attention to the fact that In Saskatchewan today, 98% of imprisoned women are Indigenous despite Indigenous women making up less than 8% of the provincial population. There is clearly systemic bias, and deep-rooted issues in the Canadian justice system which allows for this to happen.

"I'm looking to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Ministers to respond on this case, and begin an investigation as to why Odelia and Nerissa Quewezance are still incarcerated" added National Vice-Chief Kim Beaudin. "I want to see concrete action on this, and trauma support for other Indigenous prisoners who were subject to abuse from the residential school system. It's time to do the honourable thing and release the Quewezance sisters to their families".

It has recently come to CAP's attention that Odelia Quewezance was also barred from attending her twin daughter's graduation by the correctional system, despite being a low-risk resident of a healing facility in Canada. Missing an important milestone for many Indigenous Peoples, and mothers across the country, Odelia has seen far too many life events stripped away by Canada's systematic oppression.

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***For media interviews please contact:***

Kayode Southwood

819-635-4827

[kayode@impactcanada.com](mailto:kayode@impactcanada.com)

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 70% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.