



ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION

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Statement - Attawapiskat First Nation on Canada's 150 years since Confederation

As Canada gathers to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of its Confederation, we bring to your attention to remind you of the on-going struggles our people continue to endure, including the people of Attawapiskat. The call for peace and understanding, justice and fairness continues to be intangible for our people. We make the further statement that conditions fitting third world countries still linger with most of our vulnerable and isolated communities: poor housing conditions or no housing, inadequate health care services, crumbling infrastructure, high unemployment, high suicide rates and attempts, failed child welfare policy, imposed legislations and regulations, education gaps that impede the aspirations with our youth. Most of our people do not see the light of hope with ongoing bureaucratic politic top down solutions that simply do not work for our First Nation communities.

Canada speaks of reconciliation but what does that mean when you do not want to truly understand us as a Nation. The perception to our Nation is demeaning whereas our perception to our country is to repair and improve our socioeconomic conditions. However, the perception expressed to our people has put us in a peculiar and vulnerable position. We see this and sense the struggle of our people across the nation as the celebrations begin for Canada's Birthday!

Also, for far too many years, the resources from our lands continue to be extracted and exploited for the benefit of others, whereas our community continue to live in hardship and despair. Our First Nations leaders are also hindered and are not allowed to speak out to bring about change in a system that still controls or dictates the First Peoples. In certain communities, this systematic way of control also allows our youth to be 'judged' and thereby apathy lives on.

Canada, our sacred Treaties are enduring for time immemorial and no one government or entity can take that away from us. We shall always remain here to protect our people and to insist that justifiable progress is a must when you pledged to change the nature of our relationship. We want both governments to finalize a mutually agreed upon plan to repair our damaged relationship and achieve sustainable progress. Far too long our community has faced unwarranted shame, blame, discrimination and criticism on the state of our community without factoring in our colonial and tragic history.

We often hear Government announcements on new funding commitments and new fiscal relationships based on a Nation-to Nation approach however, we have yet to see these well-meaning commitments and tangible results filtered down to communities such as ours where it is most needed. Perhaps both Crowns of State and their ministries need to better coordinate and streamline bureaucratic processes so that constructive supports will reach our most vulnerable communities. Solutions must be community based. We have reflected on our struggles and humbly ask to be heard on our on-going unique challenges and to our solutions. Time is critical, genuine dialogue and action needs to happen now.

As long as the Sun shines, Grass grows, and Rivers flow - We remain, Kattawapiskak People.