

A MESSAGE OF HONOUR FROM **EYE WITNESS & RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR**, CHIEF TERRY PAUL

As spoken at the 'July 1st Walk to Remember' at Wentworth Park

For many, recent news of the uncovering and recovering of our children has shocked them deeply. But for me, and all other survivors of residential school, it is a resurgence of painful emotions that we've lived and managed since the day we left the schools.

Each and every day of my life for the last nearly 40 years as Chief of Membertou, I have carried the memories of the five-year-old boy who went to Shubenacadie Residential School all those years ago.

I remember each child having their head shaved as they entered the facility; every child was assumed to have head lice. I remember spoiled food served for meals, and I remember being far away from my family for long periods of time. I attended residential school for 4 years, and those years undoubtedly shaped me.

As I grew, I promised myself that my experiences at residential school would not hold me down. I would not allow the painful times in my life to define the possibility of what I could be, or do. I wanted better for those who came after me.

A driver for my vision behind building Membertou, has been creating a vibrant place for our children to grow, to run, to play. We built our school in Membertou to ensure that our children could grow with the freedom and joy to be themselves as proud Mi'kmaq.

It's important that we all acknowledge the true history of our nation. This country's history with Indigenous people is dark. But, now we have an opportunity for our communities to

step forward and have our stories and voices heard, so that we can all move ahead, together.

I am moved by the incredible amount of support our communities have received from allies, who have spread the colour orange across Canada. Like any movement in history, it takes unwavering allyship to move underrepresented people ahead. Wela'lloq to our allies.

To my community, and Indigenous people across the country. This is our moment to stand firmly on OUR land, and share OUR truth. The ripple effects of residential schools are still felt today.

We must come together and heal for the next seven generations.

We have been through so much, and together we will walk this horrific road to justice.

And to the five-year-old little boy who couldn't imagine what was ahead, all those years ago, I say...

"You are safe. You are strong. And, someday your community will change the game."

- Chief Terry Paul

