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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Grand Conseil des Cris (Eeyou Istchee)

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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

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Chisasibi
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Wemindji
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Eastmain
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PRESS RELEASE

Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty to meet with Pope Francis as part of Assembly of First Nations delegation visit to Vatican City

Nemaska, Eeyou Istchee (March 21, 2022) – As part of the upcoming Assembly of First Nations (AFN) delegation visit to the Vatican City from March 28 to April 1st, Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty will be meeting with Pope Francis in a private audience of 13 delegates who will speak on the issue of residential schools and to share their vision and expectations for his upcoming visit to Canada.

Organized in collaboration with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB), the delegation consisting of Indigenous residential school survivors, knowledge keepers, leaders and youth from across Canada will present recommendations such as their expectations concerning an apology, the release of all residential school documents to help find missing and deceased former students and how they can work together in the healing process.

"Our aim is to tell the stories about the painful legacy of the residential school system on our community members. We owe it to the survivors of these institutions and to the families of those children who never returned home to speak the truth and honour their spirits. To move forward in our journey towards reconciliation and healing, any apology would need to acknowledge the deep scars and pain caused by residential schools on Indigenous peoples, assume responsibility for their role in these genocidal acts and go beyond just words to establish concrete actions to help address the deep scars left by these assimilation policies. We cannot undo the past, but we can ensure that the past never repeats itself ever again." – Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty

During the visit to Vatican City, Grand Chief Gull-Masty will be accompanied by the Youth Grand Chief Adrian Gunner and will provide, with the delegation, a national perspective on the legacy of residential schools and its efforts to support the healing of the impacts of the residential school system on survivors and the intergenerational trauma it has caused to family and community members from coast to coast to coast. Within Eeyou Istchee, there are two former residential school sites where Cree and members of other Indigenous Nations attended. Actions to determine a process to search and document the residential school sites on Fort George Island (now the community of Chisasibi) are ongoing and will be respectful so as to ensure no further harm. The Cree Nation Government continues to work with and support the efforts of Chisasibi in this delicate but critical endeavor for survivors and families of survivors across Québec.

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To read the AFN's statement on the delegation's visit to Vatican City: https://www.afn.ca/assembly-of-first-nations-delegation-looking-forward-to-meeting-with-pope-francis-in-rome/

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