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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
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Cree Nation Government
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie

PRESS RELEASE
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End of the papal visit

An important step on the road to reconciliation, but certainly not the end

Wendake, July 29, 2022 - As Pope Francis's visit to Canada comes to an end, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) is now looking to the future and calling on the Catholic Church to take concrete actions, in the short term, so that the collective healing for the wrongs suffered for over a century through the residential school system can continue.

"It is very important to respect each survivor in their own healing process. Everyone has welcomed Pope Francis's requests for forgiveness in their own way, this week. However, this apology should be seen as another step on the long road to reconciliation, not the end of it. We hope that the Catholic Church will take advantage of the next few months to take concrete steps in this direction," says AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard.

The AFNQL would like to invite the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) to show leadership, openness and transparency in following up on the recent papal visit. In this spirit, the AFNQL is calling on the CCCB to respond to several long-standing requests that remain unresolved, including making public all archival documents that shed light on the history of residential schools in Canada and revoking the Doctrine of Discovery.

“This week was marked with many mixed emotions for many of our members. All of these emotions are acknowledged and are valid. Just as everyone’s experience with residential school was different so are the emotions that have been felt by each of us this week. I wish to thank Clara Napash and Allison Macleod who represented the resilience of our survivors and the future that is our youth. While the efforts of the Pope are recognized, expectations are now very high on what will come next. The apology must be followed by concrete actions to open their records and rescind the Doctrine of Discovery, for it is the truth that will guide our healing journey,” says Grand Chief of the Cree Nation of Eeyou istchee, Mandy Gull-Masty.

Lastly, the AFNQL wishes to acknowledge the efforts and behind-the-scenes work of First Nations members in recent weeks to ensure that survivors could attend the week's events and receive the respect to which they are entitled, despite the many logistical and time constraints imposed by the organizers of the papal visit.

About the AFNQL
The Assembly of First Nations Québec-Labrador is the regional political organization that brings together the 43 First Nations Chiefs of Québec and Labrador. www.apnql.com

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