



April 4, 2022

MEDIA STATEMENT - PAPAL APOLOGY FOR RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (also known as Deshkan Ziibiing Anishinaabeg of The Three Fires Confederacy) have heard the apology of the Pope, and it is a stark reminder of the federal government's apology that was given in June 2008.

Given that we are in an era of Truth & Reconciliation, it is without doubt that this day had to come.

The Pope's apology is one critical step in moving towards truth-telling on the dark legacy that this country is built upon.

If indeed, we are committed to building and renewing relationships rooted in respect and understanding, then this apology marks the start of that journey - a journey which sadly, most Canadians have inherited.

We are hopeful that the apology given will spark the necessary conversations that need to be held so that there is an understanding of the cultural genocide which the churches imposed on our people.

Regardless of where this apology took place, it is befitting that Pope Francis offered it from Rome, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church - from where the Doctrine of Discovery and the theory of terra nullius derived. It is through these instruments that European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples is premised. To this day, these harmful Eurocentric theories are still enshrined within the Westernized worldview and legal principles and must be repudiated. They are the very instruments that were used to take up lands without regard for the existing Indigenous populations - not only here in Canada - but around the world.



It is these principles that led to the Indian residential school system, in which the churches played a significant role in Christianising and assimilating Indigenous peoples. Their assimilation policy was premised on genocide; “Kill the Indian and Save the Man”. The belief is that stripping the culture and language from our children would result in addressing the “Indian problem”. It is imperative that Canadians understand the nature and impacts that these institutions had, not just here in Canada, but globally.

Like many Indigenous communities across this country, Deshkan Ziibiing (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation) was home to a residential school – and every person living in our community has to some degree been impacted by the unimaginable crimes committed against innocent children.

There is a tough and emotional journey ahead of our people.

Moving forward, we hope to see this apology followed by positive actions and not simply more empty words. We remain hopeful that the Pope’s statement of apology resonates and motivates the various religious leaders in this country to step forward and address their involvement with a strong commitment to work together to call upon Canada to address the Truth & Reconciliations 94 Calls to Action – the path forward is about truth and sharing; healing will come when the restoration of our culture, languages and customs are respected, valued, and supported.

The information and material here may trigger unpleasant feelings or thoughts of past abuse. Please contact the 24-Hour Residential School Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419 if you require emotional support.

