



MEDIA RELEASE | April 1, 2022

Syilx Nation Demands Accountability and Justice for the Victims of Deliberate Genocide and Murder in the Face of Ongoing Denial and Lack of Accountability for Indian Residential Schools

tkwəniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: On April 1, 2022, Pope Francis issued an apology for the conduct of some Roman Catholic Church members in the Canadian residential school system after a week of discussions with a delegation of First Nation, Inuit and Metis representatives. This followed the Government of Canada recent pledge of an additional \$2.9 million to assist in the “recovery” of unmarked remains from Indian Residential Schools across Canada. Over 7,000 unmarked graves have been recovered across Turtle Island in the last year. Collectively, these actions continue to fail to take responsibility for the criminal acts of genocide that occurred at Indian Residential Schools, while diverting resources that are desperately needed on the ground to ensure that justice is truly served.

“Apologies and empty words from the Prime Minister, government officials or a trip to the Vatican will never heal the pain and hurt that our people were subjected to, were witness to and continue to endure. We are past apologies - there is no forgiveness for the murder and attempted murder of our children. We have no faith in the processes being taken by colonial institutions, and are demanding that the Vatican, Roman Catholic Church and Government of Canada move beyond empty apologies. They have actively and explicitly tampered with evidence of their crimes and need to be investigated and held accountable. We will not be silent about those governments or organizations working to protect their own interests - tampering with evidence, deflection of responsibility and accountability,” Chief Greg Gabriel stated.

In the face of these atrocities, Syilx Chiefs and the Syilx Indian Residential School Committee acknowledge the people, the survivors, and those who passed that were taken and placed in Indian Residential Schools. We hold up and stand behind those who survived and those who didn't. We acknowledge the ongoing impacts of this severe trauma, and honor our ancestors and all living things since time immemorial who have ensured the survival of our people. Our ancestors have fought for us to live and survive, and we continue to fight, to heal. We are grateful for their spirits and the strength they have bestowed upon us. We will continue to actively fight to ensure that justice is delivered to all victims of the Indian Residential Schools throughout the territory and Turtle Island.

“The impact of genocide upon all our peoples is a horrific legacy on Canada's history and will take more than Truth and Reconciliation talk to ever come to terms with what our people have had to live through to be here today. We are demanding justice, equality, and actualization of human rights, not apologies without real action. This colonial history was a collusion of the State and the Church — that is the Truth, stated Chief Clarence Louie.

~

Okanagan Nation Alliance
#101, 3535 Old Okanagan Hwy
Westbank, BC V4T 3L7

The Syilx Indian Residential School (SIRS) Committee is a group of highly dedicated, intergenerational Syilx Indian Residential School survivors. The SIRS Committee is invaluable in providing direction to the Nation on numerous projects regarding the Indian Residential Schools. This Committee, represented by the seven member communities, has expressed that they feel a sense of belonging and healing from participating on this Committee. They have a true ownership role in ensuring projects move forward, taking into account their knowledge and experience. For more information on the Syilx Indian Residential School experience visit: www.syilx.org/wellness/indian-residential-school/

*The Indian Residential School Survivors Society has a 24/7 emergency crisis: 1-800-721-0066. **KU-US Crisis Line Society** also provides a 24-hour provincial Indigenous crisis line: Adults call 250-723-4050; children and youth call 250-723-2040; or toll-free 1-800-588-8717.*

For further information please contact:

Chief Clarence Louie, ONA Tribal Chair

T: 250-498-9132

Jennifer Lewis, ONA Wellness Manager

T: 250-826-7844

E: wellness.manager@syilx.org