

# First Nations Summit

## STATEMENT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
APRIL 1, 2022**

### **First Nations Summit statement on the apology issued by Pope Francis**

*(X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and sə̱ilw̱əta̱ (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, BC)* – Leaders of the First Nations Summit welcomed the apology issued today by Pope Francis for the role of the Catholic Church in Canada's horrific Indian Residential School System. The apology follows several days of meetings between the Pope and his officials and Indigenous representatives who travelled to Vatican City earlier this week.

We are hopeful that Pope Francis will take the next step towards delivering a fulsome apology on Canadian soil later this year.

Today, we stand in support of all residential school survivors, their families, and their communities. We must also collectively step back and remember all those who died as a result of the residential school system, especially the lost children, whose unmarked graves, continue to be discovered on the grounds of former residential schools across Canada.

The apology by Pope Francis represents a significant step forward in the healing journey of residential school survivors and their families, however it will be up to individuals to assess the full impact. It is extremely important that we fully respect the many survivors who, in their own discretion and time, will consider the Pope's apology and determine how, in their own interest, each of them will deal with it. Collectively, we celebrate and stand on the dignity of who we are and celebrate the continued survival of our cultures and traditions.

We will continue to advocate for residential school issues to remain at the forefront of Canadian dialogue, especially as further investigations uncover additional burials at former residential school sites. We ask all Canadians to take the necessary steps to understand the depths and consequences of the multi-layered and intergenerational impacts these destructive institutions had and continue to have on our citizens and communities.

Governments and religious institutions utilized the residential school system as a clear attempt to destroy our languages and cultures. However, the resilience of residential school survivors and our ancestors ensured we have a foundation for the preservation of our identity, cultures and traditions.

This apology or any future apologies will never rectify the decades of abuse and cultural genocide experienced by our people at residential schools, however it is a critical and necessary step forward in our collective path towards reconciliation.

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*The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca).*

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