



FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC INC.
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC.

Press release
For immediate distribution

Residential schools: atrocities that plunge us back into suffering

Kahnawake, June 28, 2021 — Residential schools, commonly referred to as residential schools, were institutions dedicated to the public education of Indigenous people in Canada. They were institutions designed to educate, evangelize, assimilate and intern Indigenous children against their will. This painful memory continues to surface and reopen wounds since the discovery of the 215 bodies of Indigenous children found last month in Kamloops, British Columbia.

The discovery of these bodies, which were known to First Nations and Inuit, leads to the accountability of governments. Finally, governments find themselves in a situation where they are forced to react and take action. Quebec Native Women (hereinafter QNW) is not surprised, however, that tragic events have to happen in order for governments to finally open their eyes and take steps towards reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous peoples.

Currently, 1,323 bodies of Indigenous children have been found in the various provinces of Canada, but we know that this number will increase significantly as a result of further excavations on other former residential school sites.

The provincial and federal governments must act quickly and consistently and issue an appropriate plan of action, in conjunction with expert Indigenous organizations. Families and communities must be given the truth so that their healing process can begin.

"Will we ever be recognized as real human beings whose lives are worth as much as any other? Will there finally be equality of basic rights between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people? For me, we are still far from reconciliation. As long as there is no reparation, there will be no reconciliation," says Viviane Michel, President of QNW.

QNW also wishes to emphasize its aberration regarding the Pope's refusal to apologize to the indigenous communities in the name of the Church. It is not a matter of taking the blame personally, it is a matter of recognizing that many of the atrocities perpetrated against First Nations peoples were ordered by the decisions of the Church. There is a need to recognize that Indigenous people must be treated fairly and with respect for their fundamental rights. Moving forward is first and foremost about acknowledging wrongs and asking for forgiveness: it is the first step in the reconciliation process. Our organization formally asks the Church and the

governments to take responsibility and acknowledge their wrongs, for the betterment of our Indigenous women, girls and communities.

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