



## Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador

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### **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

### **TREAT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS WITH RESPECT, HONOUR THE MEMORY OF THE MISSING CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO NEVER MADE IT BACK HOME AND SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES**

*Wendake, June 23, 2022* - At a time when the Catholic hierarchy is making public the program for Pope Francis' visit to our Territories, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) recalls the essential duty of respect and memory that must mark each step of this historic event. The AFNQL wishes to emphasize that Pope Francis' visit to our Territories is not a celebration but a confirmation of the role played by the Catholic Church in the management of Indian residential schools.

"Residential schools were established to eradicate all traces of spirituality and culture belonging to the First Peoples of this land. The Catholic Church played a central role in this disgraceful enterprise of assimilation. Pope Francis has apologized on behalf of the Church and has decided to travel to our Territories to deliver his message to survivors of Indian residential schools. They are the ones who must be at the heart of what is an essential step in the Reconciliation process," declared Ghislain Picard, Chief of the AFNQL.

The AFNQL has already reminded both civil and religious authorities of the obligation to respect the primary role of survivors in welcoming Pope Francis as well as in all of the other planned activities and, will continue to ensure this with those involved in the papal visit. Among other things, every effort will be made to facilitate the participation of survivors who choose to take part in any of the planned events.

"In order for this event to fulfill expectations on both sides, it is essential to remind those responsible for the papal visit and the public in general, of the reality of residential schools and their consequences, which Pope Francis is coming to evoke in our country. This is not a celebration. It is a time for commemoration and respect. The AFNQL will make sure that no one loses sight of this," concludes Ghislain Picard.

#### **About the AFNQL**

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the regional political organization that brings together the 43 First Nations Chiefs of Quebec and Labrador. [www.apnql.com](http://www.apnql.com)