

## **ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**

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AFN National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo Statement on the 2nd Anniversary of Apology to Residential School Survivors

OTTAWA, June 11 /CNW Telbec/ - Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo issued the following statement today to mark the second anniversary of the Government of Canada's Apology for the Indian Residential Schools:

"Today, we remember first and foremost the thousands of First Nations youth who were taken from their families and placed in Indian residential schools, those who are still with us as well as the memory of those who have passed on. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which led to the apology, is a tribute and testament to their diligence in the quest for justice and reconciliation.

The historic apology to residential school survivors was an important moment in our shared history. The apology was a statement by all of Parliament that colonialist policies and attitudes that undermined First Nations governments and denigrated First Nations families and cultures were wrong, caused great harm and have no place in Canada today.

The Apology also contained a promise and a commitment by Parliament to join First Nations on a journey towards healing and reconciliation. Survivors and their families look to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which launches its first national event in Winnipeg next week, as an important part of this process. As the Commission embarks on its truth telling process, we must all work to ensure survivors have the cultural and emotional support they need to tell their stories.

As we confront the legacy of the past we look also to the future with the understanding that reconciliation today requires significant changes in the relationship between First Nations and governments.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada committed to endorsing in the Speech from the Throne earlier this year, provides a way forward towards real transformational change in the relationship between First Nations and Canada. It mirrors the relationship expressed in our original treaties. It sets out the principles of partnership and mutual respect that will guide us as we cooperatively craft a comprehensive plan to foster strong First Nations and a stronger Canada.

A keystone of this plan will be efforts to improve and advance First Nations education. Never again will education be used as a weapon against us. Education will become a tool to strengthen our children and families, our governments and communities, our languages and cultures. It will be an avenue to restore our rightful place in Canada.

This week, the AFN officially launched a Call to Action on First Nations Education. It is a call to all sectors of Canadian society to support us in our goal of achieving equitable outcomes and opportunities for First Nations students.

The anniversary of the historic Apology to residential school survivors is a time to reflect on our shared history and our shared future. It is a time to consider how we can walk

together towards our destination of real and lasting reconciliation. By embracing the principles of partnership and respect, we can fulfill the spirit and intent of the Treaties in our lifetime."

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

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For further information: Alain Garon, Bilingual Communications Officer, (613) 241-6789 (382), or [agaron@afn.ca](mailto:agaron@afn.ca)