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The Honour of Our Children: Carrying their Spirits Home

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – July 2, 2021] – News of hundreds of unmarked graves of Indigenous children, taken from families and communities over decades, are being revealed across the land using new technology. The stark, physical evidence cannot be ignored, downplayed or minimized. Many Canadians are impacted by powerful emotions of grief, rage, frustration, shame, and relief during a time of national soul searching. The unveiling of resting places of Indigenous peoples at government and church institutions is just beginning.

We must identify and honour all of our children, those taken who never came home. The dark chapter of residential schools in Canada will never be history until the searches are complete. The ground scans must be done in a good way, the Dene way, to take us above the anger, rage and the desire to lash out.

A chosen few want the path of violence, seeking vengeance and retribution. Churches are burning across the country. We are deeply disappointed by the recent attempt in Yellowknife to burn down Saint Patrick's Church. We are all shocked by these actions - violence is not the way to deal with injustice.

As Dene, we have laws and principles that have stood the test of time. We know that "hurt people, hurt people" and that our elders teach the value of forgiveness and love. We have the power to choose the path that brings us the most peace in life. We call upon the People to remember our sacred laws. Help one another, love one another as much as possible, and respect our Elders.

We had other great leaders such Mandela, Gandhi and Mother Theresa who knew all too well "injustice" yet believed in the power of people to change society through the power of forgiveness and creating acts of nonviolence to this cause.

We say to those responsible for the recent fire at St Patrick's Church, "this is not the Dene way." We call upon you to step away from the path of anger and violence. We ask you to join with us to seek accountability peacefully and respect the wishes of our Elders.

The Church and Canada must still be held accountable. The Churches, and the Pope must acknowledge their role and apologize to our children's families and communities. The Pope must commit the Churches to work with Canada and Indigenous governments to identify every child. Every child deserves to rest in peace and for our families and communities to have closure. As a country, Canada must work with Indigenous governments to finally turn the page on this dark, painful chapter of our collective history.

Let us be Martin Luther King's dream where we can all walk in unity and fight the evils of the world together.