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United Nations 14th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples –

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Liidlii Kue First Nation, Northwest Territories – July 12, 2021] – Dene National Chief, on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada, addressed the United Nations 14th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – virtual session.

Dene National Chief spoke to the United Nations regarding recent events in Canada and the urgent need for accountability to support justice and healing for our people. The disturbing recoveries of our little ones at former Indian Residential Schools in recent weeks have pulled back the curtain on the genocide against our people and the dark shared history of Canada. The Dene and our northern relatives will soon be searching our residential school grounds for children who did not return.

The recoveries at Kamloops and Cowesses First Nation have shocked Canadians and opened fresh wounds for Indigenous peoples who have been speaking this truth for generations. The Assembly of First Nations has received an outpouring of support from across Canada and around the world. We thank these friends and allies for speaking up, for sharing their truth as we relive ours.

Through our collective grief and pain over recent weeks, there comes hope and an opportunity for change – a change that will bring justice and accountability for our lost and stolen little ones and their families. And change will build a future where First Nations self-determination is respected in ways that allow us to thrive, standing proud in our cultures and languages.

This work requires full participation from all parties and will not happen overnight, but it must start now. The support of the United Nations plays a vital role in keeping Canada accountable. First Nations Chiefs-In-Assembly passed a resolution last week demanding justice and accountability for the missing and unidentified children of residential schools, requiring action from all governments and the Catholic Church through a Papal apology that explicitly acknowledges the various harms caused by the residential school system.

A recent poll states that while 93 percent of Canadians are aware of the recoveries at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, only 10 percent of Canadians are familiar with the history of the residential school system.

Together with our community partners and all peoples, we can walk the path of truth and provide the families and residential school survivors hope in the way forward.

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