

**Issue: Papal Apology**

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action:**

- #58 We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit and Metis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims of abuse and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.

**Background:**

- In March of 2010, Pope Benedict XVI released a letter apologizing for years of physical and sexual abuse suffered by Irish children at the hands of priests. The seven-page letter included various sections addressed to the victims, their parents, the abusers, church leaders and the Irish faithful as a whole. The papal apology was made following three Irish government-ordered investigations published from 2005 to 2009 that documented how thousands of Irish children suffered sexual abuse and other abuses by priests in their parishes and by nuns and brothers in boarding schools and orphanages.
- In July 2015, Pope Francis apologized for the sins, offences and crimes committed by the Catholic Church against indigenous peoples during the colonial-era conquest of the Americas. The apology was delivered in Bolivia while meeting with indigenous groups and other activists. During his apology, Pope Francis noted that Latin American church leaders in the past had acknowledged that "grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God."
- In 1992 St. John Paul II (then Pope John Paul II), apologized to the continent's indigenous peoples for the "pain and suffering" caused during the 500 years of the church's presence in the Americas during a visit to the Dominican Republic.

**Suggested Messaging:**

- First Nations Survivors and family members have been adamant that they would like the Pope to travel to Canada and make a formal apology on behalf of the Catholic Church for impacts of Residential schools.
- Pope Francis has agreed to come to Canada "to help ongoing efforts at reconciliation with Indigenous people." No date has been set for the visit and there is no commitment that Pope Francis will make a formal apology during his visit. It is our sincere hope that he will make a formal apology during his visit to Canada.
- For all Canadians to take the first steps on the healing path forward and for real reconciliation to occur, must be a public acknowledgement of the legacy of Residential Schools and commemoration of what they stood for.
- Public acknowledgement needs to focus on coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people, going forward