

## **Press Statement**

### **CAP Fully Supports Call for Immediate Launch of Criminal Investigations into Residential Schools**

July 22<sup>th</sup> 2021 (Ottawa, ON) – On July 19<sup>th</sup>, in an interview with Global News, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that he would support a criminal investigation into the deaths that occurred at Residential Schools across Canada.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the National Indigenous Organization representing off-reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit Aboriginal Peoples fully supports this call for a criminal investigation, and insists that immediate steps be taken to launch this investigation without any further delay.

“These are more than just innocent children whose lives were taken away by a program designed to commit genocide against Indigenous people in Canada” said Elmer St Pierre, CAP National Chief. “That generation of children never grew up to be mothers and fathers, community leaders, and they are not with us today to be elders and knowledge keepers. The loss of these lives continues to impact every Indigenous community in Canada. There is no excuse for delaying a criminal investigation into these matters.”

As of July 2021, the grounds of 5 residential schools have been searched with ground-penetrating radar, identifying over 1,600 potential locations of bodies in unmarked graves. A further 134 officially acknowledged residential schools continue to await a comprehensive search. In addition to the residential school system, searches have not comprehensively begun on sites of other institutions where Indigenous people were taken and saw their rights violated, such as day schools and so-called “Indian hospitals”.

“In no other instance would it be a question whether or not to criminally investigate deaths across the country on an unthinkable scale” said Kim Beaudin, CAP Vice-Chief. “This is a matter of fundamental justice and rule of law.”

CAP calls on immediate steps to be taken to launch criminal investigations into the deaths at the former residential schools, accountability from the organizations that were responsible for operating the institutions, full restitution to survivors, and charges to be laid where criminal responsibility can be established.

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