



Canada's Catholic Bishops Welcome Historic Visit from Pope Francis

July 29, 2022 The Bishops of Canada are thankful for Pope Francis' historic visit to our country. He came in fulfilment of his promise to manifest by his very presence his closeness to the Indigenous Peoples of this land. This visit represents a significant milestone on the path of healing and reconciliation.

In his various public and private addresses, he gave a heartfelt and solemn apology to Indigenous Peoples on behalf of the Catholic Church, spoke of his admiration for Indigenous culture and spirituality, expressed profound sadness at the lasting impact of colonization, acknowledged the catastrophic impact of the residential school system, and sought forgiveness for abuses, including sexual abuses, that were committed by members of the Church.

The Holy Father called on us to continue to assist survivors and families in healing from the traumas they have suffered. We have heard this call and will be reviewing an updated action plan during our National Plenary Assembly this fall. It is our hope that the relationships forged in this planning process, particularly with Indigenous partners at both the national and local levels, will grow well beyond this visit and serve as the foundation for the work that lies ahead. In conversations with our Indigenous sisters and brothers, we have heard:

- Calls for greater transparency with the preservation and disclosure of residential school records;
- Asks for support to address the issue of Indigenous artifacts housed at the Vatican Museum;
- A desire to affirm the inherent rights of Indigenous people and to clarify the historical policies and principles often referred to as the "Doctrine of Discovery";
- An invitation to walk with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in addressing systemic injustices which continue today; and
- To financially support initiatives that advance healing and reconciliation.

This guidance will be instrumental to our next steps as we seek to walk together in a new way.

During our 2021 Plenary Assembly, the Canadian Bishops pledged to promote access to records, educate clergy on Indigenous cultures and spirituality, continue dialogue with Indigenous communities and engagement with the Vatican regarding artifacts, and commit \$30 million for what would eventually become an Indigenous Reconciliation Fund. We are grateful to the Indigenous partners, governments and faithful Catholics who have helped us make meaningful progress on these commitments, while recognizing that significant work lies ahead.

Reconciliation is a journey that involves all of us, and the Holy Father's presence has been a source of hope and inspiration for Canadians across the country. We would like to sincerely thank the Survivors for their bravery and openness to be a part of these encounters with the Holy Father and to the Indigenous partners for their assistance in the planning process. We are blessed to have been part of this penitential pilgrimage and conclude this week with renewed hope for walking together towards a better future.

For further information, email communications@cccb.ca