



**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES VIEWS  
CANADA'S APOLOGY TO RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS AS A STEP  
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

**For Immediate Release**

**OTTAWA, ON, June 9, 2008** – In a landmark event, the survivors of Canada's Indian residential school system will be offered an official apology by the Government of Canada on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - a move that the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) hopes is out of good faith.

"The NAFC is hopeful that this apology is meaningful and intended to forge a new relationship," said Vera Pawis Tabobondung, President of the National Association of Friendship Centres. "This apology will not take back what happened [in residential schools], but we hope it will allow everyone involved to contribute to a new chapter in the legacy of Indian Residential Schools."

Although the truth and reconciliation process is not intended to lay blame, a critical factor in its success will be a collective commitment on behalf of all the effected parties. This includes the Government of Canada which must acknowledge its role in the consequences and impacts that federal policies had on Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.

“Fundamentally, truth begins with accepting responsibility,” add Peter Dinsdale, Executive Director of the National Association of Friendship Centres. “It is time for the Government of Canada to say “*yes, we were wrong*”. This apology is a critical step toward reconciliation; another will be to ensure that the necessary supports are in place, and are sustainable, in order to foster the healing and healthy development of all Aboriginal people who have been affected by Indian Residential Schools.”

The NAFC recognizes the significance of this historic event. The impacts and long-term effects of the Indian Residential School system are evident in the needs of Canada’s rapidly growing urban Aboriginal population. For over 50 years, the Friendship Centre Movement remains a conduit for survivors, and all Aboriginal Canadians, to access programs and services that reflect their unique cultural and holistic needs.

In the spirit of friendship, the National Association of Friendship Centres will observe June 11, 2008 as a historic moment for Canada’s Aboriginal people.

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) represents 118 of Canada’s Friendship Centres and their urban Aboriginal membership.

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