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For Immediate Release

President expresses disappointment over Province's residential schools apology decision

Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe today expressed his utmost disappointment over the decision of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to issue an apology this Friday in Cartwright to residential schools survivors and their descendants, many of whom are members of the NunatuKavut Community Council. This planned apology to an unrecognized Indigenous group precedes any apology to Labrador Inuit residential school survivors and their families – despite concerns expressed to the office of Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey and Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation Minister Lisa Dempster.

“An apology to an unrecognized Indigenous group in advance of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is an insult to survivors and to Labrador Inuit. This feels like the Province is telling us they do not respect Inuit – and it exposes the deep roots of colonialism still impacting us today.”

While some students who attended residential schools were non-Indigenous (as there were no other schools available for them to attend), Labrador Inuit led the way in having an apology delivered in 2017 by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the federal government for Canada's role in Labrador's residential schools system.

“Labrador Inuit played a central role in the apology from Canada and, therefore, it is only right that any apologies from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador be given to them first,” notes President Lampe. “Instead, the Province has chosen to disregard the genuine suffering and historical injustices endured by our people. This is a stark reminder of how far we still have to go in our journey towards reconciliation.”

Given her affiliation with NCC, which is not recognized as Inuit by the Nunatsiavut Government and other Inuit in Canada, and her previous long-term employment with NCC, President Lampe is advocating for Minister Dempster's immediate removal from her role as the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

“Her apparent conflict of interest raises serious questions about her ability to carry out her duties in an unbiased manner. As long as she remains in her current role, we fear that achieving reconciliation will be challenging, if not impossible. She should be removed as Minister before more harm is inflicted on the true Indigenous peoples of our province.”

Media Contact:

Bert Pomeroy, Director of Communication
(709) 896-8582