

For Immediate Release

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Canada's Apology to Aboriginal Peoples –One Step Towards Reconciliation

VANCOUVER – Today marks the sixth anniversary of Canada's apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools for the lasting and damaging impacts of that system.

On June 11, 2008 Prime Minister Harper took a significant step towards reconciliation when he acknowledged and apologized, on behalf of the federal government, for forcibly removing approximately 150,000 aboriginal children from their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and for trying to assimilate them into the dominant culture. On that day, Prime Minister Harper committed to building new relationships with aboriginal peoples.

The BC Treaty Commission encourages Canada to continue to forge new relationships between aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada through the completion of treaties in BC. Treaties are the ultimate expression of reconciliation with aboriginal peoples. Just as the apology signified a desire to move forward with a renewed understanding, modern treaties move the Parties forward with a renewed relationship of reconciliation.

Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre, a former residential school student says, "Fairly negotiated and fairly implemented treaties is the next step in reconciliation with First Nations. After all, when a First Nation benefits, the whole region benefits." The Treaty Commission acknowledges and honours all the former students of residential schools and their families.