



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 26, 2021

## **AMC and AFN Manitoba condemn remarks by former Prime Minister Jean Chretien**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba** – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Manitoba region, today both condemn the disgraceful remarks made by former Prime Minister Jean Chretien in relation to the condition and administration of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system under his watch as Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the late 60s to early 70s. In a French language interview on October 24, 2021, Chretien stated that he was not aware of the horrific abuses to First Nations children that were documented to have occurred while he was Minister. He then went further to minimize the genocidal intent and result of the IRS system by comparing it to his experiences at a Quebec boarding school.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “the comments made by the former Prime Minister are absolutely despicable and the AMC condemns them in the strongest terms. By pleading ignorance and denying any culpability during a time when there were teachers and others writing to him as Minister to say that there were crimes being committed against children in these institutions of assimilation is irresponsible and reprehensible. As Minister, he should have known. It was his job to know. If he took the time to read the letters being written to his office then perhaps some of the abuses would never have happened. If it is any consolation, First Nations are thankful that this ‘old guard’ attitude is for the most part left in the past where it belongs.”

AFN Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse states, “In addition to his hurtful comments, in his book Chretien also brags that he advised Her Royal Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II to never apologize for the British Crown’s treatment of Indigenous peoples across the Commonwealth because it would set a precedent for apologizing to over 600 First Nations in this country and she would be on her knees for years. This is not the legacy befitting an elder statesman. First Nations in Manitoba and across the country urge Jean Chretien to apologize to First Nations and all Canadians for these comments and to work on a legacy that is more honourable.”

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “these remarks are not only revisionist and out of touch, they are dangerous. First Nations peoples are already subject to systemic racism and the targets of hate in this country. These remarks have the potential to contribute to the skewed interpretation of the IRS system and contribute to the IRS apologist movement in this country that says the residential schools weren’t that bad. At their worst these comments have the potential to fuel this hate and set back reconciliation efforts in this country. The AMC demands that the former Prime Minister apologize for the misguided and damaging remarks. At the end of the day, I have no time for misinformation; no time for the smoothing over of grotesque history of Canada’s treatment of First Nations citizens, especially our children; and no time to continually have to correct uninformed politicians.”

**For more information, please contact:**

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**About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishininiwe (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.