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APOLOGY DESERVED, DEHCHO GRAND CHIEF SAYS, BUT ACTIONS NEEDED

Gerald Antoine, interim Grand Chief of the Dehcho First Nations, has acknowledged the proposed apology of Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Canada's Indigenous Peoples for the residential school atrocities of 97 years "because it is right" but, in a statement issued today, has taken a tough position that words without actions are simply words.

In a stern historical analysis, Antoine traced the history of Canadian policies of assimilation of Indigenous Peoples which would lead to their disappearance long before residential schools were formally established in 1911.

"The residential schools shattered what was left of our peoples," he said, "but the historical context goes much deeper."

Without serious and fundamental policy changes today which would lead to the dismantling of the culture of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Treasury Board votes on Treaty obligations, the healing hoped for by the apology will not begin, Antoine said.

"When Canada recognizes its addiction to power and accepts the reality that Indigenous Peoples agreed to share and live in peace and not to give their lands, resources and very lives so that the Queen's 'children' could have it all for themselves, then the healing will begin for Canada and for us."

The complete text of Antoine's statement follows [is attached].

For further information please contact Gerald Antoine at the above co-ordinates