

'ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS'

HALTON INDIGENOUS GROUP MEMBER SPEAKS OUT ABOUT POPE'S APOLOGY

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When Pope Francis made a historic apology to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada for the Catholic Church's role in forced assimilation and residential schools, he humbly asked for their forgiveness.

"I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous Peoples," said Francis.

But when an apology goes unaccepted, it makes the invisible more obvious. It reveals how deep the wounds are felt.

Similarly, the apology was like a re-traumatization

for Jody Harbour, an urban Indigenous resident of Halton and co-founder of Grandmother's Voice, a Halton-based community for Indigenous people that advances healing and knowledge.

"It's like he is poking a sharp object into the raw tissue of an open wound," Harbour said. "I have been a proud Indigenous woman my whole life. I never held the shame that many others inherited. My father carried that pain for my siblings and me."

Harbour has spent most of her time engaging with Halton urban Indigenous communities, advocating and listening to residential school survivors and their families. But after she heard the Pope's apology, her first feeling was exhaustion in her body and a "heaviness" in her heart.

"We are so past words," Harbour said as she felt the



Jody Harbour photo

Jody Harbour, co-founder of the Halton-based Grandmothers Voice, didn't think much of Pope Francis' recent apology to Canada's Indigenous Peoples.

apology was not enough.

She described the incident as a selfish gesture by the Pope, giving particular attention to the proverbial saying, "Actions speak louder than words."

"The apology contains words that may have meaning to the person delivering

the message. But did he think about the impact it would have on the people who are healing from the pain?" she said.

When asked whether the Catholic Church could have managed the situation differently, Harbour thought of Indigenous families and

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- Jody Harbour

residential school survivors in need.

"The Catholic Church can contribute to the healing of our Nation," she said. "A financial contribution to some type of economic sovereignty of survivors so they can ensure a path to healing for their lineage is what I could see possible."

Harbour believes there is still hope for healing in this time, and although she was disappointed the apology was not accompanied by further effort, she thinks it can be the beginning of a path of renewal.

"There are many at the beginning stages of learning and remembering this horrible story. Everyone is on

their own personal healing journey, including the Pope. My hope is that we share love and words of healing in this time."

She also feels the social climate in Canada is better prepared to understand the truth of our country's history, which includes the grizzly discoveries of mass graves of Indigenous children, instances of sexual abuse, cultural shame, and the murder of Indigenous women.

But despite Canada's dark history, Harbour said, "We are in a significant time of awareness and healing for the original people of these lands and a Nation founded on this truth."

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