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## **Statement from Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Chair and CEO Duane Ningaqsiq Smith on the display of Inuvialuit artifacts in the Vatican Museum**

Dec 2, 2021 [INUVIK] The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is seeking the immediate return of all Indigenous artifacts held in the collection of the Vatican Museum.

An article published in The Globe and Mail on Dec. 1 confirmed that an Inuvialuit qayaq removed from the Mackenzie Delta region by a Roman Catholic Bishop in the 1920s is currently on display in the Vatican Museum along with other Indigenous artifacts from the region.

This qayaq is a piece of Inuvialuit history, made by Inuvialuit hands in Inuvialuit traditions. It is not “the Pope’s kayak” and rightly belongs in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, where its lessons and significance can benefit Inuvialuit culture and communities.

We are shocked by the insensitive display of these Inuvialuit and Indigenous artifacts at the Vatican Museum in the context of ongoing revelations related to the abuse and deaths of thousands of Indigenous children at Canadian residential schools, more than 60 per cent of which were run by the Catholic Church. We echo previous calls from Indigenous leaders across Canada that Pope Francis must apologize for the egregious harms committed by the Church against Inuvialuit and all Indigenous peoples, and take immediate steps towards restitution, record sharing and the return of land held by the Diocese.

We call on the Government of Canada to support and accelerate the return of these artifacts, and to work with Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and other Indigenous governments, including Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to ensure their appropriate cultural repatriation and ongoing care.

Please contact [media@inuvialuit.com](mailto:media@inuvialuit.com) for more information.

### **About the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation**

Established in 1984 to manage the settlement outlined in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) represents the collective interests of Inuvialuit in and beyond the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. The IRC works to continually improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of the Inuvialuit through implementation of the IFA and by all other available means.