**Media Advisory**

**Young people leave Midland July 21 to paddle hundreds of kilometres, working toward reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples**

**Toronto, ON, July 18, 2017** – More than 30 people, comprised of Indigenous, Jesuit, English and French Canadian paddlers leave Midland on July 21 at 12:00 noon for a month-long, 850-kilometre canoe trip in response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

By helping both Indigenous and non-Indigenous to be immersed in each others’ customs and traditions for an entire month, the Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage (CCP) hopes to foster respect, trust, dialogue and hopefully friendships -- the building blocks for reconciliation.

Following a traditional First Nations canoe trade route, the CCP will begin at Midland, Ontario then go up Georgian Bay, travel across the French River, Lake Nipissing, the Mattawa and Ottawa Rivers, and end near Montreal.

**Who**: Father Peter Bisson, SJ, (Provincial, Jesuits in English Canada), William Baird, (General Manager, Sainte-Marie among the Hurons), George Cornell, (Mayor of Tiny Township), Father Michael Knox, SJ, (Director, Martyrs’ Shrine), Gord McKay, (Mayor of Midland), Scott Warnock, (Mayor of Tay Township).

**What:** Launch of the Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage, an 850-kilometre canoe trip in response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

**When:** Friday, July 21, launch ceremonies begin at 12:00 Noon, a Mass precedes the send-off at 10:30 AM. Reception at 1:30 PM in Ste. Marie’s restaurant

**Where:** Launch is from Sainte-Marie Park, located off Wye Valley Road, adjacent to the bridge on Hwy. 12, over the **Wye** River, between Martyrs’ Shrine and Ste-Marie among the Hurons, 16164 Highway #12, Midland.

The CCP itinerary below shows major landfalls, but please be advised there may be changes due to logistical considerations and weather-related contingencies.

July 21 - Departs Sainte-Marie among the Hurons (Midland, ON)

July 28 – French River Visitor’s Centre, French River Provincial Park

July 31 – North Bay, ON

August 2 – Mattawa, ON

August 6 – Pembroke, ON

August 9 – Ottawa, ON

August 14 – Montreal, Quebec

August 15 – Kahnawake First Nation (close to Montreal)

For photos, video and news releases, please go to: <https://canoepilgrimage.com/2017/04/20/press-release/>

The Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage has been made possible by the generosity of donors including The Miller Group, the Ontario 150 Community Celebration Fund, the Canadian Heritage River System, Parks Canada, and Ontario Parks. Also thanks to Sainte-Marie among the Hurons and Martyrs’ Shrine for hosting the launch event on July 21.

**About the Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage**

The Canadian Canoe Pilgrimage (CCP) is a project inspired by Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) with the hope of encouraging intercultural and interreligious dialogue and learning. Participants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, will be immersed in each other’s customs and traditions. Through this immersion, the goal is to foster respect, trust, dialogue and hopefully friendship -- the building blocks for reconciliation.

The canoe route is a traditional First Nations trading route that was travelled by early European settlers such as Samuel de Champlain and Jean de Brébeuf, who were welcomed and guided by the Indigenous Peoples of this land. This pilgrimage will begin at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons in Midland, on the shore of Georgian Bay, on July 21 and end on August 15 on the St. Lawrence River at the Kahnawake First Nation, close to Montreal. The community of paddlers making this 850-kilometre, 25-day voyage is comprised of Indigenous Peoples, Jesuits, English and French Canadians, men and women - all desiring to travel together on a path of healing and friendship. The route follows a similar one paddled by 24 young Jesuits in 1967. For more information, and to donate, please go to: [www.canoepilgrimage.com](http://www.canoepilgrimage.com).

**About the Jesuits in English Canada**

The Jesuits, an order of priests and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church, have worked in Canada for more than 400 years. They have responsibility for the direction of schools, churches, retreat houses, and a variety of social justice ministries that span from St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador to Vancouver, British Columbia. They have worked closely with the TRC and issued a public Statement of Reconciliation in 2013. The Jesuits are currently implementing the Calls to Action described by the TRC. For more details please visit [www.jesuits.ca](http://www.jesuits.ca).

**(more)**

**About Sainte-Marie among the Hurons**

Ontario’s first European Community, Sainte-Marie among the Hurons was the headquarters for the French Jesuit Mission to the Huron Wendat people. In 1639, the Jesuits, along with French lay workers, began construction of a fenced community that included barracks, a church, workshops, residences, and a sheltered area for Native visitors.  By 1648, Sainte-Marie was a wilderness home to 66 French men, representing one-fifth of the entire population of New France. Sainte-Marie's brief history ended in 1649, when members of the mission community were forced to abandon and burn their home of nearly ten years. After extensive archaeological and historical research, Sainte-Marie among the Hurons is now recreated on its original site, where the mission’s compelling story is brought to life. More information may be found at

**<http://www.saintemarieamongthehurons.on.ca>**

**About Martyrs’ Shrine**

Martyrs’ Shrine is the National Shrine to the Canadian martyrs, celebrating its 90th season, and is a ministry of the Jesuits in English Canada. This house of prayer and home of peace honours the Jesuit missionaries and their companions who lived, worked, and died here more than 350 years ago. It is located in Midland, Ontario, in the heart of the Huron Confederacy of the 17th century. More than 110,000 visitors from around the world and from all cultural backgrounds are welcomed to the Shrine’s 75-acre landscaped grounds each year. More information may be found at: <http://martyrs-shrine.com>

**For news media and government information, please contact:**

Mark Hunter LaVigne, MAJ, APR, FCPRS  
[Mark.lavigne@hunterlavigne.com](mailto:Mark.lavigne@hunterlavigne.com)  
416-884-2018 (mobile)

Erica Zlomislic  
[cdacommunications@jesuits.org](mailto:cdacommunications@jesuits.org)  
416-962-4500 X225  
855-962-4500 X225  
416-333-2585 (mobile)

**For project information, and to discuss donations and grants, please contact:**Erik Sorensen, SJ[canoe.pilgrimage@jesuits.net](mailto:esorensen@jesuits.ca)647-850-5411 (mobile)

**For community relations and social media, please contact:**Adam Pittman, SJ[apittman@jesuits.ca](mailto:apittman@jesuits.ca)347-513-7100

**Facebook/Twitter/Instagram: @CanoePilgrimage**

**For French Canada, please contact:**Marco Veilleux[mveilleux@jesuites.org](mailto:mveilleux@jesuites.org)514-387-2541 poste 277