



Tkemlúps te Secwépemc

(Kamloops Indian Band)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement from the Office of the Chief, Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir

5 pm, May 31, 2021, Kamloops – As the last logs go on our sacred fire, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the outpouring of support to our community. Thank you for helping us bring to light such hard truths that came from the preliminary findings regarding the unmarked burial sites of Kamloops Indian Residential School students so that we may begin the process of honouring the lost loved ones who are in our caretaking. We love, honour, and respect these children, their families, and communities.

To the Prime Minister of Canada and all federal parties, we acknowledge your gestures, but as a community who is burdened with the legacy of a federally mandated Indian Residential School, Canada must face ownership and accountability to Tkemlúps te Secwépemc as well as all communities and families. Our community is still gathering all the facts in this evolving tragedy. We will keep you informed as more information comes to light.

We have heard from many survivors, from our own community and beyond. They are finally being heard after so many years of silence and disbelief about the deaths of children in the residential schools. No words are sufficient to express the comfort and love we wish to extend to survivors and intergenerational survivors. We see you, we love you, and we believe you. We are thankful to the many who are working hard with us to ensure supports are there as you come to terms with these latest findings as well as your own truths and traumas.

We are deeply disturbed to learn that the Saint Joseph's church was vandalized. The church was built from the ground up by Tkemlúps te Secwépemc members. We understand the many emotions connected to a Roman Catholic run residential school. At the same time, we respect the choices that Tkemlúps te Secwépemc ancestors made, over a 100 years ago, to erect this church.

Regrettably, we know that many more children are unaccounted for. We have heard that the same knowing of unmarked burial sites exists at other former residential school grounds. It was something that the TRC raised in the early days of their work. However, it was not part of their original mandate. The TRC sought for it to be included and were turned down twice by the federal government. That said, the TRC was nonetheless able to do some important work on the topic and we encourage you to revisit *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume 4*.

For further important context, we also direct your attention to the report "Where are the Children buried?" completed by Dr. Scott Hamilton. The report "addresses the question where deceased Indian Residential School (IRS) students are buried. This is difficult to answer because of the varying circumstances of death

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and burial, coupled with the generally sparse information about Residential School cemeteries. It requires a historic understanding of school operations that contextualizes the patterns underlying death and burial.”
(Link to report here

<https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AAA-Hamilton-cemetery-FInal.pdf>)

We ask all Canadians to reacquaint themselves with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report and Calls to Action – upholding the heavy lifting already done by the survivors, intergenerational survivors, and the TRC. In addition, to show your solidarity, we encourage you to wear an orange shirt and start conversations with your neighbours about why you are doing so.

Tkemlúps te Secwépemc is now accepting donations that will automatically be deposited into a separate account set up for this initiative. The email is: donations@kib.ca There is no other fundraising initiative that Tkemlúps te Secwépemc has authorised or is participating in at this time.

Media – please respect our need to attend to our loved ones, to the ceremonies and protocols required at this time. Defer from visiting our community until further notice. We are grieving these lost children that are in our care. During this time of pandemic, we do not wish to have a tragedy upon a tragedy. We are concerned for the well being of all with the growing crowds that are coming to our community. We have yet to suffer a loss due to COVID-19 and we also want to ensure that anyone who comes to our community is not put at risk either.

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