Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc

(Kamloops Indian Band)

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 27, 2021, Kamloops – It is with a heavy heart that Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Kukpi7 (Chief) Rosanne Casimir confirms an unthinkable loss that was spoken about but never documented by the Kamloops Indian Residential School. This past weekend, with the help of a ground penetrating radar specialist, the stark truth of the preliminary findings came to light – the confirmation of the remains of 215 children who were students of the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc is the home community of the Kamloops Indian Residential School which was the largest school in the Indian Affairs residential school system. As such, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Leadership acknowledges their responsibility to caretake for these lost children.

"We had a knowing in our community that we were able to verify. To our knowledge, these missing children are undocumented deaths," stated Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir. "Some were as young as three years old. We sought out a way to confirm that knowing out of deepest respect and love for those lost children and their families, understanding that Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc is the final resting place of these children."

This work was undertaken by the C7élksteńs re Secwépemc ne Ck̓úl̓tens ell ne
Xqwelténs (Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Language and Culture Department) with ceremonial Knowledge Keepers who ensured that the work was conducted respectfully in light of the serious nature of the investigation with cultural protocols being upheld.

Given that these lost loved ones are buried within the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc community, and with all community members still grappling with the effects of residential school, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Chief and Council first reached out to their community members to make them aware of the situation, albeit that it is still developing.

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc will continue to work with the ground penetrating radar specialist to complete the survey of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds. In undertaking this current investigation, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Chief and Council would like to acknowledge the preliminary work that was carried out in the early 2000's. With access to the latest technology, the true accounting of the missing students will hopefully bring some peace and closure to those lives lost and their home communities.

Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir stated, "We are thankful for the Pathway to Healing grant we received to undertake this important work. Given the size of the school, with up to 500 students registered and attending at any one time, we understand that this confirmed loss affects First Nations communities

200-330 Chief Alex Thomas Way, Kamloops BC V2H 1H1
Phone: 250-828-9700 Fax: 250-372-8833
www.tkemlups.ca

across British Columbia and beyond. We wish to ensure that our community members, as well as all home communities for the children who attended are duly informed. This is the beginning but, given the nature of this news, we felt it important to share immediately. At this time we have more questions than answers. We look forward to providing updates as they become available."

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc is following the necessary steps regarding these preliminary findings. This includes:

- Engaging with the coroner.
- Reaching out to the home communities who had children who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School.
- Taking measures to ensure that the locations of the remains are protected.
- The Secwépemc Museum Archivist is working with the Royal British Columbia Museum, amongst others, to seek out any existing records of these deaths.

Please note that the Heritage Park is closed to the public and no one will be permitted on site for the duration of this sensitive work.

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc expect to complete preliminary findings by mid- June and will be providing updates as they become available.

– 30 –

To arrange interviews:
Contact: Racelle Kooy
Mobile: 250-267-7782
racellekooy@gmail.com

Context: Missing Children

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) noted that large numbers of Indigenous children who were sent to residential schools never returned to their home communities. Some children ran away, and others died at the schools. The students who did not return have come to be known as the Missing Children. The Missing Children Project documents the deaths and the burial places of children who died while attending the schools. To date, more than 4,100 children who died while attending a residential school have been identified. (Source: http://www.trc.ca/events-and-projects/missing-children-project.html)

Brief Background about the Kamloops Indian Residential School:

Source: https://collections.irshdc.ubc.ca/index.php/Detail/entities/46

Kamloops (BC)
Dates of Operation
May 19, 1890 - July 31, 1978
Description
The Kamloops Industrial School (later known as the Kamloops Indian Residential School) was opened, under Roman Catholic administration, in 1890. It became the largest school in the Indian Affairs

residential school system. Enrolment peaked in the early 1950s at 500. In 1910, the principal said that the government did not provide enough money to properly feed the students. In 1924, a portion of the school was destroyed by fire. In 1969, the federal government took over the administration of the school, which no longer provided any classes and operated it as residence for students attending local day schools until 1978, when the residence was closed. (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation)
Read More
Denomination
Catholic Church
Home Communities of Students*
Neskainlith, North Thompson, Kamloops, Pavilion, Penticton, Adam's Lake, Bonaparte, Fountain, Douglas L., Okanagan, Quilchena, Shulus, Little Shuswap, Coldwater, L. Nicola, Bridge R. Enderby, Deadman's Cr., Hope, Leon's C., Cayoose, Salmon R., Canoe C., Lillooet, Mount Currie (Lilwat Nation), D'Arcy (Nquatqua), Seabird Island, Skwah, Kamloops, Union Bar, Head of L., Deroche, Spuzzum, Shalalth, Spalumcheen.

*****_Note: It is our understanding that there were children that came from other communities not listed here._

Yọurs respectfully,
Tkemlúps te Secwépemc

Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir (Chief)
On behalf of Council