



## *Tkemlúps te Secwépeḿc*

(Kamloops Indian Band)

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

May 27, 2024

### **Reflections on the Third Anniversary of Le Estcwicwéy' (the Missing)**

May 23, 2021, marks the day that preliminary ground penetrating radar was completed on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. Tkemlúps te Secwépeḿc observes it as a day of reflection. We encouraged our members to be with family and support each other.

The 2021 decision to share the news about the preliminary investigative work came about because the findings were being spread like wildfire. To maintain the integrity of the investigation, to uphold truth and counter rumour and misinformation, Tkemlúps te Secwépeḿc Council made the hard decision to share the news publicly. We knew it would be heart wrenching for our membership as well as for Indigenous People across Canada as virtually all live with firsthand or intergenerational impacts of Indian Residential Schools.

Today, May 27, 2024, marks the third anniversary of the day that preliminary finding went public. On this day, we choose to reach out directly to you – Tkemlúps te Secwépeḿc membership, community members and allies. Thank you for how you rallied around us in support of our findings and continue to walk with us. Thank you to our dedicated Le Estcwicwéy' Department, staff dedicated to completing the investigation as well as building a Healing House for Survivors and intergenerational Survivors.

At the same time, we knew that there would be a backlash. There have always been those who target Indigenous People in Canada, with systemic racism and white supremacy as foundational to Canada as the very federal laws that ripped our children away from home, in cattle trucks and police cars, to bring them to the residential schools.

That said, three years later, we remain steadfast in our sacred duty as guardians to the missing children from the Kamloops Indian Residential School. From the beginning, we have articulated and exercised our jurisdiction. The investigation continues to be carried out in compliance with Secwépeḿc laws, legal traditions, worldviews, values, and protocols. *Cont' ..*



We are taking steps to ensure the investigation is carried out in a way that does not preclude and will not interfere with potential future legal proceedings.

With all the misinformation and targeted denialism, allow me to remind you of key facts:



May 2021- Messages on tree by KIRS Monument

- ✓ Elders and Survivors have always spoken of children dying and disappearing while at the school. Men speak of, as boys attending Kamloops Indian Residential School, being woken in the middle of the night, and asked to dig holes that seemed like graves, in the dark, and not being told why.
- ✓ In May 2021 with the assistance of a Ground Penetrating Radar, Tkemlups te Secwepemc was able to narrow down the location of probable unmarked burial sites on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS).
- ✓ Tkemlups immediately took responsibility for the children, who we call Le Estcwicwéy (the Missing). This includes the responsibility to care for them and to seek justice for them.
- ✓ We remain committed to working with the many other communities and Nations whose children were taken to the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Over 128 communities and 32 Nations had children at the school.

At this time, we are deep into the investigative work. Our approach is multidisciplinary and includes the following:

- ✓ Archival and documentary research and analysis
- ✓ Wenecwtsínem (truth telling) with KIRS Survivors
- ✓ Archaeological and anthropological surveys and studies
- ✓ Potential DNA and other forensic methods

Our investigative findings (and investigative steps) are currently being kept confidential to preserve the integrity of the investigation. Our investigators' findings to date are consistent with the presence of unmarked burials. When we reach our next milestone, we will be sure to update you.



Thinking of our own thorough process, I also reflect on all the other communities grappling with their findings regarding Missing Children at other former Residential Schools. We grieve with you and stand with you as you continue with your own investigations.

You may be asking – how can you help? Did a member of your family attend Kamloops Indian Residential School? We are working with Survivors to learn what they recollect from their experience as it relates to the missing children. However, we are not looking to stir up bad memories. We are looking for insight that may assist in our research. Please reach out and be assured that this is a trauma-informed and confidential process.

As an ally, to refute the very real harm caused by denialists, we encourage you to speak out and organise. Truth about the realities of Residential Schools and the Missing Children must be upheld. There are so many tools to help educate people about Residential Schools.

I would like to end with what I shared in July 2021 and remains very true today. I want to acknowledge Indian Residential School Survivors and Intergenerational Survivors. No words are sufficient to express the comfort and love we wish to convey to you. We see you, we love you, and we believe you.

Yours truly,  
**Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc**

**Kúkpi7Rosanne Casimir (Chief)**  
On behalf of Council



Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir in front of the KIRS- Fall 2021