



APRIL 1, 2024

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and Catholic Church reflect on Sacred Covenant signing and the advancement of truth and reconciliation

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, BC – In an unprecedented and historic ceremony, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, and Roman Catholic Diocese of Kamloops signed a Sacred Covenant, marking a significant step forward in healing and reconciliation.

The Sacred Covenant, signed on Easter Sunday, reflects our mutual acknowledgment of past wrongs, particularly the Catholic Church's role in the Residential School System, and a shared commitment to truth, reconciliation, and the future. It clarifies the "Doctrine of Discovery" by affirming the dignity and rights of First Nations peoples, repudiating past injustices. The Covenant outlines practical commitments, including honouring and memorializing residential school students, facilitating access to historical records, and retaining scientific expertise to support the Nation's efforts in uncovering the truth and promoting healing.

Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir

"This Easter Sunday was a testament of allyship. Inasmuch as I participated virtually while I recoup from a broken leg, it was clear that there were many hands that shaped the positives outcomes of today.

I was touched to learn of the strong turnout in the early hours of Easter morning to participate in a sunrise ceremony - to set the intention of the day through Secwepemc spiritual practice. I was further moved to hear about the number of Northern Secwepemc Elders who traveled from Canim Lake, Esketemc, Canoe Creek, and Williams Lake First Nations, to join us and sing hymns in Secwepemctsin as part of Easter Sunday Mass at St Joseph's Church.

In keeping with our oral traditions, we called upon many leaders came to bear witness of the historic event. This included Northwest Territories Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, made particularly meaningful as he led the historic journey to meet the Pope at the Vatican. A heartfelt thank you to Williams Lake First Nation Kukpi7 Willie Sellars and Upper Nicola Band Chief Dan Manuel, as well as Member of Parliament Frank Caputo, Member of the BC Legislative Assembly Peter Milobar, and Kamloops City Councillor Bill Sarai for also accepting to witness the signing of the Sacred Covenant and learn of the history that brought it to life.

The Archdiocese of Vancouver and the Diocese of Kamloops have made it clear that they are embarking on this new journey of truth, justice, and healing with us."

Archbishop Miller

In his address, Archbishop Miller described the significance of the Covenant not as a transaction, but as a relational and spiritual commitment to walk together on a path towards healing and understanding. He emphasized the importance of this new beginning, inspired by the Easter message of hope and renewal.



A message from Pope Francis, conveyed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, was shared. The Pope extended his greetings and support for the Covenant, viewing it as a step towards fulfilling the call for the Church and Indigenous Peoples of Canada to "walk together, pray together, and work together" towards reconciliation.

History of Collaboration

The Sacred Covenant and ceremony highlighted the extraordinary journey of Chief Johnny Chillihetza of Upper Nicola Band (*then referred to as Douglas Lake Indian Band, now integrated into the Upper Nicola Band as one of its 2 communities*), Chief Louis Clexlixqen of T'kemplúps te SecwépeMC (*then referred to as the Kamloops Indian Band*), and priest Father Jean-Marie-Raphael Le Jeune. Their long voyage in 1904 to seek support from Pope Pius X for their Nations' rights and land titles exemplifies a profound legacy of unity. Their act of advocacy and collaboration serves as an example for us today, demonstrating the importance of solidarity in the pursuit of reconciliation.





Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, and other representatives met in February to finalize the details of the Sacred Covenant.

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