

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

July 15, 2021

FNLC Stands with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and all IRS Survivors and Families and Calls on Governments for Immediate Actions

(Xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) This morning, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc released the *Kamloops Indian Residential School Le Estcwéy (The Missing) Report Findings* and gathered residential school survivors to share their thoughts and experiences with Canada and the world. The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) sends our love and prayers to the survivors for their incredible courage and stands in solidarity with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. We call on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and all of Canada to honour their commitments to reconciliation and to join Indigenous peoples on the continued journey for truth, justice, and healing. As we work toward these goals, immediate attention and actions are required.

Residential school records must be made immediately and fully accessible for future work to search, and subject to the wishes and choices of First Nations communities and families, to identify the children who were buried on the grounds of these institutions. Adequate and long-term funding must be made available for the planning, research and work that First Nations communities will undertake to search, memorialize and, if the choice is made, to bring their missing, lost and stolen children home.

While the work of finding Indigenous children's graves at residential school sites is just beginning, it is important and necessary to realize, ensure and advance the pathway to truth and justice. However, the physical, emotional and spiritual impacts to survivors and their families who are experiencing inter-generational trauma are profound and significant. It is urgent that their health and well-being be supported immediately and for the long-term.

"First Nations have revealed the truth that has been shared through our oral histories and which is now being presented as a continuously growing body of physical evidence. The search and continued work are necessary for the process of reconciliation and justice as our grievous losses, of lives, cultures and ways of life, can no longer be ignored," stated BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "I urge all Canadians to come together with First Nations and learn, understand and reflect on the Canadian state's colonial history and the shared broken relationship with Indigenous peoples. Justice and reconciliation demand no less."

"We hold our hands up to the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc for sharing their report findings and providing an overview of the very important work ahead for their community. We also commend the academic institutions and technical organizations that assisted in the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc search for the lost children buried at the former site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Most importantly, we hold our hands up to the elders and knowledge keepers who assisted in the identification of burial sites based on their traumatic memories," said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "All lost children from the horrific Indian Residential School system deserve recognition, remembrance and a chance to be found. We call on the federal and provincial governments to provide the necessary resources for every First Nation in Canada that had an Indian Residential School in their traditional territory, to undertake the important work of finding the lost children."



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“We continue to raise our hands to the resilient residential school survivors who teach us with their continued strength and perseverance through immense trauma and pain. We would also like to acknowledge all intergenerational survivors of residential schools. It is overdue for Canada to address the repercussions of state-sanctioned genocide and account for more recent decisions, for example in relation to the decision to let the Catholic entities off the hook for their obligations, and how this has made it more difficult for our people to access records and learn what we need to know about the missing children,” stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. “Finally, we express our outmost gratitude to the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc and to all the experts and specialists who have put in the hard and thorough work to identify the unmarked graves found within the Nation’s jurisdiction. Canada owes it to each and every survivor, each and every child buried, and each and every grieving family member and loved one, to provide adequate and comprehensive reparations, supports, and funds for healing, justice, and closure.”

Important link:

Press release - KIRS missing children findings but a fraction of investigation and work need to bring peace to families and communities: <https://tkemlups.ca/press-release-kirs-missing-children-findings-but-a-fraction-of-investigation-and-work-need-to-bring-peace-to-families-and-communities/>

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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