BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
October 14, 15 & 16, 2026
In person & online via Zoom

Resolution 31(b)/2026

SUBJECT: **ADVANCING A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL/INDIAN HOSPITAL DEATH INVESTIGATION INITIATIVE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

DECISION:

WHEREAS:

A. First Nations were subjected to Canada's policies of forced assimilation, including through the forcible removal of children to Residential Schools to "kill the Indian in the child." First Nations know the truth of the crimes and atrocities committed at these institutions, including the loss of culture and language, emotional, spiritual, sexual, physical, and psychological abuse and other injustices that severely impacted entire communities and families for generations;

B. the ongoing investigations into the unmarked graves and likely remains of children who were forced to attend former Residential Schools across Canada in unmarked graves have provided further evidence supporting longstanding findings and testimonies regarding genocide, cultural genocide, and serious human rights violations arising from Canada's Residential School system;

C. on May 27, 2021, Tk̓emlúps te Secwépemc announced that through efforts to learn the truth about the missing children who attended the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, 215 anomalies consistent with potential unmarked burials;

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D. following the Tk̓emlúps te Secwépemc announcement in 2021, the 21 lead First Nations in British Columbia conducting investigations into missing children and unmarked burials associated with former Indian Residential Schools and Indian Hospitals endorsed the formation of the Technical Working Group (TWG) in 2022 to provide practical and functional support for community-led investigations. In 2025, an executive sub-committee was established to advance strategic recommendations and concerns affecting investigation work, and in 2026 it was renamed the BC Indian Residential School – Indian Hospital (IRS-IH) Advisory Committee, which serves as the governing body for shared strategic priorities while continuing to rely on the technical expertise and engagement of the TWG;

E. substantial barriers and threats continue to impact IRS-IH investigations, including federal political instability, the lack of long-term sustainable funding, access to databases and records, and the lack of federal action in addressing and implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, and the key elements outlined in the Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites' Final Report;

F. Ontario has established a dedicated Residential School Death Investigation Team within the Office of the Chief Coroner, providing support for archival research, historical death investigations, coordination with First Nations communities, record recovery and information-sharing. This model demonstrates a practical provincial mechanism that British Columbia could adapt in partnership with First Nations. Manitoba is also actively exploring a similar approach through provincial discussions and briefing processes;

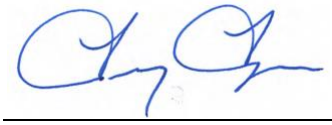
G. the BC IRS-IH Advisory Committee has called on British Columbia to establish a similar investigation initiative led by the BC Coroners Service; however, despite repeated calls from First Nations, a dedicated Residential School Death Investigation Initiative has not yet been established in British Columbia;

H. the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of B.C., passed legislation committing to implement, affirms:

> **Article 7(2):** Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.
>
> **Article 8(1):** Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.
>
> **(2):** States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources; (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any

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of their rights; (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration; (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them;

I. the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada estimates that 150,000 children were forced to attend Residential Schools nationwide, identifying that more than 4,100 children died at these facilities although survivors and families have maintained that that number is much higher. This number is likely to rise as First Nations continue to document and identify missing children and unmarked graves through archival, archaeological and oral histories;

J. the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 71 through 76 specifically call upon governments, churches, coroners, archivists and related institutions to work with Survivors and Indigenous communities to identify, document, maintain, commemorate and respond to deaths associated with Residential Schools;

K. BCAFN Resolution 30/2021, Demanding Justice and Accountability for the Missing and Unidentified Children of Residential Schools, affirms support for all ongoing residential school investigations in British Columbia;

L. BCAFN Resolution 16/2025, Support for B.C. First Nation Community-Led Indian Residential School and Indian Hospital Investigations, affirms support for the Advisory Committee and the Technical Working Group, and directs the BCAFN to advance recommendations and key concerns identified by the group; and

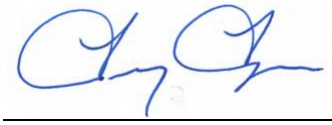
M. as residential school denialism and anti-Indigenous racism continue to increase across British Columbia and Canada, independent, credible, and culturally informed investigations are necessary to uphold truth, support Survivors and families, and ensure the public record accurately reflects the experiences of Indigenous children who were forced into Residential Schools and Indian Hospitals. First Nations require the immediate support of all levels of government to continue this work, grounded in culturally relevant approaches as determined by the 21 lead First Nations participating in the TWG Advisory Committee.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Province of British Columbia to establish, in partnership with the BC TWG and IRS-IH Advisory Committee, First Nations, Survivors, and affected families, a Residential School and Indian Hospital Death Investigation Initiative within the BC Coroners Service, supported by dedicated funding, Indigenous-led governance, and culturally safe protocols developed in collaboration with affected Nations;

2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on the Government of British Columbia and the BC Coroners to:

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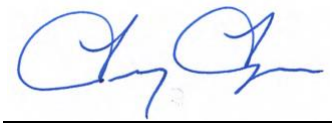
- convene discussions with First Nations, Survivors, families, the BC Coroners Service, and relevant provincial ministries regarding the establishment of a Residential School Death Investigation Initiative in British Columbia;
- direct the B.C. Coroners Service to review the Ontario Residential School Death Investigation Team model as a potential foundation for a made-in-British Columbia approach;
- support First Nations-led planning, engagement, capacity-building, and sustainable funding necessary to advance this work;
- meet with representatives of the BC IRS-IH Advisory Committee, First Nations leadership, and relevant subject matter experts to explore pathways toward implementation; and
- commit to developing a provincially supported, First Nations-informed process that helps Nations and families obtain answers regarding children who died while attending residential schools;

3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on British Columbia to ensure adequate, long-term and sustainable resourcing is provided to ensure the Residential School-Indian Hospital Death Investigation Initiative will operate on a long-term basis, to ensure First Nations receive the proper support to complete death investigation projects;

4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly call on Canada to provide long-term sustainable funding, unrestricted access to federal records and databases, and technical supports necessary to assist First Nations and any future provincial investigative body in determining the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Indigenous children who attended Residential Schools and Indian Hospitals; and

5. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the Regional Chief, working with the First Nations Summit (FNS) and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), to work with the BC Indian Residential School – Indian Hospital (IRS-IH) Advisory Committee and the Technical Working Group (TWG) to advocate for the necessary supports for First Nations to conduct investigations related to missing children and unmarked burial sites.

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