

## KAMLOOPS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL MASS GRAVE – EVIDENCE OF CANADIAN GENOCIDE

The discovery of the remains of 215 undocumented Indigenous children at the former Kamloops Residential School, British Columbia, though horrifying, is not unexpected. As stated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the residential school system, many of the children who were forcibly placed in these schools never made it back home to their families and communities. A 1927 report of the Kamloops School made clear mention of the building's poor conditions such that, cases of bronchitis and pneumonia were not uncommon.<sup>1</sup> The residential school system and its later iterations (i.e. the 60's Scoop) speak to a broader history of cultural genocide, whereby Indigenous cultures and traditions were purposefully and violently targeted for eradication. To this day, Indigenous peoples are still reckoning with the effects of these policies in the form of ingrained institutional racism and intergenerational trauma.

We at COPE Ontario, stand with our Indigenous members in mourning the loss of these children while recognizing that their stories are part of Canada's history of violence against Indigenous peoples. We as a union believe in being a platform for those who are often silenced therefore, we feel that concrete action must be taken to right these injustices. We must do more than just wear an orange shirt and say a land acknowledgement.

We call upon our members and affiliates to educate themselves on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, the history of Residential Schools and the impact of Colonization on the Indigenous of Canada. Those of us who are settlers in Canada need to grow our understanding and reflection of our Canadian history, to take responsibility for how our country was built, and who carried the burden and trauma. For this is how we can become better allies for Indigenous struggles. Listed below are some resources for further education. We also call upon our members to hold their elected and public representatives accountable to enact the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation commission. Finally, we call upon Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau to immediately cease all legal battles currently in progress against Residential School survivors.

Information on the Kamloops School: [IRSHDC : School : Kamloops \(BC\) \[868\] \(ubc.ca\)](#)

Truth and Reconciliation Report: [Reconciliation \(trc.ca\)](#)

The Canadian Office & Professional Employees' Union is a Canadian Union representing approximately 35,000 members in the private and public sector. COPE ONTARIO works with Ontario Health Coalition, Labour Councils and the Ontario Federation of Labour to protect healthcare jobs so that we retain and grow unionized jobs and create a stronger healthcare system that serves all of Ontario. Together we are stronger!

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<sup>1</sup> *The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Vol. 4, page 55.*