



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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June 11, 2021

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister, Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

As duly elected union leaders representing tens of thousands of Canadian workers who are members of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), we are writing to express our sorrow after learning of the tragic news that the remains of 215 children were found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. As union leaders that not only advocate for better working conditions for our members and all workers, but also for social, racial, and economic justice for all people, we urge your government to leave no stone unturned and move quickly in bringing transparency and reconciliation to all Indigenous Canadians who have suffered as a result of our nation's Indian Residential School system.

The residential school system was created by the Canadian government and operated by the church (Anglican, Presbyterian, United, and Roman Catholic), with its primary purpose to indoctrinate children with white Canadian, Christian cultural norms. In doing so, Indigenous children were stripped from their families, prevented from embracing their own heritages and cultures, and not permitted to even speak their own languages. If children disobeyed, they were severely punished, including being beaten, exposed to extreme mental abuse, and even sexual abuse. Sadly, the residential school system in our nation operated for 150 years, with the last school in Saskatchewan finally closing just 25 years ago in 1996. It has and continues to have devastating impacts on generations of Indigenous, Métis, Inuit and First Nations cultures. As a country, we can no longer look past this injustice. Unlike in the past when the Canadian government simply stopped tracking how many children were a part of the residential school system and how many children died, our nation must finally reckon with this profound injustice.

To that end, IFPTE calls on your federal government implement all 94 recommendations called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with a particular emphasis on Call to Action 75, which urges the federal government to, "develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, maintenance and protection of residential school cemeteries," one of the 94 recommendations that the government has yet to act on.

We further call on your government to end its litigation with residential school survivors and first Nations Children, following the unanimous adoption of the resolution put forward by the NDP leader this week. Please make it a priority of your government to finally bring some level of accountability and transparency to this stain on our nation.

Sincerely,



Michelle Johnston,
SUP/Local 160 President
Métis



Richard Mahe,
WAPSO/Local 162 President
Canadian Area Vice President



Scott Travers,
Canadian Area Vice President

