

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

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Discovery of the remains of 215 children at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School a confirmation of Canadian Genocide

(Xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, BC) – Leaders of the First Nations Summit (FNS) are deeply saddened and horrified by the discovery of the remains of 215 children at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School.

“Words cannot express our deep sorrow for the lost children whose remains have now been found. It is simply unconscionable to think 215 lives were taken and cast aside in hidden or unmarked graves. This discovery is yet another blight on Canada’s history and further proof of the genocide resulting from the horrific Indian Residential School system,” said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive.

“The Indian Residential School system was created to strip our people of every element of our cultures and assimilate us into Canadian society,” added Political Executive member Lydia Hwitsum. “We all know the devastating impacts these horrific institutions have had and continue to have on our communities to this very day, as a result of the physical and emotional abuses that took place. With the discovery of the remains of these children at one school site, we have to wonder how many children across Canada paid the ultimate price of losing their lives while attending one of these dreadful schools.”

“We hold up our hands to the Tk’emlups te Secwepemc First Nation for undertaking the culturally sensitive work that led to this discovery and for taking the responsibility of caretaking the site of the lost children’s remains. Our thoughts also go out to all of the First Nations communities whose children went missing at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and who will now be contemplating on if some of their lost souls are among those remains that have been found,” concluded Robert Phillips of the FNS Political Executive.

The FNS recognizes that this discovery could cause trauma for Indian Residential School survivors and their families. We encourage those who suffer emotional distress as a result of this information to contact the Indian Residential School Society (IRSSS) 24-hour support line at 1-800-721-0066 or visit their website at www.irsss.ca.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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