



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 28, 2021

### **BCAFN grieves on discovery of location of unmarked graves of children who attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School**

*(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – May 28, 2021)* – Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc reported yesterday the location of 215 children buried on the property of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. The long horrific legacy of the residential school system oversaw the institutionalization of thousands of children from the surrounding region, throughout the interior of British Columbia, and beyond. Some never returned home to their families. It is unknown how many children died and disappeared while attending residential schools in Canada with few known locations of their resting sites. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada estimates at least 3,200 students died over 115 years.

“The finding of these graves refreshes the grief and loss for all First Nations in British Columbia as we remember the fear, horror and desperation experienced by families and communities as their children were forcibly taken away to residential schools. It was a dreadful time of forced assimilation and genocide inflicted by the colonial Canadian state for over a hundred years,” stated BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) Regional Chief Terry Teegee. He continues, “Finding these grave sites is urgent work as many families continue to mourn the loss of their missing children and seek information about their fates.

Indigenous peoples continue to deal and cope with the past genocidal policies and entrenched colonial system. The investigation at this burial site will continue and it is expected that the number of child graves will increase. Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir, a BCAFN Board member, has indicated that Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc will work with First Nations communities and families who had children attending the school on protocols, etc. The BCAFN will be offering supports and will be closely monitoring the results of this search, and future burial investigations at other residential school sites in British Columbia.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called for government and church action (71 – 76) on the issue of missing children and burial information, including, where possible, the location of deceased residential school children. It is expected that thousands of unmarked graves exist across Canada of Indigenous children who died at residential schools. Families who never saw their children return home experience never-ending grief and continue to live with deep scars.

#### **Additional Information:**

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc press release (May 27, 2021): Remains of Children of Kamloops Residential School Discovered - <https://tkemlups.ca/wp-content/uploads/05-May-27-2021-TteS-MEDIA-RELEASE.pdf>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Missing children and burial information - <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524504992259/1557512149981>

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