

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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News Release

May 27, 2021

UBCIC Mourns with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Residential School Survivors and all First Nations

((X^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – May 28, 2021) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) mourns with the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc, and with all of the families of the children lost to the Kamloops Indian Residential School, upon hearing the [announcement by Tk'emlúps](#) that the remains of children had been found buried on the grounds of the former residential school.

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer and Kukpi7 of the Neskonlith Indian Band stated: "As Secwépemc we are grieving our relatives, and all of the stsmemelt, whose lives were lost to the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Though we knew that many children never returned home, and their families were left without answers, this confirmation brings a particular heaviness to our hearts and our spirits all throughout Secwépemculecw. I hold my hands up to Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir, and to the people of Tk'emlúps, for undertaking this difficult but critical work to identify and honour each of the spirits who were lost to this institution of state sanctioned genocide, and the ongoing work to bring closure and healing to their families and communities. We stand beside you in prayer, and in honouring each and every one of them".

"There are no words to express the deep mourning that we feel as First Nations people, and as survivors, when we hear an announcement like this. These were children – all belonging to a family and community, and a Nation – who were forcibly stolen from their homes under the authority of the Canadian government, and never returned. We call upon Canada, and all of those who call yourselves Canadians, to witness and recognize the truth of our collective history. This is the reality of the genocide that was, and is, inflicted upon us as Indigenous peoples by the colonial state. Today we honour the lives of those children, and hold prayers that they, and their families, may finally be at peace," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President.

“We express our deepest sympathy to the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc and our gratitude for shouldering the immense responsibility of caretaking for these lost children,” stated Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President. “In 1969, over 150 Chiefs and delegates gathered on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School for the first ever assembly of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. Those leaders gathered together on these grounds, and what we now know to be the sacred, and final, resting place of these children. They came together to challenge the interference of the colonial state on our lives, on our children’s lives, and to fight for our future generations. This can only be felt deeply as we stand united today, as our leaders stood united over 50 years ago, in our collective grief, healing, and strength.”

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UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information including context of missing children and a brief background on the Kamloops Indian Residential School, please visit:

<https://tkemlups.ca/wp-content/uploads/05-May-27-2021-TteS-MEDIA-RELEASE.pdf>

For more information about UBCIC, please visit: www.ubcic.bc.ca