

IVAT Statement on the Discovery of the Remains of 215 Children in Canada

4 June 2021

On May 29, 2021, we were heartbroken to learn of the remains of 215 children found buried at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, Canada.

Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation stated, "Given the size of the school, with up to 500 students registered and attending at any one time, we understand this confirmed loss affects Indigenous communities across British Columbia and beyond."¹ The painful and long history of forced separation of children from their families, and the physical, sexual, and psychological violence directed at these children, called "cultural genocide" by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission², compounds the profound and devastating historical trauma of Indigenous people both in Canada and in the United States. The trauma is perpetuated, and healing is denied, each day that truth, transformation, and reparations go unanswered. More than 3,200 children who died at residential schools in Canada had been identified per a 2015 report by the Commission, with nearly a third of them not named. Since then, 900 more have been identified.³ The efforts to find the names of these children have been underway for years as most names were not recorded and families were never told what happened to their children.

We stand in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters in Canada as they mourn the loss of these beloved children. We support the call for nationwide searches for mass graves at all residential school sites. We demand that no child be allowed to be dishonored in these ways. Centuries of violation, violence and tremendous pain must be acknowledged, and true commitments made to Indigenous Peoples everywhere to hold the appropriate governments, systems, and policies accountable for these atrocities. We send our love and hope for a better future to all who have suffered and those who continue to be retraumatized by the deep wounds created by these ongoing forms of violence and oppression.

Sincerely,



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¹ <https://apnews.com/article/caribbean-canada-7430e40bc8808410db45d08feb8fbf71>

² <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/> and <http://www.trc.ca/about-us.html>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/remains-215-children-found-former-indigenous-school-site-canada-2021-05-28/>