



May 31, 2021

A Statement from the President and General Secretary of The Canadian Council of Churches Regarding the Documentation of the Mass Grave at the Kamloops Residential School

Along with the rest of Canada and the world, we were horrified to learn of the bodies of 215 children found in unmarked and undocumented graves at the Kamloops Residential School. We extend our deepest condolences to the families and communities most affected in the loss of their children.

In the words of the [Catholic Bishop of Kamloops, Joseph Nguyen](#): “No words of sorrow could adequately describe this horrific discovery”; and the Catholic Archbishop of Vancouver J. Michael Miller: “The pain that such news causes remind us of our ongoing need to bring to light every tragic situation that occurred in residential schools run by the Church.”

Let us pause to grieve, listen carefully, patiently, and humbly to the survivors; to the communities and families of the children; to our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit sisters and brothers. **Let us pause and hear** what they are asking of us.

Let us pause to acknowledge the deep sorrow the survivors of residential schools across Canada and their descendants continue to carry.

Let us admit that we fail to hear and fail to do what we have been asked. We have failed by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

Let us live according to our faith. It is appropriate that we voice our shame and sorrow and offer prayers, but this is never enough. The voices of children now silenced and those who suffer demand we listen and act.

Let us humbly ask to walk together on the path of truth and reconciliation in a good way.

We remember again these words from the [2014 Expression of Reconciliation](#) to survivors and former students of Residential Schools, our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis brothers and sisters and their descendants, wherever they may be:

“As Christians, we have been part of communities and governments that brought tremendous pressure to bear..., and through actions of privilege, prejudice and discrimination sought to assimilate the Indigenous Peoples in this country. One of the most destructive of these actions was the creation of Indian Residential Schools, a system of assimilation in which a number of the member churches of The Canadian Council of Churches played a prominent role. We know



that, despite some well-intentioned and even caring and loving school staff, the system had disastrous effects on students, their families and communities.”

“As willing or unintentional accomplices to the terrible effects that so-called Christian attitudes and policies had on your life and the lives of your peoples, we [also] live with the legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada. As Christian communities we take seriously the challenge of reconciliation, to deepen bonds of friendship and solidarity, to strive to “walk together” in the present and future, and to consult with you about how we can take that journey together.”

Read the full Expression of Reconciliation [here](#).

Let us again commit to this sacred journey.

The Rev. Dr. Das Sydney,
President
The Canadian Council of Churches

Pastor Peter Noteboom,
General Secretary
The Canadian Council of Churches

More information:

- Read the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- Read the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>
- Learn more about the “Every Child Matters” Orange Shirt Day <https://www.orangeshirtday.org/>



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