

MACABRE DISCOVERY IN KAMLOOPS: SADNESS AND DESOLATION

Montreal, June 4, 2021 – The Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) wishes to express its profound sadness and compassion following [the announcement on May 27th of the terrible discovery](#) of the remains of 215 children in a mass grave at the site of the former Kamloops residential school. Some of the children were barely three years of age, and words do not suffice to imagine the pain felt within the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First nation. We offer our condolences and assure them of our prayers.

Such shocking news awakens the unhealed wounds of Canada's colonial history. Although officially terminated 25 years ago, the residential school program continues to plague the survivors and their families. Several catholic religious communities were also involved in this governmental program and we continue to regret this situation. We make our own [the words of Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB](#), who declared, "The Church was unquestionably wrong in implementing a government colonialist policy which resulted in devastation for children, families and communities".

A number of religious congregations were present at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings. They offered apologies for their role in the residential schools and contributed to financial compensations for survivors and their families. The CRC answered Call to Action 48 of the TRC by [a joint Catholic response](#). Since then, our members regularly take part in awareness-raising activities to educate themselves about the history of colonization and its impacts on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples, but also to discover the rich cultures and spirituality they offer to our society.

For many survivors and their families, current events rekindle the need to bear witness to their experiences. The CRC members value these testimonies: shedding light on the past is crucial if we want to consider paths forward in the perspective of reparation. Furthermore, several religious women and men minister to Indigenous communities and work in reconciliation projects. We know their commitment and are aware of their distress in the face of recent news.

Recently, the CRC expressed [its support to the federal government and the Senate for Bill C-15](#), "An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", which aims to ensure that the laws of Canada become consistent with the United Nations Declaration

on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This legal framework is decisive in order to move towards reconciliation and justice.

The CRC recognizes the responsibility of its members in working to establish renewed and just relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The CRC incites its members to make all the necessary efforts to bring the truth to light. This is part of our organization's priorities and we recommit to taking up the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in collaboration with our partners, including members of Indigenous communities.

Helpline

The [Indian Residential School Survivors Society - IRSSS](#) offers a 24-hour toll-free helpline to survivors and their families at 1-866-925-4419.

About CRC

The Canadian Religious Conference is a network that brings together the leaders of 250 Catholic congregations of women and men religious in Canada. The CRC's mission is to encourage its members to live fully their vocation in following Christ and to support them in their prophetic witness to justice and peace in a Canadian context.

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