



Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc

(Kamloops Indian Band)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement from the Office of the Chief, Kukpí7 Rosanne Casimir

June 16, 2021, 1pm, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc – Our hearts go out to the other communities who have recently confirmed unmarked grave sites and missing children on the grounds of the former residential schools in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Our hearts are with you and all communities affected.

We grieve these latest findings brought to light with the help of science. This does not make the loss any less, the horrors any softer or the tragedy any lighter. Within the Secwépemc Nation, Williams Lake First Nation (T'exelceme) is preparing to investigate the former St. Joseph's Indian Residential School. We understand the deep wounds that these findings and investigations open up for survivors and intergenerational survivors. We stand with you as we reflect on this harsh truth that is part of the history we need all Canadians to acknowledge and to come to terms with so that we may collectively heal as a Nation.

More missing children and unmarked graves will be confirmed. This was a knowing that survivors brought to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – and the Commissioners did their utmost to bring this to light as part of their work. I appreciate the many who have held fast to these horrific truths, however painful. They did not relent so that we may find and honour the missing children.

At Tk'emlúps, we have had a bit of time to make peace with our role as caretakers. This is our work and we understand that it's just the beginning. It was only last week, on June 10th, when we were able to call upon our ceremonial people from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, from our Secwépemc Nation, as well as our neighbouring communities to do what will be the first of many needed ceremonies for the missing children in our caretaking, as well as for survivors, intergenerational survivors and all who were able to join us.

It has been a whirlwind of activity around the Kamloops Indian Residential School Memorial and the Tk'emlúps pow wow arbour. It has been frankly overwhelming. That said, on behalf of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the outpouring of support. Thank you for your condolences, support, donations and especially for your outpouring of love. We stand strong because of you.

I wish to acknowledge First Nations Health Authority Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Shannon McDonald and all FNHA staff who have leaned in to support Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc during this extraordinary time of grief and loss while still operating under pandemic protocols.



Dr. McDonald has shared a message stating, “Since we have heard the tragic news that the grounds of KIRS are the resting place of at least 215 children, we have all felt a need to respond to the hurt, the anger and the deep need to be with people to share our pain and express our emotions. In the context of the present pandemic and knowing that the summer season is upon us, it is very important to keep ourselves safe and to assure that no one else around us is negatively impacted.

From a public health and mental health perspective we all need to consider our space and pace: space – maintaining physical and mental space for TteS and pace – a need to prepare for a healing journey and coordinate our efforts.”

Reflecting on the sage words of Dr. McDonald, I would like to make clear that, as much as we appreciate how many wish to come to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, we need to slow the pace so that we can plan. With each activity, gathering or event, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc shoulders the burden of:

- Public safety, including COVID-19 measures,
- Security and custodial work,
- Resources, and
- Financial costs.

Please help us ensure that we do not have a tragedy upon a tragedy. There has been nonstop activities since the news broke. We want to respect and uphold the need to gather, to do ceremony. Tk'emlúps community members are only now getting their second COVID-19 vaccination. With such high traffic into our community, we want to ensure pandemic protocols are being respected, that there is no spreading in the Interior Health region due to activities in our community.

Just yesterday, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Council renewed our state of emergency due to COVID-19 for another 30 days. So, for our community's safety, in respect of our community members, our staff, ceremonial people and leadership, please respect that we need to work with each of you to ensure our community and resources are not overwhelmed by activities and visitors. This is only the beginning and we want you to be part of this journey with us. Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc continues to welcome the general public to pay their respects at the memorial in front of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in a COVID safe way.

For more information about the findings, to contact us to share about proposed event, gathering or ceremony so that we may collaborate and coordinate with you, visit our website to learn more:

www.kib.ca/kirs.

– 30 –

Contact: Racelle Kooy
Email: media@kib.ca

Additional Information

To donate to the host community of the Kamloops Indian Residential School Missing Children – Tkemlúps te Secwépemc is accepting donations that will be used:

- Directly towards the work that is needed for further investigation- scientific and archival



- And later memorialize the children.
- Tax receipt can be issued

Please note that Tkemlúps te Secwépemc has not authorized any other fundraisers on our behalf at this time. **You can learn more at www.kib.ca/kirs**

Donate to the organisation that directly supports Indian Residential School survivors and intergenerational survivors, **The Indian Residential School Survivors Society**: <https://www.irsss.ca/donate>

There are so many resources to learn more about Indian residential schools, the diversity of First Nations people, their languages and cultures. Learn more:

<https://native-land.ca/>

<https://maps.fpcc.ca>

<https://www.firstvoices.com/>

http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

<https://www.icscollaborative.com/home>

<https://oncanadaproject.ca/settlerstakeaction>

<https://www.qwelmintec.ca/for-the-children>