



Media Release | May 28, 2021

SYILX OKANAGAN NATION JOINS OTHER NATIONS CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AFTER REMAINS OF 215 RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL VICTIMS UNEARTHED AT KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

tkwə̌niwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory: The Syilx Okanagan Nation are shocked and profoundly saddened by the confirmation of 215 children's remains found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School on Thursday, May 27, 2021. Children from across many First Nation's attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School, and this revelation is felt by every Syilx Okanagan family. This horrifying discovery has confirmed what our survivors and families have known and feared all along, that the violence and abuse far exceeded what was previously reported.

"The legacy of the Indian Residential School system has had devastating impacts on the Syilx Okanagan Nation that continue to be felt today. The level of inhumane and criminal treatment of First Nation's children at the hands of colonial governments and organized religion is deeply disturbing. We are calling on the Province of British Columbia and Government of Canada to directly address these atrocities," stated Chief Clarence Louie.

While the families, communities and Nations process this unthinkable discovery, it is important to remember the intense grief that Syilx Okanagan people and all Indian Residential School survivors will feel over the coming days, weeks, months and years. The Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Chief and Council hosted an Urgent Chiefs meeting today, in which Chief Clarence Louie added "I want to thank the Tk'emlups Chief and Council for arranging this meeting and inviting us to do and share what needs to be done," and affirmed that "the Syilx Okanagan Nation are ready to participate and support wherever possible."

As part of a collective, Nation-wide response, the Syilx Indian Residential School Committee is also asking that all members reach out to survivors and family members to check in and see if they need support. There are also cultural and social support and resources in our respective communities, our spiritual and cultural leaders in our Nations and communities.

As more information is received and preparations for ceremonies and more meetings continue we will keep you posted.

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society has a 24/7 emergency crisis: 1-800-721-0066. KU-US Crisis Line Society also provides a 24-hour provincial Indigenous crisis line: Adults call 250-723-4050; children and youth call 250-723-2040; or toll-free 1-800-588-8717.

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