



## **Syilx Okanagan Nation Demands Justice for Victims One Year After Remains of 215 Children Unearthed at Kamloops Indian Residential School**

**tkwəłniwt (Westbank), Syilx Territory:** On May 27, 2022, the Syilx Okanagan Nation recognizes the one-year anniversary of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc announcing the unearthing of 215 remains at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Children from across many First Nations, including the Syilx Okanagan Nation, attended the Kamloops Indian Residential School, and this revelation is felt by every Syilx Okanagan family. This horrifying discovery has confirmed what our survivors have said for years — 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 continues to be felt today. The loss of language and culture for the Syilx Nation, and harm created, cannot be underestimated as expressed by Jack Kruger, "I for one can't accept an apology in any form. I don't want money; I want our language and culture back. I want the church to pay for every native of every Nation, every Syilx that wants to go to school and receive proper support to learn their language and culture again," Over the last year we have witnessed the general public in Canada become aware of these issues, and yet there has been little to no movement towards ensuring meaningful justice for the victims. Syilx Okanagan people and families affected by this news still have no information regarding the specificities of these remains, and no pathway has been provided for how to move forward. Grace Greyeyes added, "I want to see those people responsible for what happened to those children have justice done for our people. They need to acknowledge the fact that those schools were designed by the Church and by the Canadian Government to get rid of the Indians".

"After one year of this issue being recognized by the Government of Canada, we have seen no movement towards meaningful justice for these victims, hollow apologies will not suffice. We continue to demand that the federal government take direct action to criminally investigate these findings. This is murder and it's not being investigated as such," Chief Clarence Louie, ONA Tribal Chair stated. To date no person or institution have been charged in these egregious crimes.

We continue to collectively send prayers to all peoples who are being impacted by these tragic findings, alongside all Tribal Nations that continues to be re-traumatized by Indian Residential Schools. All these spirits deserve the space to be honored, grieved, and properly cared for. We are also calling on all people to recognize May 27 by wearing orange shirts and supporting Indian Residential School survivors everywhere.

“Over 7,000 unmarked graves have been recovered across Turtle Island in the last year. As these numbers continue to grow, we cannot make them just numbers — each child was a prisoner of war. This intentional cultural genocide was and is to kill the Indian in the child, to remove Indigenous people from each other, their spirit and the lands that the settlers covet. We also recognize that the continued recovery of unmarked graves is traumatizing for many Nation members and First Nations peoples in general. As these truths continue to be unearthed we encourage all Nation members to unite and continue supporting the survivors and each other through the emotional and mental health impacts of the recent findings,” Louie added.

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*The Syilx Indian Residential School (SIRS) Committee is a group of highly dedicated, intergenerational Syilx Indian Residential School survivors. The SIRS Committee is invaluable in providing direction to the Nation on numerous projects regarding the Indian Residential Schools. This Committee, represented by the seven member communities, has expressed that they feel a sense of belonging from participating on this Committee. They have a true ownership role in ensuring projects move forward, taking into account their knowledge and experience. For more information on the Syilx Indian Residential School experience visit: [www.syilx.org/wellness/indian-residential-school/](http://www.syilx.org/wellness/indian-residential-school/)*

*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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