



CHIEFS COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

May 31, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA CHIEFS COUNCIL ISSUE STATEMENT ON THE DISCOVERY OF REMAINS OF 215 CHILDREN FOUND AT FORMER KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

THUNDER BAY, ON: Responding to the discovery of the bodies of 215 Indigenous children in unmarked graves at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation as reported on May 28, 2021—the Matawa Chiefs Council offered the following statement:

“The Matawa Chiefs Council, send our deepest condolences to the families and community of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation and all survivors of Indian residential schools in Canada as this gruesome discovery is made. It truly reveals that the issue of Indian residential schools in Canada is not a closed chapter in Turtle Island's history but an ongoing and unaddressed travesty of justice.

We join Indigenous leaders across Canada in calling for a full investigation and ground radar searches of all residential school sites in Canada. Furthermore, we call on the implementation of a process that identifies and repatriates bodies, so that they may be put to rest by being returned to their communities. The country will not start to be in peace until this is done. It is also time that the Roman Catholic Church be made accountable in the repulsive role they have played in the treatment of Indian residential school children. We call on those of the Roman Catholic faith to stand with Indigenous Peoples at this hour and to demand that their leaders take responsibility for the blood on their hands that has not yet taken place.

No Indigenous person went unscathed by this ugly history of calculated genocide. Survivors of Indian residential schools ourselves—we are triggered by memories of our peers vanishing in our midst and knowing instinctually that they were never coming back. It continues to be saddening to us that parents and families were not even notified when children passed away and were just buried away from their homelands and to this day—have never been brought home. Our members are also triggered by this event and our hearts are heavy for our Nation as they, and their families, are forced to recall memories of their experience at Indian residential school and their lives being changed forever.

*Call to Action 76 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, specifically with respect to [missing children and unmarked burials](#), **needs immediate action**. What the Prime Minister has done so far is just not enough to address the gravity of the issue at hand where innocent children became deceased as a result of their gross negligence and the churches that were responsible. Action is needed now to show that Canada is committed to addressing this matter. In addition, Canada must stop minimizing their culpability in litigations such as the St. Anne's and in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal cases.”*

Matawa Chiefs Council

- More information can be found in 'About Us' here: [Chiefs Council - Matawa](#)
- Members include:
 - Chief Harvey Yesno, Eabametoong First Nation
 - Chief Dorothy Towedo, Aroland First Nation
 - Chief Rick Allen, Constance Lake First Nation
 - Councillors Victor Chapais and Sheri Taylor, Ginoogaming First Nation
 - Chief Judy Desmoulin, Long Lake #58 First Nation
 - Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation
 - Chief Sheldon Oskineegish, Nibinamik First Nation
 - Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation
 - Chief Wayne Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation

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