



*Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k*

# PRESS RELEASE

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## MCK offers condolences, pays respect to 215 children found buried in mass grave with Moment of Silence at 2:15pm TODAY

For immediate release

**(Kahnawake – 31, Onerahtohkó:wa/May 2021)** The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) is offering its sincerest condolences to the families of the 215 Indigenous children found buried in an unmarked mass grave at the Kamloops Residential School.

**The MCK will observe a Moment of Silence at 2:15pm this afternoon, and is asking community members to do the same.**

The MCK shares the horror, sadness and anger that this community, and indeed all Indigenous communities, are feeling since this discovery was announced. The fact that this atrocity was done at the behest of Canada by way of its assimilation policies is itself the most disturbing aspect of this tragedy. It speaks to the lack of respect for human dignity of these precious children, their families, and all Indigenous Peoples.

In this specific case, it appears that the administrators of the Kamloops schools did not feel the need to offer a proper burial to children who died while in their care. Those administrators not only did not respect the dignity of those in their care but, worse, probably did not even consider them as worthy of being commemorated in the most basic way.

The practice of mass graves that are not the result of a natural disaster or war, are most often the result of genocide undertaken by government/military actions in “other countries.” For an action like this to have occurred during Canada’s lifetime as a country prompts a massive rethinking of the very foundation of this country.

All the Reconciliation in the world will not bring back the precious lives of those 215 children, nor fully repair the harrowing despair of their families and their descendants. We must all take the time to honor these children by taking pause to fully acknowledge the horrendous fates they faced, pay proper tribute to their spirits, and to continue to hold Canada responsible for ensuring this kind of atrocity never occurs again. If there was ever any doubt, Canadians must now realize the depth of this matter and the depth of the pain that Indigenous people have experienced and continue to experience to this day.

The MCK strongly supports all efforts to pay tribute to the 215 students. It is important to note that we must, as a community, consider that this is an emotionally challenging time for many, and we therefore encourage that our tributary actions keep in mind peace and good mind, in order to promote acknowledgement and healing. Every single Kahnawa’kehró:non shares in the grief that has resulted from this horrendous discovery. Every family has been touched by the Residential School program, and there are still several survivors who experienced it first-hand. To assist in their healing journey, the efforts of true reconciliation must be the top priority. We must never forget the past, but we cannot let the past consume us. We are better than that. We must all pull together to support and comfort each other.

For those who may need assistance, please be aware that there are a number of resources available. They include the *National Indian Residential School Survivors Crisis Line*, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at **1-866-925-4419**.

The *Hope for Wellness Helpline*, for Mental health counselling and crisis intervention for Indigenous persons, can be accessed at **1-855-242-3310**. It is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Kahnawà:ke Shakotia’takehnhas Community Services also has counsellors available. They can be accessed at **450-632-6880** during business hours and via the Peacekeepers at **450-632-6505** at all other times.