

Jun 2, 2021

## Grieving the Loss of 215 Children



June is Indigenous History Month in Canada, a time devoted to recognizing and celebrating the rich cultures and heritage of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada. And yet we start this month not in celebration, but in grieving the 215 children discovered last week buried on the site of a residential school in Kamloops, BC. We at COPA wish to declare our sympathy and support for their families, communities, and for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada.

In establishing residential schools, the Canadian government was responsible for the brutal separation of more than 150,000 children from their families, causing loss, heartbreak and ongoing intergenerational trauma. This history is a shocking and shameful part of Canada's past, and Indigenous children, families, and communities continue to live with the terrible consequences today.

We decry the physical, sexual and emotional abuse that the children in the residential school system suffered, and we mourn the deaths of an estimated 6000 children across Canada from cruelty, neglect and disease they experienced in these institutions. Although

Indigenous peoples and cultures were deeply damaged, they refused to surrender their identity, and the Survivors of these institutions have acted with immense courage and determination to ensure that we know this history and continue to be aware and sensitive to the ongoing trauma caused by residential schools.

All Canadians have an important role to play in the reconciliation process. We can begin by acknowledging the legacy of residential schools and becoming better informed about the various and complicated effects of intergenerational trauma still affecting us all today. A way to think of this journey is as a step toward decolonizing and indigenizing our schools, our communities, and society. To learn more about the residential school system, Survivors, and the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation process, visit the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's website. There are many moving stories and testimonials there.

COPA offers 2 toolkits for learning more about this journey of reconciliation. [A Circle of Caring](#) and [Joining the Circle](#) multimedia toolkits were both designed to support safe, strong and free schools and communities. They were created through a grassroots approach in collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit families, community leaders, and educators. They include short films in 7 Indigenous languages, interviews with Elders, Knowledge and Wisdom Keepers, language and problem-solving tools, and more. Topics for discussion and reflection include:

- cultural pride and identity
- helping our children succeed
- understanding racism, bullying, and discrimination
- building and strengthening relationships with families
- nurturing safe and healthy schools and communities

COPA has published several blogs about reconciliation and decolonization, cultural identity, Indigenous perspectives in curriculum, sharing the wisdom of Elders, Knowledge and Wisdom Keepers, and more:

[Infusing Curriculum with Indigenous Voices and Perspectives](#)

[Gathering Momentum? Resources in Indigenous Education](#)

[Interview With Théo](#)

[Evaluating resources to use to indigenize and decolonize the classroom](#)

[Shirley Williams, Passionate Advocate of Anishinaabemowin-Ojibway Language and Culture](#)

[Woman Who Walks on the Water in the Mist](#)

[The Importance of Identity: an Interview with Catherine Davis](#)

['warming the ground' in Kingston](#)

[#ClaimYourPlaceDeb](#)

[WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?](#)

We hope you will join us on social media throughout the month of June as we highlight Indigenous History Month. Please share our posts and resources with your communities and networks, using the hashtags [#IndigenousHistoryMonth](#) and [#NIHM2021](#)

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