

**SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE D'ANTHROPOLOGIE
CANADIAN ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY**



Statement on the Burial of Children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School

May 31, 2021

The Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA) acknowledges the pain caused by the finding of the remains of 215 children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. We are profoundly saddened and angered by this tragic news and understand that the death and disappearances of children were known and, yet, rarely believed or accepted by Canadians. We remember all survivors of residential schools and grieve with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc people, and all First Nations communities, whose children attended the school and suffered such unimaginable loss.

We recognize that this burial is one of many unmarked burial sites associated with residential schools across Canada. We acknowledge the ongoing work of archaeologists such as Dr. Kisha Supernant and the many affiliated researchers at the [Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology](#) who have been doing the difficult research of locating the burial sites of Missing Children for many years.

We reaffirm our commitment to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Calls to Action](#) and recognizing [treaty](#) relationships by supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples during and beyond this time of deep pain, trauma, grief, and rage by taking actions to enhance institutional accountability and supporting anti-oppressive education. As anthropologists, we must continue to work for and with Indigenous communities with community-based oral historical and archival research that documents and confirms the injustices of settler colonialism. This includes a continued commitment to recognize our own history and entanglements with settler colonialism as a discipline and as individuals.

We recognize that although it has been six years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued its Final Report including [94 Calls to Action](#), the Federal Government has stalled and evaded the implementation of these Calls to Action.

Therefore, we call on the Federal Government again to implement all of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada with particular attention to the 6 Calls under "Missing Children and Burial Information." Specifically, we ask the Federal Government to create a fund to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to locate, commemorate, and honour their Missing Children. These 6 Calls include:

71. We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

72. We call upon the federal government to allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

73. We call upon the federal government to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children.

74. We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child's burial location, and to respond to families' wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested.

75. We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of Calls to Action| 9 appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.

76. We call upon the parties engaged in the work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries to adopt strategies in accordance with the following principles:

- i. The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies.
- ii. Information shall be sought from residential school Survivors and other Knowledge Keepers in the development of such strategies.
- iii. Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.

The trauma of residential schools is not located in the past. It continues today. Moreover, the current treatment and over representation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in the child welfare system reinforces and exacerbates these traumas. Thus, we call on the Federal Government to address the Calls for Action on Child Welfare and to comply with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's 2019 ruling to compensate First Nations children discriminated against within the on-reserve child welfare system.