

June 2021

Dear Honourable Mark Strahl, Honourable Ed Fast, and Honourable Brad Vis: Members for Chilliwack, Hope, Abbotsford, and Mission – constituencies that cover our University of the Fraser Valley Campuses,

The recent uncovering of the unmarked and undocumented deaths of 215 children at the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc former Indian Residential school has provided an urgent reminder to non-Indigenous people of the need to honour the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. We call upon you, and your elected colleagues, to earnestly act upon the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Report. Specifically, we ask that you respond with immediacy to those under the heading: Missing Children and Burial Information:

- #71 that death records be shared and made available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation;
- #72 that resources be allocated to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation such that the development and maintenance of a National Residential School Student Death Register be sufficiently funded;
- #73 that 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 that 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 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.

Additionally, we request your action in:

- learning as an individual about the residential school system, and intergenerational trauma and supporting your staff and team to do the same;
- ensuring that residential schools be protected and funded as heritage memorial sites (Call to Action # 79);
- examining your own geographic constituency for place names (like parks, schools, or street names) that bear the name of individuals involved with residential schools, and that you take swift action to change them;
- ensuring that the Government immediately cease legal action against residential school survivors and Indigenous children;
- demanding change to policies, procedures, and practices that result in the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child-welfare system (Call to Action # 1-5).

We look forward to hearing about your leadership in these areas at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

The Faculty of Health Sciences Indigenization Committee, University of the Fraser Valley

c/o Co-Chairs Lauren Couture and Kate McCulloch

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is 'L Couture' and the signature on the right is 'K McCulloch'.