



MINISTER OF INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN RELATIONS

Room 301
Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V5
CANADA

June 1, 2021

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
200 - 275 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg MB R3B 283

Dear Grand Chief Arlen Dumas:

The news from Kamloops last week was a grim reminder of the impact that residential schools had on the lives of Indigenous children, families, and communities. Indigenous children were forced to attend residential schools faced neglect, mistreatment and abuse.

Residential schools are very much a part of Canadian history, but today we can recognize that they represent a very un-Canadian idea. We owe it to those 215 children in BC, and to 150,000 others who were forced to attend residential schools across Canada to remember the tragedies of the past and to use the lessons we have learned from them.

We must ensure that the tragedies of yesterday will never happen again. Our government is committed to making sure that every child matters, as our government works together with Indigenous people in Manitoba to help their communities build a better tomorrow.

Our government is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous leaders and communities, residential school survivors and the federal government to researching graves of missing children. Manitoba has also made a public commitment to take measures to advance reconciliation in response to the National Inquiry's Calls to Action. Work is ongoing on a wide variety of activities that align with these Calls to Action and support efforts, and they are outlined in our Path to Reconciliation annual report.

It has been my privilege to serve as Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations for five years. I have been honoured to engage with Indigenous Manitobans across the province. But in my time as minister I have also seen that the legacy of residential schools still has a profound impact on many people and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eileen Clarke".

Honourable Eileen Clarke
Minister



FSIN And Province Call For Federal Action To Research Undocumented Deaths And Burials In Residential Schools In Saskatchewan

Released on May 31, 2021

Following the discovery of the remains of 215 children buried on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School on the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation in British Columbia, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and the Government of Saskatchewan are issuing a joint call for the Government of Canada to immediately commence research on undocumented deaths and burials in residential schools in Saskatchewan, including radar ground search at residential school sites.

The FSIN has indicated that initial sites for radar ground search should include Muskowekwan Indian Residential School (IRS), Onion Lake St. Anthony's IRS, Beauval IRS, Guy Hill IRS, Lebret IRS and Sturgeon Landing IRS, along with additional sites in consultation with First Nations in Saskatchewan.

"Our First Nations communities and families need closure to begin healing from the traumas forced upon them at these residential schools," FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron said. "There are thousands of families across this country and in our Treaty territories that have been waiting for their children to come home. These children deserve the respect and dignity of proper burials and we must follow protocol and work with our Elders to ensure that their souls are at peace. We respectfully ask all First Nations across Canada to join us on this very important healing journey. We are calling on the Liberal Government, the NDP and Conservative parties to support us in this endeavour."

"Saskatchewan is supporting the call from the FSIN and FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron for the federal government to take immediate action following the tragic discovery of the remains of 215 children at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School," Premier Scott Moe said. "With an estimated 20 federal residential schools operated in Saskatchewan, meaningful reconciliation in our province must include research into the estimated hundreds

of children that did not return home after attending these institutions, including radar ground search. Saskatchewan is prepared to support this work through the Ministry of First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs in collaboration with the FSIN and First Nations in Saskatchewan."

In commemoration of the 215 children whose remains were discovered on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, flags at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building will be flown at half-mast until further notice.

The residential school system operated in Canada for more than a century. The federal government reports that 150,000 Indigenous children were removed and separated from their families and communities to attend these schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) estimates that approximately 20 federal residential schools operated in Saskatchewan from the 1880s to the 1990s.

The province has recently acted to protect cemeteries at residential school sites in Saskatchewan. In 2019, the Battelford Industrial School Cemetery, the resting place for at least 74 children who died while attending the institution, was marked as a Provincial Heritage Property. Similarly, the Regina Indian Industrial School Cemetery, the resting place of approximately 36 children, was designated a Provincial Heritage Property in 2017.

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

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For more information, contact:

Larissa Burnouf

FSIN

Email: communications@fsin.com

Cell: 306-291-6864

Julie Leggott

Executive Council and Office of the Premier

Regina

Phone: 306-787-9619

Email: julie.leggott@gov.sk.ca

Funding to find unmarked Indigenous graves: Minister Wilson

Minister of Indigenous Relations Rick Wilson issued the following statement on support for survivors and loved ones of the Indian residential school system:

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“Residential schools operated between 1893 and 1996 across Canada. Of the 134 schools, at least 25 operated in Alberta. For generations, Indigenous parents had their children taken from them to attend schools away from their families, communities, languages and culture. For too many families, children never returned.

“The intergenerational trauma caused to students, families and communities sparked the need for a countrywide effort to document the history and legacy of the residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released their report in 2015, and the work toward reconciliation continues.

“Action 74 of the 94 Truth and Reconciliation actions calls for the federal government to work with churches and Indigenous leaders to let families know where their children or relatives are buried and to respond to their wishes regarding commemoration of beloved family members.

“Alberta joins that effort. Today, I am announcing the Alberta government’s intention to fund research into the undocumented deaths and burials of hundreds of Indigenous children who did not make their way home. The details of that funding will be announced in the coming days.

“Finding their graves is a matter of reconciliation and another step toward closure for families. Many of the schools have been destroyed and while their general location is known, the exact coordinates are missing. It is also possible that children were buried in locations such as nearby churches.

“The discovery of 215 lost children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School site heightens the need to take action. Alberta’s government extends sincere condolences to the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and all of the families affected by this profound tragedy. They need real progress from governments, institutions and from every one of us toward real reconciliation.”