

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



May 31, 2021

Statement from the Chair of the Board in the wake of residential school children remains

Cowichan Valley, BC – “Today we lower our flags and our heads in solemn recognition of the horrific and heartbreaking discovery of the 215 stolen children at the Kamloops Residential School site in Tk’emlups te Secwepemc First Nation territory.

Our flags at the Cowichan Valley Regional District offices and all facilities will remain lowered for 215 hours; one hour of remembrance for each of the lost souls discovered, but never forgotten by their loved ones.

The Kamloops Residential School is sadly yet another sickening example of the residential school system, and the stolen children who were subjected to such inhuman abuse and neglect. We do not forget. We must not.

My heart aches in solidarity with the Tk’emlups te Secwepemc First Nation, our First Nations here at home – Stz’uminus, Penelakut, Lyackson, Halalt, Cowichan, Malahat, Ditidaht, Pacheedaht, Ts’uubaa-asatx – and those across Canada. It is incumbent on all of us to recognize and respond to these tragic discoveries. The pain is immeasurable and unfathomable.

Closer to home, the terrible legacy of the Kuper Island Residential School is known, but often not talked about. The survivors and their families, and the families of those who never returned home continue to suffer the pain and trauma of the forced reservation and residential school system.

We are heartsick in considering the lives lost, and the pain and trauma that survivors and their families grapple with to this day in Kamloops, here in the Cowichan, and across Canada. We must strive to better understand this painful legacy and support all of our First Nations communities here at home, across BC and throughout Canada during this painful time.

Never far below the surface, events like these recent discoveries in Kamloops open still fresh wounds, the pain of loss, and the anger we should all feel to such an abhorrent example of the inhumanity and cruelty experienced by First Nations people taken to Residential and Day schools.

I encourage everyone to consider wearing orange, particularly over the coming days, to show your support for those grieving this tragic loss.

I thank you all in advance for your caring and kind response to this horrific discovery; I feel the horror and grief as well. As we grieve as a community, region, province and nation, we find greater understanding. This should never happen again and it’s upon all of us to ensure that it doesn’t. We must do everything we can to support the healing necessary. I welcome you all to join us.

With the greatest love and respect to all of our First Nations. We stand with you always. One heart. One mind. Naut'sa mawt.

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