



Stó:lō Nation Chiefs Council

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PRESS RELEASE from Stó:lō Nation Chiefs Council:

First and foremost, the Stó:lō Nation Chief's Council (SNCC) send our deepest condolences, thoughts and prayers to the families of the 215 children found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School site. Our leadership and community members are experiencing heavy hearts throughout the territory, the province and across the country. The reprehensible actions of the residential school system have always been deeply felt within our Indigenous communities. Now the rest of the country is beginning to understand just how severely the atrocities committed through residential schools have engrained themselves in our people and the lasting impacts that they have left behind.

Our leadership met to discuss how we can support families, take care of the cultural work and plan for a larger ceremony to honor and recognize those who have passed before us. It is so important to acknowledge that we have family members who are still suffering from the impacts of the residential school system. The SNCC would like to acknowledge all of the important work done by the Stó:lō communities as well as the organizations who work directly with our people. We would like nothing more than to host a large gathering and help uplift spirits in ceremony, but we are also mindful of the current health restrictions in place, so communities will be hosting individually to keep the participant numbers appropriate and continue to keep our communities safe. Chief Terry Horne has offered to carve two poles that will be located at each of the residential school sites of Coqualeetza and Pekw'xe:yles with a target date of September 30th in recognition of Orange Shirt Day.

The SNCC has provided direction to conduct research aimed at identifying potential grave sites at both former residential school locations in the Fraser Valley, Coqualeetza and St. Mary's, in Chilliwack (Coqualeetza grounds) and Mission (Pekw'xe:yles reserve; Heritage Park) respectively. We are aware of the tragic history that includes deaths of students at both places and our thoughts go out to their families. Our staff are now conducting research on documented cemeteries and registries of students who died at these schools, as well as assessing the feasibility of using ground penetrating radar to potentially locate unmarked grave sites. All our work is and will continue to be guided by cultural protocol and oversight.

The SNCC supports the First Nation Leadership Council in urging the Prime Minister of Canada to take appropriate leadership action and ensure that comprehensive steps are put into place to establish an effective response and legal framework governing the protection and investigation of the unmarked mass burial site at the former Kamloops Residential School and where needed elsewhere.

Chief David Jimmie
President, Stó:lō Nations Chiefs Council