



OTTAWA ABORIGINAL COALITION
100-1155 Lola Street, Ottawa, ON K1K4C1

June 1, 2021

Statement on the 215 children found buried at the Kamloops Residential School

The Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition wants to acknowledge the spirits of the 215 Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation children who are being returned to all of us in this public way. We start our statement with the beautiful words of Abigail Echo-Hawk which reminds us that they were never alone.

When they buried the children
What they didn't know
They were lovingly embraced
By the land
Held and cradled in a mother's heart
The trees wept for them, with the wind
They sang mourning songs their mothers
didn't know to sing
bending branches to touch the earth
around them. The Creator cried for them
the tears falling like rain.

Mother Earth held them
until they could be found.
Now our voices sing the mourning songs.
with the trees. the wind. light sacred fire
ensure they are never forgotten as we sing
JUSTICE

As each of us look at our individual and collective responsibility to the 215 children who lay buried, to the 150,000 survivors of residential school, to the Indigenous community members who attended day schools, to the Indigenous community members who continue to have to leave their community to go to school and to all Indigenous community members who carry the generational consequences of residential schools, we ask that we focus on JUSTICE.

What can each of us do to heal, to comfort each other and do no further harm to Indigenous people in Canada? Look at your beliefs, structures, systems and your relationships with Indigenous people and let us all do our work to honour the children.

There will be more children found, more truths. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission told us that. Indigenous community members have told us that. Maybe we are now ready to listen.

We ask that you mourn the children – to honour them and their families and communities. We also ask that you work for JUSTICE for Indigenous people which requires us to dismantle the colonialism that continues in our everyday lives and is only amplified in the horrific legacy of residential schools.

www.ottawaaboriginalcoalition.ca

