



Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council

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Discovery of 751 Children Unmarked Graves at Former Indian Residential School at Cowessess First Nation In Saskatchewan

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Port Alberni, BC – Listening to the discovery of approximately 751 children found at the former Marieval Indian residential school on the Cowessess reserve in Saskatchewan is really hard news to take in and process, for all of us.

Words are so inadequate to express sorrow, condolences, and grief that we are all feeling for these children who never had a chance to hug their mothers, fathers, and families one last time or simply have an appropriate burial.

As Nuuchahnulth, our hearts go out to the Cowessess First Nation and all the families whose children did not make it back home. Many families were never provided an explanation to where their loved ones went, this is unimaginable, a violation of human rights, and absolutely unacceptable. We are all impacted by this devastating news, either as survivors of the Indian residential school system, or first, or second generation of survivors.

The governments and churches must come forward with funding so that all that want help, counselling, or otherwise can deal with what they are feeling. We demand governments and churches to provide funding for First Nations to carry out the work that's needed to do with these unmarked burial sites including meeting the wishes of the First Nations whose children attended such schools as well as the First Nation whose territory such schools reside upon.

President Judith Sayers states "To know that our children were treated in this manner, in unmarked graves, without a name, without a location for family to mourn their loss is unthinkable - yet it happened. Things that should never happen to precious human beings has happened and we know we will find more unmarked graves, again and again and again across this country around former residential schools. This is horrendous, atrocious and unbearable!"

Vice President Mariah Charleson adds "We acknowledge that many children were taken far from their Nations, families/loved ones, and communities to attend Marieval Residential School. This was a direct result of Canada's racist mandate that was implemented through laws to rid this country of the "Indian in the child" through assimilation." Charleson goes on to further say, "This is a clear act of genocide and every power must be exerted to right the many wrongs made in order for us all to move forward in a good way."

This is yet another reminder of the stark history of how Canada was formed, through the direct use of genocide and assimilation. The churches played a key role in operating Indian Residential Schools in Canada and their role must be acknowledged.

Though Canada failed at its attempt to get rid of us, this dark reality has again raised its ugly head through the unearthing of truths that these unmarked grave sites have revealed all across Canada, something many survivors have lived with much of their lives.

We call on our ancestors to be with all First Nations people of this country as we work through the findings of these unmarked graves.

We call on all Canadians to listen, learn, and determine what actions you will take to ensure this never happens again and that you will respect and value all Indigenous peoples of these lands and what we have contributed, and continue to contribute, to this country.

We must remember the lives of these children, honour them, and mourn their short lives and imagine what contributions they could have made to make this world a better place. They cannot do so, but we can on their behalf and in their memory. So, let's get to work.

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About Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council

The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council (NTC) provides programs and services to over 10,000 registered members. The role of the NTC is to represent 14 First Nations in three regions stretching 300 kilometers of the Pacific Coast of Vancouver Island from Brooks Peninsula in the north to Point-no-Point in the south. The NTC represents Ahousaht, Ditidaht, Ehattesaht/Chinehkint, Hesquiaht, Hupacasath, Huu-ay- aht, Kyuquot/Checklesah, Mowachaht /Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, Tseshaht, Uchucklesaht and Ucluelet First Nations and provides a variety of programs and services to them.

For more information, please visit www.nuuchahnulth.org.