



**Statement from Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto
re Discovery of Children's Remains at former Kamloops Residential School**

June 3, 2021

"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it." (1 Cor 12:26)

In recent days, the country has been shocked, saddened and angered by the discovery of the remains of 215 children in unmarked graves who attended a residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia. We pray for the children who died in Kamloops and in residential schools throughout the country – they must not be forgotten. We must also recognize the betrayal of trust by many Catholic leaders who were responsible for operating residential schools, abandoning their obligation to care for young and innocent children.

We all seek the truth and this tragic discovery provides yet another opportunity for us to learn more about this dark chapter in our history and the painful journey experienced by so many of our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

There is much more work to be done. Since the 1990's, many of the Catholic entities responsible for the operation of residential schools have apologized publicly for their actions and have journeyed together with victims on the path to truth and reconciliation. This includes the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the religious order that operated the residential school in Kamloops, which over the weekend again apologized for its role in the residential school system. Pope Benedict XVI also had the chance to meet with Indigenous leaders in 2009 to personally express his sorrow and anguish.

These actions do not erase our history; they acknowledge our past, force us to face the consequences of our behaviour and compel us to ensure that our sins are not repeated.

While the Archdiocese of Toronto did not operate residential schools, we join with the Indigenous peoples, the Catholic community and Canadians from coast to coast to coast in a period of collective grief for those who are physically, emotionally and spiritually wounded. This Sunday, I will offer Mass for those who died or were abused at residential schools and for all those who deal with the intergenerational trauma caused by this system. We must also continue to build on the tangible initiatives present throughout the country, like the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle, where bishops and priests, women religious, laity and Indigenous peoples are committed to walking together on a path to reconciliation.

As I have stated previously when speaking of abuse in the Church, the real scandal is when evil festers in the darkness. Once in the open, evil can be rooted out. That must happen. Then new life can begin. Let us journey together to find light through the darkness once again.

Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.

+ Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Collins
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