

June 1, 2021

A Renewed Call to Reconciliation

It has been devastating and heartbreaking to hear in the news that the remains of 215 children buried in unmarked graves have been found on the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds.

We invite all members across the ELCIC to join us in offering our heartfelt empathy and prayers for the families of those children, for the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, for the City of Kamloops and for First Nations Communities across Canada as they grieve this loss. Let us offer solidarity, support and care to all who are feeling grief, anger, trauma and the need for healing. Please join us in praying for comfort and peace.

News about undocumented deaths of our nation's Indigenous children is tragic. Yet, as Richard Jock, CEO of the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) said, "[it] is sadly not a surprise and illustrates the damaging and lasting impacts that the residential school system continues to have on First Nations people, their families and communities." This is further proof of the sinful and abusive legacy of these schools — schools in which the church and government were active participants.

The remains of these children show us the depth of our systemic racism and the lengths that the dominant culture was willing to go in order to destroy another culture. Many of us can connect our ancestors to the history of the dominant culture. Knowledge of this cruel history is something that demands our repentance, but also asks us to faithfully work for a better and different future.

We name today the devastating and ongoing cultural, emotional, and spiritual impact that residential schools continue to have on Indigenous peoples

In 2011, the ELCIC made a commitment to promote right and renewed relationships between non-indigenous and Indigenous Peoples within Canada. In 2015, the ELCIC repudiated the *Doctrine of Discovery*. We committed ourselves to seek greater understanding of the issues facing Indigenous peoples, and to walk with Indigenous peoples in their ongoing efforts to exercise their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights.

We call on all members of the ELCIC to re-engage in the work of reconciliation to which we have been called in baptism. This means educating ourselves on our history and understanding. It means listening to the voices that are often marginalized or silenced in our conversations.

It also means insisting on accountability. Talk with your government representatives and encourage them to follow through on recommendations #71-#76 of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada \(TRC\) Calls to Action](#) dealing specifically with Missing Children and Burial Information. Talk with your pastor, your deacon and your faith community about responding to Calls to Action #59-#61 in your context.

If you are looking for further resources, please consider the following:

[2011 ELCIC Convention Resolution on Encouraging Right Relationships with Indigenous Peoples](#)

[2015 ELCIC Convention Resolution repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery](#)

The Anglican Church of Canada [2019 Apology for Spiritual Harm](#)

[Anglican Church of Canada Reconciliation Toolkit](#)

Indigenous Ministries award winning film [Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen lands, Strong Hearts](#)

[The KAIROS Blanket Exercise](#)

[The TRC Calls to Action](#)

Lastly, we return again to our need to pray. Pray for Indigenous siblings, for right relationships, for your community, and for ourselves as we continue to live into our ministry of reconciliation in Christ's name.

Join us in prayer:

Faithful God,

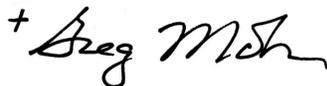
We remember the many, many, Indigenous children who did not return from residential school, including those whose remains were discovered on the grounds of the Kamloops (Tk'emlúps) Residential School. Grant comfort in the midst of grief and trauma. Strengthen the Secwépemc people, Indian Residential School survivors, their families and their communities as they process this tragic loss. Renew our commitment to the journey of truth-telling, mourning and responsibility and guide us in the ways of healing and love.

Amen.

Yours in Christ,



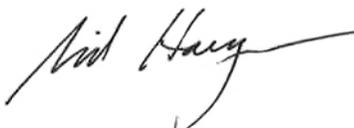
The Rev. Susan Johnson
National Bishop, ELCIC



The Rev. Dr. Greg Mohr
British Columbia Synod



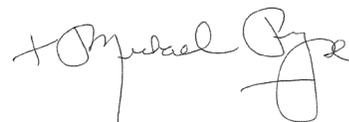
The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer
Synod of Alberta and the Territories



The Rev. Dr. Sid Haugen
Saskatchewan Synod



The Rev. Jason Zinko
Manitoba/Northwestern
Ontario Synod



The Rev. Michael Pryse
Eastern Synod