

June 21, 2021

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2
pm@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Health Sciences Association is the union representing 22,000 specialized professionals working in health sciences and community social services in British Columbia. Our members work at every level of BC's public health care system, and provide supportive services in communities across the province.

HSA members are deeply affected by the recent discovery by Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation of unmarked graves for more than 215 children on the grounds of the former residential school in Kamloops. More must be done, and without further delay, to recognize the trauma Indigenous Peoples in Canada suffered as a result of the residential schools system, trauma which continues to devastate across generations to this day. And to make this recognition meaningful, it is time to take action.

HSA accordingly calls on the federal government to work with all other levels of government to investigate deaths in residential schools according to the desire of each community, and take immediate steps to address the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #71 to 76, which address the need to recover missing children and burial information, as follows:

71. We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.
72. We call upon the federal government to allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
73. We call upon the federal government to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school

cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children.

74. We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child's burial location, and to respond to families' wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested.
75. We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.
76. We call upon the parties engaged in the work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries to adopt strategies in accordance with the following principles:
 - I. The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies.
 - II. Information shall be sought from residential school Survivors and other Knowledge Keepers in the development of such strategies.
 - III. Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.

Furthermore, while 105 First Nations are part of class action seeking reparations for the cultural impact of residential schools, the federal government is denying in court that they have liability for cultural damage caused by residential schools. HSA, on behalf of its members, calls on the federal government to immediately stop fighting residential school survivors and Indigenous children in court.

This is a shattering time for Indigenous Peoples in our country. But it is also a dark moment for all of us as Canadians. We urge you to show the leadership that is needed at this time, and take the steps above as necessary and minimal conditions for the healing our country needs.

Sincerely,



Kane Tse
President

HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION OF BC

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