



Tuesday, June 1, 2021

Content Warning: Mention of residential schools, murder, settler colonialism, genocide, abuse

Statement on the Indigenous Children's Remains Found at Kamloops Residential School

Dear UTM students,

This past week the bodies of 215 Indigenous children were found on the site of a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Beginning in 1800, residential schools took away more than 150,000 Indigenous children from their homes and families. In these so-called "schools" the children were not allowed to speak their language, follow their culture and traditions, and were often met with violence and abuse. It is estimated that over 6000 children were murdered in these schools. While the last residential school closed in 1996, the genocide of Indigenous communities has not stopped.

We are reminded yet again that this is not a distant past or "dark chapter in Canada's history" but on-going colonialism. The Indigenous peoples of this land are systemically discriminated against and continue to face various forms of oppression at the hands of the colonial government. There are many structures in place today that are inherently anti-Indigenous and racist, such as the welfare system, the lack of clean water for Indigenous communities and the lack of access to post-secondary education which disproportionately impacts Indigenous children and communities.

The University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU) stands in solidarity with Indigenous communities that are continuously targeted by the on-going settler colonialism and violence. The 215 children found at this mass gravesite deserved to live on their land happily and free with their families, friends, and community. The murder of these children was systemic and rooted in the desire to wipe Indigenous people off of Turtle Island. This is painful, wrong, and shameful. As settlers on the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations territory, we must honour the lives of these Indigenous children and work to support and preserve the communities that still exist today, their lands, cultures, and histories.

In honour of Indigenous History Month, we would like to emphasize that the colonial history on these lands is a continued reality for Indigenous peoples. As settlers on Turtle Island we directly benefit from the colonization and genocide of Indigenous peoples, thus it is imperative that we advocate for justice and liberation for Indigenous communities. We urge the UTM community to actively support Indigenous communities, and Indigenous students on campus and here are few ways to do that:

- Learn more about:
 - The Indigenous land, territories, treaties and languages by visiting native-land.ca
 - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action: http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- Books to read:
 - 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act
 - From the Ashes
 - The Right to Be Cold
 - Seven Fallen Feathers
- Films to watch:
 - [Invasion](#)
 - [We Were Children](#)
 - [Kanehsatake 270 Years of Resistance](#)
 - [Foster Child](#)
 - [Our People Will Be Healed](#)
 - [Trick or Treaty](#)
 - [Nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up to the top](#)
- Donate to:
 - <https://www.irsss.ca/donate>
 - <https://legacyofhope.ca/english/get-involved/donate/>
- Amplify the voices of the Indigenous communities on social media by sharing articles, tweets, stories, and actions.

A national Indian Residential School Crisis Line has also been set up to provide support for former students and those affected. People can access emotional and crisis referral services by calling the 24-hour national crisis line: 1-866-925-4419.

In Solidarity,

The University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU)