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SCO RESPONSE TO DISCOVERY OF REMAINS AT BC RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SITE

The bodies of 215 children found as more devastating colonial legacy is uncovered – Grand Chief Daniels

May 28, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is expressing shock, sadness, and solidarity with First Nation relatives across Canada, after learning of the discovery of the remains of 215 children on a former residential school site in Kamloops, British Columbia.

“Today, we are all reliving one of the darkest periods in our collective history,” said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “I join all of our relatives in grieving the loss of these young souls and to all lives that were lost to the Indian Residential School system.”

Just days ago, the remains of the children were confirmed through the help of ground penetrating radar. Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation's language and culture department oversaw the project to ensure it was done in a culturally appropriate and respectful way. In a news release Chief Rosanne Casimir confirmed the stark truth of the preliminary findings, revealing the remains of students of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, some as young as three years of age.

“If you ever needed more evidence of the cruelty and genocide that was imposed on the First Peoples of Turtle Island, this is it,” emphasized Grand Chief Daniels. ““These were children who were forcibly stolen from their families and their communities under the authority of the Canadian government, and never returned. It fills me with rage and grief to learn of this today.”

The news of the Kamloops discovery also stirs up past anguish for First Nation people located in what is now Manitoba. In the summer of 2018, it was publically revealed that the Turtle Crossing Campground, along the Assiniboine River in Brandon, is situated on the site of unmarked graves of more than 54 children from more than 12 First Nations who died at Brandon Residential School. In 2001, the City of Brandon sold the land and the cemetery, then known as Curran Park. Researchers have identified children ranging in age from seven to 16, dating back to the early 1900s.

Meanwhile the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation has created a memorial register of the more than 3,200 children who died at residential schools <https://nctr.ca/memorial/>, and the number continues to grow as records are located and due to access to technology. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, child abuse was institutionalized and normalized at residential schools, and many children were starved and experimented on.

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“It’s sadly fitting that we are talking about this tragedy as we head into Indigenous History Month next week,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “Every Canadian needs to know about this time and the generational trauma it caused. We also all need to pause and honour the lives of those children discovered in Kamloops, and pray that they, and their families, may finally be at peace.”

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The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 80,000 citizens in what is now called southern Manitoba. SCO is an independent political organization that protects, preserves, promotes, and enhances First Nations peoples’ inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

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