

Statement from the Anti-Racism & Respect Advisory Committee & Diversity Thunder Bay on the discovery of remains of 215 children found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School

"This past Friday, we were all deeply saddened by the discovery of the bodies of 215 Indigenous children in unmarked graves at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. Our hearts go out to all the parents and families of these children. We cannot begin to imagine what they have endured all these years knowing only that their children had disappeared.

"The history of Residential schools in Canada is deeply unsettling and is a permanent stain on our nation's history. Our committees are deeply invested in working towards a city free of racism and discrimination of any kind. In order to do this we need to share very uncomfortable conversations around Canada's colonial past. Together, we have a responsibility as leaders in our community to learn from our shared history by upholding the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action.

"Our nation was home to a cultural genocide of Indigenous people, we must never forget the horrors and pain Residential Schools played in shaping our nation and collectively we must work even harder to decolonize and honestly address Truth and Reconciliation together. We must continue to hold space for and listen to our communities' voices, especially those of the Indigenous elders and teachers to allow for healing and reconciliation. Collectively, our committees strongly believe that Every Child Matters.

"On behalf of the Anti-Racism & Respect Advisory Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay, we send our prayers, love and light to all the families who never had a chance to say goodbye to their children and to all who are affected by this tragic discovery. As the bodies are identified, we must learn their names and ensure that we say their names as a constant reminder that we must find a different path together."

Signed by:

Jason Veltri – Chair, Anti-Racism & Respect Advisory Committee

Councillor Cody Fraser – Vice-Chair, Anti-Racism & Respect Advisory Committee

Walid Chahal – Co-Chair, Diversity Thunder Bay

Rebecca Johnson – Co-Chair, Diversity Thunder Bay