



# Ontario Native Women's Association

Statement from the Ontario Native Women's Association, For Immediate Release | May 31, 2021

## Time for Action to Honour the Lost Lives of 215 Children

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) wants to offer our condolences to the families and communities whose children were *found* recently. When we heard the news, we were shaken by the incredible loss to the communities and to this country. The unfulfilled life of each of those children means that we are restoring families and communities without key members being present. We cannot measure the collective loss of the 215 children at the Kamloops Residential School. These children had mothers and fathers and communities waiting for their return.

Each child shared a home, family, language, community, and love, in a life cut short by a colonial system that continues today. We must remember that there are no burial grounds for non-Indigenous children that attended Canadian public schools.

The unfulfilled future of each child is now. It is more than lowered flags; it's raised heads looking into the eyes of the families in search of answers and justice. The consciousness of a nation must realize the truth of how residential schools attempted to destroy and erase Indigenous people in Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its 94 Calls to Action in 2015. The Final report includes *Calls to find Missing Children and Burial Information* and *Calls for Accountable and Meaningful Church Apologies and Reconciliation*. For the full truth to be revealed to Canada and the world, the time to act on any Calls to Action that are outstanding is now. We continue to ask for healing supports for all Indigenous communities in Canada. This is a call for immediate action.

Children's roles in our communities are beyond sacred. They are our future generations; Elders, Knowledge Holders, Leaders and Storytellers. The 215 children have told their story. One of colonization, genocide, erasure. We must be responsible to act on these lives and stories.

We want to acknowledge all of the survivors of residential schools. Their resiliency against over 100 years of colonial approaches is the example that many of us carry forward in our day to day lives.

ONWA has lowered our flag and lit a sacred fire on Monday, May 31, 2021, in memory of the children, their families and communities. We encourage everyone to wear orange today to honour the request of Chief Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation.

For those needing support, please call: National Indian Residential School Crisis Line, 1-866-925-4419

### For more information:

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