



Indigenous
Physicians
Association
of Canada

IPAC Statement

June 7, 2021

The Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC) is grieving with our Indigenous families and communities upon the discovery of the 215 First Nations children at a grave site adjacent to the Kamloops Indian Residential School, on the lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation.

As Indigenous People, the sense of grief is raw. There are over 130 known residential schools across Canada, but the precise number and location of graves of the Indigenous children is not. The TRC calls to action (#71-77) included the "identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried". We do not know how many children were lost.

A full forensic investigation of these sites would be a massive, concerted effort involving multiple entities, partners, and experts. Any potential investigation of these sites must be led by the Nations involved, and guided by the wishes of the families and communities. Of utmost importance, respecting the knowledge of the Elders and Survivors of the residential school system will be essential.

The responsibility rests on the shoulders of the institutions who created and maintained this system for 150 years. Time for action is long past due.

It may not be possible to identify the cause of death, or the exact number of children who died as a result of the residential school system, or even the number of graves. However, we have to try. We owe it to the Survivors of these schools, and most of all, we must honour the spirits of these children and support their families and communities.

The Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada stands with Indigenous people, urges all partners to cooperate, and supports the Survivors, families and communities, during this terrible time. Please contact the 24 Hour Residential School Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419 if you require emotional support.

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