



June 15, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada Ottawa ON

Prime Minister,

On behalf of the St. Andrew's Society of Winnipeg, the oldest Scottish settler heritage society in western Canada, I write to convey our outrage in response to the discovery of the unmarked graves of 215 children at the Kamloops Residential School property. The Society is mindful of its history and thus, it is in full awareness of this history that we send this letter to you.

An elder expressed sorrow and anger that Canada does not like the word 'genocide'. Genocide is the proper and legal word for this atrocity, the latest in this shameful era in Canada's colonial history. These graves constitute a crime.

Residential school survivors have long advocated for recognizing all schools, all survivors, and the innocents who never returned home. We urge the Canadian Government to move forward in the fastest, most humane way to search all school sites for remains and not just sites recognized in the Indian Residential School court settlement. Many other schools functioned as residential schools with the same horrific abuses and crimes against children. We believe the scale of atrocities may be much deeper and wider.

There will be other unmarked graves. More sorrow and more betrayal, but this time the burden will not be carried only by Indigenous people but by all Canadians. We recognize that if Canada is to face its history, it first must learn it. There were Manitoba schools in Teulon, Cranberry Portage, and schools in this country that were left out of the Indian Residential School Settlement. All residential schools must be included.

We expect reforms moving forward that will restore families and radically overhaul the equally outrageous child welfare system. This system takes children from their homes to this day, removes children from their families, separates them from their communities, culture, traditions, and languages in a manner similar to the way the residential school system was designed and executed.

We urge a full investigation into the management of residential schools in Canada. The children must be laid to rest with dignity and grace. The survivors and their descendants must be recognized, and their experiences validated. We call for criminal proceedings against any surviving perpetrators. All Canadians have now had a glimpse of the awful truth. This truth threatens to seriously undermine our international reputation as a champion for human rights.

The voices of residential school survivors must be heard. We are honoured to attach an impact statement from Elder Ray Mason, President of Spirit Wind and one of this country's most respected residential school survivors.

Genuine healing and reconciliation starts with recognition of the appalling acts committed in the name of this nation. Only then can we move forward as a united Canada under the guidance of the 94 Calls to Action from the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Flook', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Flook
President

June 4/21

When I first saw and heard of the gruesome discovery of the massive, unmarked grave of the 215 children, I got cold chills right through my body and began to cry, thinking that I could have been one of them too.

My cry was both with happiness and sadness. These little children didn't have a chance in life. Now, their cries for justice will finally be heard. These poor little ones have been crying for many years to be found. I am very happy because someone will be held accountable.

My cries of sadness were because what these little children went through. This proves what I have been saying all along: When Canada took us away from our parents, communities and culture, they were legally and ultimately responsible for our safety and wellbeing.

I have said all along during my advocacy work for Survivors of Canada that Canada was a Colonial society and country, because of their actions and what they did to us Native people. Their colonial educational system has had a devastating effect. They almost succeeded in "taking the Indian out the child."

I am concerned about the schools that did not qualify for either the IRRS or the Indian Day School Agreements, like the ones in Teulon and Cranberry Portage, Manitoba. There are approximately 150-200,000 survivors who went to these schools against their will and there is a very high probability that there will be unmarked graves at most of these institutions.

I am also concerned that Canada is forced into doing something about reconciling with our people and the families that are affected by this. Can we trust them, that they will do what they say they will do?? Time will tell, I suppose. I hope that they don't take forever.

In closing, I ask the Creator to guide me in the right direction with kindness, forgiveness, and love for my fellow men. I ask that what I just said will help others to understand our hurt, our anguish, our mistrust and our willingness to move forward in life so that we live together with love, understanding, and in harmony with one another in this beautiful country we call Canada.

Miigwetch, (thank you)

Elder Ray Mason

Peguis First Nation