

Office of the Superintendent

Shelley Green - Superintendent

Sunday, May 30, 2021

RE: We stand strong with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation

Dear students, staff and families:

I write to you with a heavy heart and respect for the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation who is experiencing an incomprehensible tragedy. The sorrow and loss their community is facing after the discovery of a mass grave at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School is beyond devastating. We want to honour the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation and send expressions from the heart and offers of support.

The pain of this discovery reverberates through communities across the country, including ours. We understand this is very difficult for families and communities at this time, including survivors of residential schools and for those who may have had a loved one who never returned. I want you to know that our learning community is here for everyone who is grieving and we hold space for you.

As a school district that strongly believes in working towards truth and reconciliation and our continued work in becoming culturally responsive, this is horrific news that we know may have an impact on our students, staff and communities. We encourage you to reach out to those in your circle and check in to see how they are doing and seek support if required.

We have supports in place for our students, staff and families who may need assistance at this time. Our Indigenous Education Department is working alongside our Critical Incident Response Team who is readily available. If you or someone you know requires counselling or additional support, please connect with your School Principal.

To honour our commitment to truth and reconciliation and all the calls to action, we invite our community to wear orange this week to honour the lives of those children and demonstrate that every child matters. We will also be lowering our flags to half-mast throughout the Greater Victoria School District to recognize the 215 Indigenous children whose lives were lost, the Indigenous students who never made it home, the survivors and their families.

The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.

As we move forward, I ask that we all take a moment to recognize the harm caused by colonialism and commit to the work of healing and doing better together. Our communities are very interwoven so when one hurts, we all hurt. We must continue to support each other on the path to reconciliation, so please know we are here to support you.

Sincerely,



Shelley Green
Superintendent of Schools

Additional supports include:

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Website – <http://www.trc.ca/index.html>
- Indian Residential School Survivors Society – [24 Hour Crisis Line \(1-800-721-0066\)](http://www.irsosociety.ca)
- KUU-US Crisis Line Society – [24 Hour Crisis Line \(British Columbia\) \(1-800-588-8717\)](http://www.kuu-us.org)
- National Indian Residential School Crisis Line (1-800-925-4419)
- Métis Nation BC – [Mental Health Services](http://www.metisnationbc.ca)
- First Nations Health Authority – [Mental Health Benefit](http://www.fnha.ca)

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One *Learning* Community

