

DATE: May 31, 2021
TO: All Covenant Health staff, physicians and volunteers
FROM: Patrick Dumelie, CEO
RE: Kamloops residential school deaths

Last week, we were deeply saddened to learn that the bodies of 215 children were found buried on the grounds of what was once the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Each of the children lost was filled with spirit and an unfulfilled promise. Their deaths are a stark reminder that the Residential School system continues to devastate Indigenous communities even years after its dismantling.

This unimaginable news fills us with deep sadness and grief. There is also anger at the individuals, religious organizations, and governments which created and supported residential schools across Canada. These schools shattered countless Indigenous families; their children taken from them and subjected to abuse and the systematic denigration of their culture.

The irony that June is Indigenous History month is not lost. This situation reminds us that so much work is left to be done. We must openly explore this dark chapter in Canada, understand the suffering it caused and compassionately support those who continue to be impacted by the aftermath of the residential schools system, as well as other forms of racism and abuse our Indigenous brothers and sisters continue to face today.

This work is critical to achieving truth and reconciliation with Indigenous survivors and communities.

I encourage you to participate in the events we've scheduled for this month of recognition. You can find the complete list on this [CompassionNet page](#).

A National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available to provide support for residential school survivors, their families and those dealing with intergenerational traumas. Emotional and crisis referral services can be accessed by calling the 24-hour national crisis line at 1-866-925-4419.

We honour these and other lives lost in the residential school system. We offer prayers of peace and comfort to their families and to all survivors of residential schools. We commit to continue this journey towards justice and reconciliation through honest learning and dialogue.