



memo

DATE: June 24, 2021

TO: All Staff, Physicians, and Volunteers

FROM: Dr. Gordon Self, Chief Mission and Ethics Officer

RE: Discovery of Residential School burial remains in Saskatchewan

The horrific news reported today of the 751 unmarked graves found near the former Marieval (Cowessess) Indian Residential School in the Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan is a further reminder of the deep and immeasurable pain etched in our country's narrative. It is a pain that is revisited upon us each time we hear the stories of survivors of the Residential School system and when we learn of the children who never returned home. It is a pain that demands justice.

To all our staff, physicians and volunteers whose own family members may have attended Residential Schools, I can only imagine how this news personally affects you. I know many are reaching out to fellow co-workers to express their support in their own way.

This is one of a number of such revelations coming to light in the last number of weeks, following the recent discovery of a similar mass grave in Kamloops, BC and others in Manitoba and elsewhere. The shocking news is a sobering reminder that the truth of the Residential School system cannot and should not be ignored or discounted. What we are grappling with is not some relic from the past, but an ongoing pain inflicted on our Indigenous sisters and brothers, which touches us all.

Empathy demands that we work together to reconcile this truth with an ongoing commitment to reconciliation. I am encouraged by seeing so many embracing Covenant's values of respect and compassion in opening their hearts to one another in support and shared grief.

While this is an important step, our value of social justice calls us to do more. We are compelled to advance the Calls to Action under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) especially those belonging to the health sector; that is, to you and me.

It requires all of us to bring a trauma-informed lens to recognize when a patient or resident in our care, or their family member, or our fellow co-worker may be experiencing intense reactions, triggered by their experience with the Residential School system and other injustices suffered through colonization. Conflict around the goals of care in clinical settings, for example, may stem from deeply embedded past traumas that we need to recognize and seek to understand.

We can all become more culturally sensitive through completing online modules on Indigenous Health. We can learn about and promote Indigenous healing practices, and work to build meaningful relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nations. These are practical steps we can take to embrace the Calls to Action under the TRC.

As a reminder, Covenant Indigenous History Month and Diversity and Inclusion resources are found [here](#). As well, please know the 24 hour Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-866-925-4419.

Thank you for living our mission and values, in words and through your practical and heart-felt actions.