



ONTARIO CATHOLIC SUPERVISORY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

*A faith-centred learning community of leaders
called to serve and shape the future of Catholic Education*

Statement of the 215 students who died in the Kamloops Residential School System

It is with profound sadness that the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA), an association comprised of Directors of Education and Superintendents of Education, responds to the news regarding the death of the 215 students from the Kamloops Residential School. Sadly, the discovery adds to the trauma faced by the families of those students and to Indigenous communities across Canada.

The residential school system represents a shameful chapter in Canada's history, one that needs to be explored, understood and followed by reconciliation on many levels. As senior Catholic educators we recommit ourselves to ensuring that our schools are places of safety, hospitality and welcome for all students. As well we commit to telling the events of the residential schools and learning from this tragic experience in our school systems.

In the Gospel of Mark (9:36-37), we are reminded of the giftedness of each child: "He took a child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me.'" While we cannot undo the tragic events of the past, we can ensure that such occurrences never happen again and that any mistreatment of Indigenous and other communities is never again tolerated or condoned. In this most recent tragedy, our faith institutions did not follow Jesus' words and failed to live up to the dictates and demands of our faith. We acknowledge as Catholic leaders that we cannot allow the antecedent of the Residential Schools to find their roots in our schools today; we must ensure that the lives of these child victims were not in vain. We also acknowledge that the Government of Canada failed to fulfil one of its most fundamental responsibilities to protect all Canadians, including and most importantly, the most vulnerable in our society who depend on the government for shelter, compassion and care.

OCSOA calls upon the Government of Canada to establish a national day of Mourning for all children who were mistreated or died in Residential Schools in our country.

We commit as senior Catholic leaders that our system will continue to find concrete ways to remember and honour those children who died in residential schools in Kamloops and across Canada.

The OCSOA Board of Directors
June 2, 2021