

# BOUNDARY PEACE INITIATIVE

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## America is Dying

*By: Floyd Red Crow Westerman*

We were told that we would see America come and go. In a sense, America is dying, from within, because they forgot the instructions of how to live on earth. It's the Hopi belief, it's our belief, that if you are not spiritually connected to the earth, and understand the spiritual reality of how to live on earth, it's likely that you will not make it.

Everything is spiritual, everything has a spirit, everything was brought here by the creator, the one creator. Some people call him God, some people call him Buddha, some people call him Allah, some people call him other names. We call him Tunkaschila... Grandfather.

We are here on earth only a few winters, then we go to the spirit world. The spirit world is more real than most of us believe.

The spirit world is everything. Over 95% of our body is water. In order to stay healthy, you've got to drink good water. ... Water is sacred, the air is sacred.

Our DNA is made out of the same DNA as the tree, the tree breaths what we exhale, we need what the tree exhales. So we have a common destiny with the tree.

We are all from the earth, and when the earth, the water, the atmosphere is corrupted, then it will create its own reaction. The mother is reacting.

In the Hopi prophecy, they say the storms and floods will become greater. To me, it's not a negative thing to know that there will be great changes. It's not negative, it's evolution. When you look at it as evolution, it's time, nothing stays the same. You should learn how to plant something. That is the first connection.

You should treat all things as spirit; realize that we are one family. It's never something like the end. It's like life; there is no end to life."

*As a Special Edition we hope to help us learn, understand and support the First Nations, Métis and Inuit for justice and reconciliation.*

## May Your Memory Be for a Blessing

*By Roly Russell, MLA Boundary - Similkameen*

My whole heart goes out to the children that died in residential schools. As a father of two children that are the same age that those children were, and more fundamentally as a human with any modest degree of empathy, it's impossible not to be immensely saddened and deeply angered by these realities.

"May your memory be for a blessing": so goes a phrase from Judaism that I hear a friend utter periodically. In the context of these children's lives this has enormous relevance and importance. I feel this because although these short lives have ended, their memories have now resonated and amplified across our province, nation, and world. And this provides us with a lens that's important for my own grieving; the spirits of these small people have now catalyzed an awakening of our collective consciousness with an understanding of the realities of this cultural genocide and the attempts to erase a peoples' way of knowing and way of living. In other words, I hope that from this darkness in the past the memories of these children will brighten some dim spots in our nation's future.

We are where we are, and we've come from a place that we need to acknowledge and understand more deeply in order to be able to move forward respectfully. And so, I hope that these discoveries – 'confirmations' is a more appropriate term – help us to build a future where we understand in a fundamental and visceral sense why genuine reconciliation is so important.

On an individual level, I'd ask all of us also to be aware of how much trauma this has exposed for people in our communities. There is a great deal of pain and grief at the heart of this, and these last weeks have been a blatant reminder of this historic effort to actively erase cultures and languages. Old uncertainties have been renewed, and past traumas re-opened. So, I hope we can all keep a compassionate heart, listen well when listening is what's needed, and let's recognize that this grief will be processed in very different ways by different people. Broken hearts need time to mend, and we all have an obligation to help when the time is right.

*May the children's memories be for a blessing,  
May the children's memories be for good change,  
May the children's memories be for a better tomorrow,  
together.*

## No, you can't begin to imagine it

*By: Grace McGregor, RDKB Director for Area C*

From: the Grand Forks Gazette with permission from the author

The discovery last month at a residential school in Kamloops of 215 children in a mass grave is horrific and unfathomable to say the least. I have seen many posting online and heard many say, "I can't imagine the pain this brings: or "I can't imagine this happening".

I'm not trying to hurt anyone's feelings but, no. No, you can't imagine the pain this brings. You can't imagine that it's "unthinkable." People tend to say this when they're at a loss of words.

The pain of having one's child ripped away against their will, to never hear from them again, The idea of the abuse; the feeling that you'd be helpless in getting your children back, or that you may never find out what happened to them is something no person should have to go through.

I don't think there is an end to the pain that I just described. We can't ever lose sight of the fact that these children and families were stripped of their culture, their language, a childhood of protection and growth, a loving touch---everything. The residential school (70 percent of the schools were run by churches according to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society) were part of the federal government's policy to attempt to assimilate Indigenous children and destroy Indigenous cultures and languages—in other words, to basically wipe out their culture, plain and simple.

And this legacy was capped so recently that it would be difficult to it "historic", as if it lay in the distant past. The last residential school closed as recently as 1997. I know that many of you were having babies at the time, enjoying time with our families.

So, can you imagine them being ripped from your arms and forcible taken and then.....nothing. No word from them, never to be seen again. I'm going to say it again. No, you can't begin to imagine it. It should have never happened in the first place and it will no doubt affect and disrupt Indigenous families for generations to come.

The awful discovery is not a surprise for the Tk'emlups te Secwepeme First Nations, who were already investigating the deaths at residential schools. They say that they have known all along that there are more deaths than what has been recorded. At the Kamloops school, 51 deaths were recorded "on the books" and with more than 150,000 children put through the residential schools in Canada, I'm sure the final death toll will be staggering.

Canada has to step up its efforts and immediately start investigating all the former school sites so that at least some answers are available. We all have a part to play here. And, yes, it is very difficult to know what to say at such a horrific loss.

***I will help you out: Start with "I am sorry."***

The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line (1-866-925-4419) is available 24-hours a day for anyone experiencing pains or distress as a result of their residential school experience.

## Truth First Step to Reconciliation

*By: Richard Cannings, MP South Okanagan-West Kootenay*

The discovery of 215 unmarked and seemingly undocumented graves of children on the grounds of the former residential school in Kamloops has produced an outpouring of grief and anger across Canada. While the discovery was not a surprise to many people, especially to residential school survivors, it served as a shocking reminder to most Canadians that the country must face this history and learn its full truth.

These children were not students like most Canadian kids going to school. They were forcibly taken from their families and endured unimaginable hardships as their culture was beaten out of them. Those that managed to get through their time at residential school did not graduate, they survived. To this day they are called survivors, not graduates.

What the discovery by the Tk'emlúpsteSecwépemc has made so clear is that many kids didn't survive. They died from what can be most charitably described as wilful neglect. They were chronically underfed while being forced to work to produce abundant food in the school gardens and farms. They had substandard medical care and suffered physical, sexual and mental abuse at the hands of school staff, the priests and nuns entrusted with their care. Many ran away in a desperate attempt to go home; many didn't survive those escape attempts and were never seen again.

This is not ancient history. The last residential school closed in 1996. My friend and colleague Romeo Saganash had a brother who never came home from residential school. His mother was only told two years later that he had in fact died, and she only learned where he was buried 40 years later as the result of an investigation by Romeo's sister. Stories like this are repeated from every residential school across Canada.

During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings investigating the impact of residential schools, the commissioners asked for funding from the Harper government to investigate these stories of unmarked graves at many of the school sites across Canada. That request was turned down.

Unfair treatment of indigenous children by the government continues to this day. Right now, the federal government is fighting indigenous kids in court by appealing court decisions regarding financial compensation to residential school survivors and the rights of indigenous children to have the same access to health care that non-indigenous children have. All that and 19 other compliance orders from the Human Rights Tribunal.

The NDP recently introduced a motion in the House of Commons that called on the government to take the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action seriously. It asked the government to finally fund the investigations that are needed to let us all know the truth. And it asked the government to stop fighting indigenous children in court.

On Monday, that motion was passed unanimously in the House of Commons, though shamefully a few cabinet ministers abstained and the rest of the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister, didn't even show up to vote.

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## Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

**BPI web site: [www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org](http://www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org)**

**For info contact Laura at (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).**

## (From page 2) Truth First Step to Reconciliation

And within days the government was back in court, fighting indigenous children.

Many years ago, I visited the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School with members from the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc community. They had just announced plans to keep the school standing as a working reminder of the ongoing impacts of the residential school system. It was a haunting experience for me then, as I listened to some of the stories of experiences at that institution. As we learned in the past two weeks, the truth can be shocking and painful, but knowing the truth is the first step in reconciliation.

## Canada is my country

*By: Tamara Lorincz*

I live in a country that has increased **military spending** when Indigenous people live without the most basic security in **dilapidated homes** with dirty water.

I live in a country that is spending **\$800 million** more on NATO when *more* poor families are using **food banks**.

I live in a country that will **not sign** a treaty to ban the *most* dangerous weapon of mass destruction.

I live in a country that just spent **\$3 billion** in an untendered contract for new tanks when **235,000 people** are homeless.

I live in a country that is planning on spending **\$19 billion** for new fighter jets when we are in a climate emergency.

I live in a country that is building warships for **\$77 billion** instead of building affordable housing and public transit.

I live in a country that **exports tanks** to Saudi Arabia for its war against starving Yemen.

I live in a country that sells **rifles and bombs** to Israel to kill Palestinians.

(Continued next column)

## (From last column) Canada is my country

I live in a country that has **illegal sanctions** against the suffering people of Venezuela, North Korea, Nicaragua and Syria.

I live in a country that **refuses** to be held accountable for **war crimes** committed against the people of Afghanistan.

I live in a country that has its **guns and tanks** pointed at the people of Russia.

I live in a country that feels no remorse for **bombing** the people of Serbia, Libya, Syria and Iraq.

I live in a country that is building **pipelines** for the extraction of the **dirtiest oil** that is killing the climate and the future for our children.

## A Reckoning with Colonialism's Ongoing Horrors

**From: RAVEN: Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs: <https://raventrust.com>**

(June 2, 2021) Last week, the unmarked remains of hundreds of children were found at the site of the Kamloops Residential School. 215 children who, after being forcibly removed from their families, never made it home.

Here at RAVEN we send our deepest condolences to our Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc partners.

Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir, the chief of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, called the discovery of the mass gravesite an "unthinkable loss."

Says lawyer and children's advocate Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, "It is horrific. But it is not shocking. In fact, it is the opposite – a too-common unearthing of the legacy, and enduring reality, of colonialism in Canada. To the degree it is shocking, it is evidence of how much learning there is still to do."

Now is a time to mourn, and to honour the grief of Indigenous families, relatives and communities.

- Join the calls for a National Day of Mourning
- Visit monuments appearing in public squares featuring pairs of children's shoes.
- Make donations to the Residential School Survivors Fund.
- More places to donate: Indspire, Native Women's Association of Canada, Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund
- Share resources: Canadian Residential School Crisis Line 1-866-925-4419; KUU-US Crisis Line Society providing First Nations and Indigenous-specific support 1-800-588-8717 or [kuu-uscrisisline.com](http://kuu-uscrisisline.com).

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## WHAT'S UP?

### July 9<sup>th</sup> the BPI and Boundary All Nations Aboriginal Council (BANAC)

invites you to join us in **City Park** between **6 and 10 am** and every Friday through the summer. I know it's early but for now let's beat the heat; as weather changes we'll figure out where to meet. Bring a coffee, tea, a snack or even breakfast. Bring a drum or a craft as we connect and support our community as we work together to establish a world of honour, respect, peace and justice.

Stay for the entire time or for 5 minutes. As restrictions are lifted we can once again plan and organize events and actions. The ideas for weekly gathering came out of the drum circle to honour and mourn the unmarked graves discovered at the Residential School in Kamloops. Grand Forks showed our caring with at least 50 people from all sectors of our community, including the Mayor and Council, the BPI, Métis, BANAC, the USCC Doukhobors, and other groups and individuals.



Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Go to the Government of Canada website for MP contact information at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles are the author's responsibility and may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524** or **250-442-0434** or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).

The BPI is an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Peace Pledge Union, Abolition 2000 and CNANW and works with local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

(From page 3) A Reckoning with Colonialism's Ongoing Horrors

- Read the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission v4. on Missing Children & Unmarked Burials.
- Wear orange to invite and incite conversation.
- Get informed, and teach others: Yellowhead Institute - Calls to Action Accountability

The grief and trauma caused by colonization is not a thing of the past. Indigenous people carry this every day. The response of settlers and allies must be to take responsibility to ensure the rights of Indigenous Peoples are upheld: in the courts, in our institutions, and in every community, everywhere.

With heavy hearts, The RAVEN team

### Suggestions for further information:

We urge you to watch the **8-minute farewell speech by Mumilaaq Qaqqaq**, the 27-year old NDP MP for Nunavut, who is stepping away from politics and will no longer remain in the House of Commons:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/parliament-farewell-speeches-1.6067283>

### Another video to watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMjSL2brtuA>

Nelson Mandela said, "Our world is not divided by race, color, gender or religion. Our world is divided into wise people and fools. And fools divide themselves by race, color, gender and religion."

You can achieve wisdom in three ways. The first way is the way of meditation. This is the most noble way. The second way is the way of imitation. This is the easiest and least satisfying way. Thirdly, there is the way of experience. This is the most difficult way.

*Confucius*

All events, whether in the lives of human individuals, or human societies, have their beginnings in thought. Therefore, to fully understand other people and other societies, we must look beyond previous events to the thoughts which gave rise to them.

*Leo Tolstoy*

Remember that in the world of existence there is nothing so wrong as to injure a heart, for the heart of man is the home of the Merciful, and we must not disturb or harm that home."

*Abdu'l-Baha*