



Okanagan Indian Band

12420 Westside Road
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250-542-4328

June 8, 2021

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

As the trauma of the discovery of the 215 children's bodies at the Kamloops Residential School continues to ricochet throughout our community, we are calling on you and your government to take specific actions to ensure the decolonization of our home lands.

The buildings we've immediately identified for removal and replacement are three structures that are symbols of trauma and pain that our community can no longer be asked to endure. These buildings are the former day school at Six-Mile Creek which is still being used by our students; the band office (former Irish Creek day school); and the first Six-Mile Day school now called New Horizons where our elders still congregate.

We have come to this decision because we recognize the harm from intergenerational trauma these buildings have caused. If we are to heal as a community our members can no longer be forced to drive by these buildings that serve as a reminder to our colonial history and that continue to dredge up horrific memories of abuse suffered at the Indian Day schools. We want to replace these buildings with spaces that foster healing and the mental wellbeing of our community.

It is true that we used our own resources to build these buildings. Our Councils of the day were given an impossible choice: send our children to Kamloops or Cranbrook to suffer abuse, or build our own schools where, in the case of the Six-Mile School, students were forced to endure many forms of cruel punishment that has left them traumatized ever since.

As the duly elected Chief and Council, we are responsible for the health and wellbeing for all of our band members and not all members feel safe or comfortable in these buildings.

We hold Canada and the Church responsible for the atrocities committed against our people and we implore you to follow the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and address these sites of pain, suffering and memory and replace them with places of healing for the community.

We expect to hear from the appropriate Ministry staff on how Canada is willing to assist our community with turning the page on this painful period of Canadian history.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Byron Louis on behalf of Council
Okanagan Indian Band

Cc: Premier John Horgan