



Okanagan Indian Band

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NEWS RELEASE

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Okanagan Indian Band calls on Federal Government to decolonize community infrastructure on reserves

(Vernon, BC) - The Chief and Council of the Okanagan Indian Band are calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and BC Premier John Horgan to work with Indigenous communities to decolonize community infrastructure.

Across Canada, due to lack of capital funding, residential schools, Indian day schools, churches and other monuments of oppression remain in Indigenous communities to serve as constant reminders of the colonial genocide committed by Canada.

“Canadians of Japanese descent are not expected to travel to the New Denver Internment Camp to receive government services,” said OKIB Chief Byron Louis, “Jewish descendants of the victims of the Holocaust aren’t expected to visit the internment and extermination camps to apply for a business loan. For Indigenous people, we’ve been left with these scars on our land in the form of unhealthy and traumatizing buildings.”

OKIB Reserve #1 is home to two day schools, built in the 1920s and 1950s, students whom attended the schools were subject to poor treatment and abuse. The former day schools at Six Mile Creek serves as New Horizon’s a space for OKIB Elders to gather and the Irish Creek School serves as the OKIB Band Office.

Students at the Six Mile School were forced to endure many forms of cruel treatment including being forced to kneel on their knuckles to learn mathematics and prayers for example.

“These buildings have caused generations of our people pain and shame,” said Louis, “It is through dealing with our intergenerational trauma that we’re coming to terms with impact of this institutionalized abuse.”

Louis added that in addition to removing the buildings, additional mental health and trauma supports are needed.

“We’re asking Justin Trudeau and John Horgan to, as with the Lower Post Residential School, assist us in demolishing our day schools and to replace those buildings with centres that promote intergenerational healing and social cohesion, as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”

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