

May 31, 2021

Dear North Vancouver School District Community,

Last week, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation shared the devastating and tragic news that the remains of 215 Indigenous children were located in an unmarked grave at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School [Source: [CBC](#)].

As a school district and as a community, we are devastated and heartbroken with this news. The impact of this tragedy is far-reaching, and our hearts go out to Indigenous students, educators and staff of the North Vancouver School District, Indigenous members of the North Vancouver community and Indigenous peoples throughout Canada.

To honour the 215 children who suffered unimaginable trauma and harm at the former residential school in Kamloops, and their families and communities who are in mourning, the North Vancouver School District will be taking the following steps:

- Starting today, and in alignment with schools across the province, all schools will lower the Canadian flag to half-mast until further notice.
- Later today, the NVSD Indigenous Education team will gather at the Education Services Centre to participate in an intimate drum circle.
- On Wednesday, June 2, all members of the North Vancouver School District community are encouraged to wear orange.

Last week, we shared that as a school district continuing on our journey of truth and reconciliation, we have much work to do. This recent news—news that comes as a shock, but does not come as a surprise to Indigenous peoples who have lived through the residential school experience—underscores the work we must all be willing to do to understand and appreciate the full, authentic history of Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples.

The NVSD Indigenous Education team will continue to guide the school district in this important work. The team has created a grade-appropriate [resource guide](#) that will be shared with teachers and staff today to support them as they have thoughtful and sensitive conversations with each other and in the classroom about this tragic event and the history of the residential school system.

Furthermore, Indigenous Education team member and artist Ann Marchand has created an [Every Child Matters](#) original piece of artwork to honour the 215 children who were taken from their



families and whose lives were tragically lost. The artwork will be shared with NVSD students to support conversations in the classroom. We also encourage families to engage their children in conversations during this challenging time and support them as they work through this.

Resources are also available to support the community as we struggle to process this national tragedy:

- A National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available to support former students and those affected. To access emotional and crisis referral services, call the 24-hour national crisis line at 1.866.925.4419.
- Within B.C., the KUU-US Crisis Line Society provides a First Nations and Indigenous-specific crisis line, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 1.800.588.8717 or visit kuu-uscrisisline.com.

Please also visit the school district's [Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health website](#) for resources to support children, youth and families process stressful events.

At this time, we would like to thank the North Vancouver School District community members who have reached out to support Indigenous members of the community. As we continue to learn from members of the Indigenous community, and the elders who came before them, it is important to lift each other up during difficult times. May we continue on this journey of truth and reconciliation together and go forward with courage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Brad Baker".

Tsnomot (Brad Baker)
District Principal, Indigenous Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "George Tsiakos".

George Tsiakos
Chair, Board of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent of Schools