

Memorial Ringing of the Trinity Anglican Church Bells Re: 215 Indigenous Children and Youth discovered in May 2021 to be buried on the grounds of Kamloops Indian Residential School

This ceremony happened as part of the taping of the Indigenous Sunday celebration at Trinity Anglican Church in Aurora and can be viewed on the parish website for worship on June 20, 2021. Our guest preacher Thanyehtenhas Nathan Brinklow spoke about how he continued in the work started by his grandmother from Six Nations in Haudenosaunee language revitalization as a lecturer at Queen's University and on the Mohawk Traditional Territories at Tyendinaga as well as a student of Indigenous Studies at Victoria University in British Columbia. Nanocashee (Hummingbird) Jake Charles from the Chippewas of Georgina Island gathered the Indigenous Ancestors together while drumming a Welcoming Song and sent everyone away in a good way to a safe place while drumming a Travelling Song after the ceremony in ringing the church bells with the Trinity Youth Group. Jake Charles is also the owner/operator of First Nation Cultural Tours. Haudenosaunee Grandmother Mim Harder led us in prayer using the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address. Mim Harder is involved with the Mennonite Central Committee Indigenous Neighbours and Bawaajigewan Aboriginal Circle in Durham Region as well as with KAIROS conducting Blanket Exercises.

Indian Residential Schools were operated prior to Confederation and then in Canada from 1832 to 1996. Attendance became mandatory for Indigenous children in 1920 so these children could be forcibly removed from their families to enforce attendance under the Indian Act of 1876 and subsequent revisions. These residential schools were financed by the federal government but run by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, and Presbyterian Churches.

The goals of the federal policies and practices for Indigenous Peoples were to separate children and youth from their extended families and communities. Children and youth were forbidden from speaking their own language. Clothing provided by their extended families were removed and replaced with clothing and shoes which did not reflect what was worn by members of their traditional People. Their hair was cut short so their spiritual teachings about hair was disregarded. The practices of their cultural and spiritual teachings taught by their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and Elders were forbidden. Gifts of family and spiritual value were confiscated and destroyed. Children and youth were given numbers and English names, forbidden from using their names given to them by their parents and spirit names given to them by their Elders. In residential schools, children were separated from their brothers and sisters, kept with other children of their age in classrooms and dormitories. Children and youth experienced various forms of abuse in residential schools, physical: emotional, spiritual, and sexual. Children and youth learned to be silent and to survive what happened to them. When children and youth returned to their families after ten months of residential school, relationships with their caregivers were disrupted and damaged. Over the years in attending

residential schools, children and youth became estranged from their parents and extended family members.

The Kamloops Indian Residential School was established in 1890 and closed in 1969 to become a day school until it was finally closed in 1978. In the 1950's, about 500 Indigenous children and youth from First Nations in central British Columbia attended this residential school making it one of the largest in Canada. In May 2021, the bodies of 215 children in unmarked graves were discovered by using ground penetrating radar.

Today, we ring the bells at Trinity Anglican Church to honour these 215 children and youth who did not return to their families and Indigenous communities. As members of Trinity Youth Group, we show our respect for their families and Indigenous Peoples who mourn their losses and help them to journey to the Spirit World.

PRAYERS FOR THE 215 CHILDREN BURIED AT KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL, THEIR FAMILIES, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Creator, Peacemaker, Gitchi Manidoo (Great Spirit), we ask you to be close to the children found buried in unmarked graves on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School and walk with them on their journey to the Spirit World to be with their Ancestors.

We ask that you comfort the families and communities of the children and youth who did not return to their homes, not only from Kamloops Indian Residential School but also from other residential schools located in places from coast to coast to coast. Hold in the palm of your hand those whose hearts have been heavy with sorrow for so many years.

We also ask that you comfort and strengthen those who re-experience the traumas of living in residential schools. Help them to find courage to share their stories and find healing for their pain.

For Settlers and Newcomers to Canada, help us to listen to the voices of Indigenous Peoples and find ways to honour the gifts that Indigenous children and youth bring to all of our lives.

Support us, Source of All Life and Love, through each of our days in this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, this world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Source of All Life and Love, in your loving kindness, give us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last.

Amen.

David Franks