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Office of the Territorial Commander

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A Pastoral Letter in Support of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, Kamloops

Dear Salvationist friends,

It is with a sad and heavy heart that I write to you today. The legacy of the residential school system is a source of national shame, and it continues to cast a long shadow. We are becoming increasingly aware of the terrible abuses, deprivation and injustice that were perpetrated on Indigenous children and their families in Indian Residential Schools. And yet, the new revelations never cease to shock us. This past week, we learned the fate of 215 Indigenous children, discovered in a mass grave at a former residential school in Kamloops, B.C.

We know that this new information will be traumatic for many residential school survivors and their families. As Salvationists, we acknowledge this tragedy and sensitively pray for everyone who has been affected, particularly the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation of Kamloops. Our hearts are broken as we grieve for the children and their families. Most of us will never fully understand the terrible abuse that they endured, but we “mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15) and pray that God will “[heal] the broken hearted and [bind] up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3).

We have seen the memorials comprised of 215 pairs of children’s shoes on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery and Queen’s Park in Toronto, stark reminders of the staggering number of lives lost. Each child had a story, a family and a future that was sadly extinguished.

The devastating effects of the residential schools are far-reaching and continue to have a significant impact on Indigenous communities to this day. The Salvation Army stands in solidarity with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We all have a responsibility to seek justice and pray for healing for those who suffered so much. We look to the example of Christ, who compels us to reach out in love.

As a show of respect for the lives that were lost, we invite Salvation Army centres to lower their Canadian flags to half-mast for 215 hours. We also encourage you to educate your employees and congregations about the residential schools and observe a moment of silence at 2:15 p.m. one day this week.

The Bible calls us to the “ministry of reconciliation,” just as we ourselves were reconciled to God through Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:18). May we continue to journey with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, to listen and empathize, to respect and love, to commit together to seek truth and reconciliation.

Yours in Christ,



Commissioner Floyd Tidd
Territorial Commander