

Prayer for the Children of Kamloops Residential School

Creator, we pray for the little ones who were forcibly taken from their communities, homes, and families to live in the Kamloops Indian Residential School. In the quietness of our hearts, we think of the 215 children, some as young as three years old, who lost their lives and were buried in a mass, unmarked grave, unbeknownst by those who loved them.

In the last moments of their lives, they faced death without their mother or father, without their siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or friends. Some of the survivors who lived there say that along with the pervasive sense of loneliness they felt in the absence of their families, they also endured abuse, trauma, hunger, shame, and fear.

To heap this onto the shoulders of children is a defilement of the darkest kind. Perhaps, in this moment, it is simply enough to acknowledge this to ourselves and to you. In the days ahead, however, we must rigorously pursue an understanding of the powers and principalities, be they systemic or internal, which can lead us to such dark places, so that we can renounce them and give them over to you.

Loving Creator, we also pray for the children's families and the other survivors who have wondered, for many years, about the fate of their schoolmates and loved ones. In this time of discovery and truth, may their prayers be answered and their voices heard. May their sacred fires burn strong, and may they be comforted and strengthened by your presence and fierce love.

God our Creator, we pray for the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc people. For the leaders and elders who are searching through death records, working with the coroner's service, and preparing to make contact with the children's families and home communities. Bring them strength, grant them wisdom, provide them with all of the resources they need so that they can conclude their 20-year quest for truth and finally bring their children home.

We also pray for residential school survivors across Canada, particularly those whose trauma has resurfaced in recent days. While many have testified about missing children, unmarked graves, and even murder, some held hope that those who were missing simply got away or moved to a different place. The discovery of this mass grave casts a pall over that hope. Many are facing the grim reality that the missing students likely died. We pray for them as they grieve once again.

Reconciling God, we pray for healing, knowing that our actions *or inactions* will play a critical part. We pray for reconciliation, knowing that an invitation and pathway forward has already been extended through the 94 Calls to Action of the TRC. Today we search our hearts and ask if we have responded faithfully to these calls.

Instill in us your love, so that we can rightly love others. So that our prayers become something more than empty words, clanging gongs and broken promises. May our journey towards reconciliation bear fruit and establish peace, equality, and justice in this land. Amen.

Written by Dorothy and Vince (Sagkeeng First Nation) Fontaine.