



BC Association of Social Workers  
#402 – 1755 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC V6J 4S5

E: [bcasw@bcasw.org](mailto:bcasw@bcasw.org)  
T: 604.730.9111

June 3, 2021

For immediate release

## BC SOCIAL WORKERS STATEMENT ON REMAINS OF 215 CHILDREN AT FORMER INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

(Vancouver) British Columbia social workers are horrified and shocked at the confirmation of the remains of 215 children who were students at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

The members, staff, and board of the BC Association of Social Workers extend our sincerest condolences to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir and to affected families and communities across British Columbia. Our hearts go out to the many survivors of residential schools and their families who are reeling at this news and reliving the trauma. We stand with Indigenous people.

We see and we acknowledge the anguish and pain experienced by survivors, families, and community as the trauma of past and present oppressions of violence and racism surfaces. We also see and acknowledge the anger that Indigenous voices were not heard, and knowledge not heeded.

Finding the children's remains confirmed knowledge held by community members and commands our attention to a history of colonialism that sadly continues today. Our profession has a history inextricably involved in building colonial structures.

We understand and acknowledge that the profession of social work has contributed to the injustices imposed on Indigenous peoples and for that we deeply and sincerely apologize. Social workers, individually and through associations, promoted and supported the implementation of residential schools and the approach to child welfare that led to policies that discriminated against and harmed Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities. Social workers today are working within social and health systems imbued with colonial ideologies and racist beliefs.

Documents such as the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and most recently, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's investigation regarding Indigenous-specific discrimination in BC's healthcare system not only describe and teach us about our colonial history and current reality; they point the way forward if we will listen – and we must listen.

Our Association is one of the provincial/territorial social work associations in partnership with the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) that issued a statement of apology in 2019. We once again unconditionally support this statement and its commitment to reconciliation and to decolonization.

We are committed to working with the CASW toward reconciliation. These actions include a review of the profession's foundational documents, specifically the code of ethics and guidelines for ethical practice.

We are committed to truth-telling, and we are engaged in speaking out about injustices affecting Indigenous peoples, providing Indigenous-specific continuing professional development to our members, supporting the

development of more inclusive decision-making roles with engaged Indigenous members, promoting the decolonization of social work practice that recognizes our historical wrongs, and advocating for programs that respect the rights of Indigenous peoples.

We are reaching out to our communities and to our members. We especially acknowledge the need to support Indigenous social workers who have been affected in a personal way. The sadness and pain are intense and for some, the healing journey has been interrupted.

We are listening.

- 30 -

Michael Crawford, MSW, RSW | President  
BC Association of Social Workers

Statement of Apology and Commitment to Reconciliation by the Canadian Association of Social Workers.  
<https://www.casw-acts.ca/en/statement-apology-and-committment-reconciliation>

The British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW) is a voluntary, not-for-profit membership association that supports and promotes the profession of social work and advocates for social justice. BCASW is one of the provincial/territorial social work associations in partnership with the Canadian Association of Social Workers.