

Hello, friends.

Mennonite Central Committee posted this statement on June 1:

*Reflecting on the announcement revealing the discovery of the remains of 215 children on the grounds of a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia, MCC laments the loss of these young lives and the deep hurt this revelation causes all Indigenous people, especially survivors and intergenerational survivors of residential schools.*

*We commit to helping honour the lives of all children and their families and mourning with the families of these little ones. We commit to walking alongside Indigenous sisters and brothers seeking justice, and we encourage all Canadians to take actions that bear witness to the grief we are experiencing.*

Many of us have been deeply shaken by this news, and are asking, what can we do? How do we “bear witness to the grief”? My own grandkids came home from school on Tuesday, after they learned about the Kamloops tragedy and how some people were responding, and went and found three teddy bears to put out on the front steps, as a sign of solidarity. I was moved.

At this moment of reckoning, there are many things we can do in response. One of the most important, I hear over and over again from Indigenous people, is for those of us who are non-Indigenous peoples (settlers, newcomers) to *educate* ourselves. Learn the histories. Pay attention to the stories. Recognize our place in this. So here are some concrete, practical actions you can take in that direction:

- a. **Learn about where you live.** What Treaty territory is it? Which First Nations signed that treaty? Which First Nations communities are closest to your home? What rights, privileges, and obligations does that Treaty give you today? What does it promise for First Nations?
  - Explore Saskatchewan’s [Office of the Treaty Commissioner](#) website.
  - I highly recommend Harold Johnson’s book [Two Families: Treaties and Government](#) for a Cree perspective on treaty.
- b. **Learn why “land acknowledgements” are so important.** Practice acknowledging the [treaty and the territory](#) where you live. You can do this in your church gatherings and facilities, in your homes, in your businesses.
- c. **Learn where Indian Residential Schools were located.** There were [many in Saskatchewan](#), and similar discoveries of unmarked graves will certainly be found here as the research is done. Which schools are located closest to where you live? When did it operate? (Check out the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#) website.)

- d. Learn the larger story of Indian Residential Schools, and why Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was necessary. Read the [Final Report](#) and the [Calls to Action](#).
- e. Join in a local walk on National Indigenous People's Day (Monday, June 21). Find out what is going on in your community that day; and if there is nothing, try to find out why, and go on your own prayer walk. [MCC Saskatchewan](#) will be providing an online / printable guide for a Saskatoon walk (to be posted by June 18).
- f. Listen to MCC Saskatchewan's [Reconcile podcast](#) (two seasons; the study guide for season two will be launched later this month).
- g. Read a book written by an Indigenous author.
  - o a recommended overview is [The Inconvenient Indian](#) by Thomas King.
  - o for Christians: [Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery](#) by Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah.
  - o your local library will have many suggestions as well.
- h. Read (and use as a workbook) [Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization](#), by Elaine Enns & Ched Myers. Elaine explores her Saskatchewan Mennonite roots and their interaction with local Indigenous history. The book then provides a framework for others to do this hard work of unpacking and exposing the colonialism of our personal, family, and communal histories. (MCCS [book launch video here](#).)
- i. Host a book/podcast club of any of the above, for discussion.
- j. Host a KAIROS [Blanket Exercise](#) (once covid restrictions permit). This learning experience helps people to grasp the history of colonialism in North America. MCC Saskatchewan is qualified and authorized to provide these for our churches.

MCC Saskatchewan is committed to supporting churches and families in your journey of learning, reflection, and reconciliation. If you have questions about any of these activities, if you want to explore further options (there's always more!), or if you would like me to bring some teaching to your congregation, small group, or community gathering, please call—this is what I'm here for.

In Christ's service,



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