

215, AND OUR RESPONSE

June 10, 2021

We, the undersigned, are faculty members who teach in and support the Criminology Department at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. KPU's campuses stand on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples. We work and live on these and other unceded territories.

We are horrified and profoundly saddened by the recent announcement by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation that evidence of the unmarked graves of 215 children was found at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. The grief and outrage we feel following this discovery is compounded by the knowledge that similar unmarked graves lie on the grounds of other residential schools across Canada.

The ethos of these institutions was “to kill the Indian in the child”, a practice of systematic cultural genocide that supported the broader settler-colonial project. The final reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission acknowledge that many children died in the residential schools (over three thousand, by the estimates of the TRC), and that many of their graves remain unmarked today.

We recognize and condemn these deaths, alongside the abuses, trauma, and oppression endemic to the residential school system, as profound injustices.

We acknowledge that these injustices are part of the history of our present, that their effects and implications are felt by generations of people alive today, and that colonialism in Canada is ongoing.

We stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, and we recognize that we must work to decolonize our minds, our actions, and our institutions.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we make the following commitments:

- We commit to political action and organizing in support of efforts to realize justice for the victims of Canada's residential schools. We will actively support calls for action from Indigenous communities, including calls for transparency, investigation, and accountability.

- We commit to furthering our own education and understanding regarding residential schools, settler-colonialism, and the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- We commit to taking individual and collective action, as educators, to ensure that our courses and programs reflect a meaningful and sustained commitment to decolonization. In doing this, we recognize that systemic injustices, oppression, inter-generational trauma, and murder and deaths in state institutions are issues that can and must be addressed by criminology.

We further commit to sharing this statement with our colleagues, students, and community, and we invite them to hold us accountable by asking about whether and how we are translating these sentiments and words into actions.

In Solidarity,

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