



## **Feminists Deliver mourns with the families, friends, and communities of Star Blanket Cree Nation**

Our hearts are heavy, as yet another First Nation announced its findings of underground anomalies at a former residential school site.

We are in solidarity with the Star Blanket Cree First Nation and all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, and honour the memories of the thousands of children whose remains have been found across various residential schools since 2021 in so-called Canada. We mourn with residential school survivors and their families, for all the children who never returned to the homes from which they were violently stolen. <sup>1</sup>

On January 12, Star Blanket Cree Nation announced that they had located at least 2,000 underground anomalies at the former Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School located in Lebret, Sask.

Star Blanket Cree Nation also announced they found and identified a jawbone of a four to six year old child, dated to approximately 125 years old.

Built on the Qu'Appelle Reserve and operated by the Roman Catholic Church (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Grey Nuns) beginning in 1884, Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School school was expanded in 1887, 1889, and 1895. Administration was transferred to the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School Council in 1973 and the school finally closed in 1998, making it one of the last residential schools to close in Saskatchewan and the country. <sup>1</sup>

What started in 2021 with the confirmation of unmarked graves at Kamloops Indian Residential School, led to thousands of similar confirmations across the country. Given Canada's many genocides against Indigenous Peoples, we know this confirmation won't be the last one as sites of former Indian Residential Schools and Indian Hospitals are still being searched. Canada continues to steal Indigenous children from their families and communities through its foster care system. Within the colonial borders of British Columbia, the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nctr.ca/statement-on-the-identification-of-remains-at-lebret-residential-school/>

Ministry of Child and Family Development continues to remove Indigenous children at an alarming rate. As of March 31, 2021, 5,259 children and youth were in its care, out of which, 3,548 – 67.4% - were Indigenous.<sup>2</sup>

In 2021, when news from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation's confirmation of unmarked graves first came out, Many Canadians showed an outpouring of sympathy. For some time, we heard, "Every Child Matters."

However, this outpouring was soon downed by the white supremacist voices of the genocide deniers and justifiers who demanded "proof". This malevolent incredulity now follows the news of each such gravesite discovery from those who insist that these discoveries are fake news that show Canada in bad light on the international stage.

We are angry and saddened at the cynicism, but we know that the underlying root cause of this denial is white supremacy. The refusal to accept that the murders of Indigenous children in [Canada's residential school system](#) are genocides, is also white supremacy.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's (NCTR) report titled, 'Where are the children buried?'<sup>3</sup> says,

"While we know that over 3,200 children died, we remain uncertain where they were buried. The cemeteries that have been documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are, for the most part, abandoned, disused and vulnerable to accidental disturbance. Developing a strategy to address this problem is complicated, and will require long-term and thoughtful discussions about the most appropriate documentation, commemoration and protection procedures."

In its Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action 71-76 about Missing Children and Burial Information, the NCTR specifically calls upon the federal government "to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children."<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous children continue to die at alarming rates and their murders are a direct result of colonialism, racism, white supremacy, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and the multiple other layers of oppression that exist in between. We understand that the truths of this past week (and others since 2021) are not historical, but an ongoing violent reality and a stark reminder that all settlers across

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2 <https://mcf.d.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/children-in-care>

3 <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AAA-Hamilton-cemetery-Final.pdf>

4 [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

Canada must act on the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action](#) and the [National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls 231 Calls for Justice](#).

We call on the federal government to take immediate and concrete action, beginning with implementation of the TRC calls to action 71 through 76 on the Missing Children and Burial Information. This process must be led by the First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities affected, and we follow their direction, but we also must demand that the government address the process of uncovering and investigating the sites of burials with seriousness and respect.

Indigenous peoples continue to be overlooked as Canadians continue to withhold and be selective with their outrage. Abolishing white supremacy means understanding how it plays out in every institution including the child welfare system, the criminal justice system, the housing system, income inequities, access to healthcare, education and employment, on and off reserves. The road to decolonization, truth, and reconciliation requires respecting Indigenous rights and sovereignty.

Reconciliation is not a passive, one-time action but rather one that requires active disruption of colonial practices entrenched in policy and legislation, which continue to harm generations of Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation means pursuing justice for, and liberation of, Indigenous communities on all fronts.

We will continue to work towards reconciliation and liberation by following the leads of Indigenous leaders, communities, and partners to work in solidarity and honour the memory of lives lost and harmed.

Feminists Deliver Co-chairs  
Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director  
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***Information shared here may be triggering. Please reach out to these crisis lines for emotional support or assistance.***

- Indian Residential School Survivors Society – British Columbia  
Toll-Free Line: 1-800-721-0066
- The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line  
1-866-925-4419

If you would like to show support for survivors of the Residential system, and Indigenous women and gender-diverse people that are facing gender-based violence, you can donate directly to Indigenous-led organizations.

- [The Indian Residential School Survivors Society](#)
- [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)
- [Aboriginal Mother Centre](#)
- [Battered Women's Support Services](#)
- [BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres](#)
- [Downtown Eastside Women's Centre](#)
- [Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs](#)
- [Urban Native Youth Association](#)