

Over the last week and a half, we've likely all heard of the news out of Kamloops, British Columbia: another reminder of the many horrific deaths of indigenous children in our country's history. This discovery adds 215 more to an inevitably growing list of those who have died, which also leads to so many more impacted as survivors of this stain in our history, and as those who mourn the loss of loved ones. In the words of the president of our denomination, The Alliance Canada, Dave Hearn wrote this week:

"We acknowledge that our ancestors participated in this injustice, even through their silence and inaction...As a church, we own our sins of the past and repent of this failure—yes, even generations later—and commit to representing Jesus better now and in the future."

And while today we mourn along with those who suffered this terrible loss and alongside all survivors of the residential school system, this latest discovery is a reminder to us that this tragedy goes beyond one residential school. The scope of the harm is staggering. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has, to date, identified 4100 children

who died while attending residential schools and estimates that the actual number may be as high as 6000 children. To place this into perspective, if our flag was flown at half-mast one day for every child who died as a result of the residential school program, it would be at half-mast for 11 to 16 years.

It falls on all people to continue the hard work of healing and reconciliation, each in our own way and where possible together: in our families and communities, in the organization's we work with and belong to, as a nation. So, in a spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honor and acknowledge Moh'kinsstis, and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and oral practices of the Blackfoot confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Stony-Nakoda and Tsuut'ina nations. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis homeland. We do this in order to honor those who lived here first, and to take the time to personally reflect on what it means to be here now. As participants now gathered here, in the heart of this Treaty 7 territory, we acknowledge that we have ongoing

responsibilities to protect and honor all of life within our shared reality as treaty people.

By these acknowledgements, we commit ourselves and our faith community to continue to seek reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples.

Let these acknowledgements and our prayers renew our hearts and minds so that by the grace of the Holy Spirit we honor one another as image-bearers and take steps to be reconciled.

So let us make our confession, first in silent reflection and then together in prayer.

Father, as we sit in pain and grief with First Nations communities, we pray that you would make us sensitive to not only how the Spirit is moving in our individual lives, but also in our life as a community during moments like this one. As you call us to repentance, we bow our knees. We make no excuses. We name our sin as specifically as possible. We ask for grace for genuine repentance as we pray: "Lord, have mercy."

*We have refused to listen attentively to our First Nations brothers' and sisters' cry for justice. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have resisted anything that challenges our prejudices and rebukes our ignorance. Our minds and hearts listening only to voices that reinforce opinions we already hold. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have been blind to our complacency and complicity. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have expected applause for our feeble thoughts and tottering steps toward your precious image-bearers who continue to live and experience the effects of racism. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have been self-absorbed and self-deceived, preferring to teach rather than being taught. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have feared losing our "rights," while withholding rights from the oppressed and desperate. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have lacked steady compassion and sturdy courage. Our response to the evil of racism has been short-lived and shallow. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have embraced power and ignored the demands of love. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have participated in cultural conflict and disdained the pursuit of peace and understanding. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have, through ignorance, contributed to the pain and oppression of Aboriginal peoples. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have enacted and upheld unjust and oppressive laws. **Lord, have mercy.***

*We have gladly travelled the wide and easy road that leads to destruction and avoided the narrow road that leads to life. **Lord, have mercy.***