



**Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon**  
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June 2, 2021

**Further to the discovery of the 215 graves at the  
Kamloops Indian Residential School**

Dear Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:


In a letter that I wrote earlier this week, I joined with my brother bishops in B.C. and beyond with expressing on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, my sadness and sympathy to Chief Rosanne Casimir and the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation who are mourning the loss of young people upon the discovery of 215 unmarked graves on the site of the former residential school on the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. I also expressed sympathy for the many residential school survivors and their families for whom this news is again the occasion for great mourning and grief.

I also acknowledged and honoured the event of Sunday afternoon, May 30, 2021 at St. Paul's Cathedral and the memorial tribute of the many children's shoes and other artifacts to honour the memory of the children at residential schools. These items will be left in place in the coming days, in solidarity with other memorials and events being held by schools, our provincial and federal governments, and other organizations.

I mentioned how at last Sunday's morning Mass at Holy Family Cathedral, a moment of silence was observed to remember the 215 souls and all residential school survivors, their families and community members. This silence was to honour others and to honour God on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. While we may not have the words and plan worked out – God shows us through Jesus Christ the way of love, respect, accompaniment, and healing that we must follow.

Today I would like to follow up on that message with some additional reflection. The pain, the tragedy and the horror of finding children's bodies in unmarked graves and the realization that they died far away from mothers, fathers, grandparents and families is heartbreaking. Over the past few days I have listened and heard how the horror of this news is impacting and hurting so many in our community, affecting us all – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – across our diocese and our nation.

The discovery in Kamloops is again exposing the wounds and scars from the Indian Residential School legacy which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings set out in its 2015 final report. I therefore take this opportunity to join with my

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,  
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

brother bishops in Saskatchewan who have expressed deep regret and sadness for the loss of language and culture experienced by those who attended the schools, and to apologize for the abuse which took place at the schools.<sup>1</sup>

Since the conclusion of the TRC in 2015, we in Canada have come a long way. But we have a way yet to go. The apology by the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan in June 2012 concluded as follows: “The apologies are the seeds which we hope will lead to a bountiful harvest of reconciliation and healing.” I also quote a part of the Catholic Bishops of Saskatchewan statement of last year regarding racism and the call for Respect and Caring.

“There is much to affirm on this issue in our Catholic tradition, beginning in the first book of the Bible, where we read how all peoples are created in the image and likeness of God Himself. (see Genesis 1:26-27) With the privilege of being created *fully human* comes the responsibility to live and act towards others as God acts towards us. ... The privilege of our humanity carries with it the great responsibility of the preferential care of our brothers and sisters – especially those who deal with obstacles, injustices, or other barriers to their human flourishing. “

As I said in my first letter, I pray that this occasion of mourning and grief will also be the occasion for renewed commitment and efforts to build caring relationships between our Indigenous and non-Indigenous brothers and sisters, in a world that continues to grapple with a history that often falls short. The discovered 215 graves are a reminder of this history. Our respectful silence and solidarity together can be a part of the long and careful journey to an unknown and hopeful future. I commit myself and our diocese to continuing to walk this journey.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark A. Hagemoen".

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen

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<sup>1</sup> See Apologies by various Saskatchewan Catholic Bishops in 2008 and 2012 at <https://www.cccb.ca/indigenous-peoples/indian-residential-schools-and-trc/>.