



INSTITUTE OF PRAIRIE AND INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGY

[Statement on the 3rd anniversary of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc findings of unmarked graves.]

On May 27th, 2021, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc announced their preliminary findings of 200 potential unmarked graves on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. As we reflect on this discovery three years on, we honor the memories of the children who never returned home and acknowledge the enduring pain of their families and communities.

As shared in [Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc's anniversary reflections](#), their dedication to honoring and seeking justice for Le Estcwicwéy' (the Missing) continues. We echo their call to uphold the truth against denialism, recognize the systemic racism that has targeted Indigenous peoples, and commit to preserving the integrity of ongoing investigations according to Indigenous laws and protocols.

This anniversary is an opportunity to remember and acknowledge the work that has been done and the significant impact of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. Their leadership and control over the process, rather than just participation, exemplify the best practices within the field of archaeology and community-led initiatives.

However, we recognize the broader practice issues within the field of archaeology; it is impossible to ignore the structural barriers that prevent the work from being done in the most respectful and effective ways. Challenges also continue due to a renewed effort by denialists who seek to undermine the efforts and experiences of Indigenous communities. There has been positive change but there are still areas where significant improvements are needed, including national coordination of search processes, access to lands, ongoing funding support, and increased opportunities for Nations to build their capacity. While acknowledging the work done to raise awareness of the horrors and lasting impacts of residential schools, we must recognize that it is far from a resolution as many communities are seeking justice and accountability for families and Survivors.

The Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology (IPIA) will continue to support communities in the process of locating unmarked graves and ensuring that best practices are used during this sensitive work. We remain committed to providing the expertise and resources necessary as this vital work continues.

[Read Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc's statement here:

<https://tkemlups.ca/reflections-on-the-third-anniversary-of-le-estcwicwey%cc%93-the-missing/>]

[For more information about resources for communities developed by the Unmarked Graves Working Group of the Canadian Archaeological Association:

<https://canadianarchaeology.com/caa/resources-indigenous-communities-considering-investigating-unmarked-graves>]

For those needing emotional support or assistance:

Indian Residential School 24 Hour National Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419

Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador:
1-866-414-8111

Quebec: 1-877-583-2965

Ontario: 1-888-301-6426

Manitoba: 1-866-818-3505

Saskatchewan: 1-866-250-1529

Alberta: 1-888-495-6588

British Columbia: 1-877-477-0775

Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut: 1-800-464-8106