

MEDIA STATEMENT



COMMUNITIES, ALLIANCES & NETWORKS (CAAN)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 24, 2021

CAAN Statement of Solidarity as we grieve the uncovering of our Relatives' gravesites at former Residential Schools across the land

We stand in solidarity with all our relations upon the discoveries of the graves of our kin at Indian Residential Schools across this land known as Canada. Collectively we grieve. These children would have been Knowledge Keepers and Elders for our Nations and communities today - relatives that we did not have the chance to meet. We put tobacco down for them and pray that their spirits have found peace.

The recent events are reminders of the ongoing colonial project on this land now known as Canada – This project sought to ‘kill the Indian in the child’ with the implementation of government administered assimilation policies that included the Residential School System. We affirm that this project will not succeed. We are strong, we are resilient, and we stand tall. We are rooted in Creator’s laws, which give us strength in the face of this grief. We are not surprised by the news of the discoveries in Tk’emlúps, and Cowessess. We know that many wounds have been reopened and that it will be ongoing as the lands that these schools were located on are examined in other parts of the country.

“CAAN has been instrumental in seeking solutions among the many diverse Indigenous Nations across this land called Canada by wakening Indigenous ways of knowing and doing,” says Margaret Kisikaw Piyesis, CEO of CAAN. “We have been consistently envisioning solutions for the next 7 generations to come, remembering our ancestors and what they have had to endure since the colonizers came to this land to form colonial systems through the Government and the Churches.”

We call on all Canadians to read the Truth and Reconciliations Calls to Action, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice. We call on Canadians to learn the history of residential schools and the intergenerational legacy that it has wrought into the present day. Use this knowledge to dismantle inequities and honour the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples across this land. To all our relations, we offer love, light, and solidarity.

Residential school survivors, and those in need of help processing this grief, can access support from the Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419.

For more information about this initiative and media requests please contact:

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A panel of Indigenous people living with HIV spoke at Health Canada’s National Conference on HIV/AIDS in 1991 and laid the seeds for the creation of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN). CAAN has decades of history as an incorporated non-profit organization whose mandate has evolved from a primary HIV and AIDS focus to include STBBI, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, harm reduction, mental health, and aging. CAAN provides a national forum for dialogue on these issues, and responds to needs identified by Indigenous peoples, through research and programming, on prevention, education, promotion of wise practices, training, and by supporting and implementing community developed responses.

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