



Ontario Public Health Association
 l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
 Established/Établi 1949

The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

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Constituent Societies

Alliance for Healthier Communities

Association of Public Health
 Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO)

Association of Supervisors of
 Public Health Inspectors of Ontario
 (ASPHIO)

Canadian Institute of Public Health
 Inspectors - Ontario Branch (CIPHIO)

Community Health Nurses'
 Initiatives Group (RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario (HPO)

Ontario Association of Public
 Health Dentistry (OAPHD)

Ontario Association of Public Health
 Nursing Leaders (OAPHNL)

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
 (ODPH)

Ontario Society of Physical Activity
 Promoters in Public Health (OSPAPPH)

Charitable Registration
 Number 11924 8771 RR0001

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
 Prime Minister of Canada
 80 Wellington Street
 Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Marc Miller
 Minister of Indigenous Services

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
 Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
 House of Commons
 Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

June 16, 2021

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Miller, and Minister Bennett,

RE: The recent acknowledgement of the remains for 215 children in Kamloops, British Columbia

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) to urge your government to consider taking stronger action to fulfill the Calls to Actions in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. OPHA joins the nation in the mourning of the recently acknowledged remains of 215 children found at site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. Indigenous communities and advocates have long communicated the existence of burials at residential schools. Many Indigenous children did not return home.

The recent acknowledgement and public confirmation of the unmarked, undocumented burial site acts as a strong reminder of the necessity to deliver on the Calls to Actions in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Published six years ago, too much time has already passed. We cannot wait. Of the 94 Calls to Action, few have been fully implemented. Of the Calls to Action from the *"Where are the children buried? Cemeteries and unmarked burials,"* section of this report, none are completed. Your government's commitment to \$27 million to assist Indigenous communities in locating and memorializing children who died at residential schools is an important first step.

Indigenous health, reconciliation, and racism against Indigenous peoples are public health crises. This is particularly true following COVID-19 and the exacerbated risk Indigenous communities face in pandemics due to the social determinants of health and lack of political power they face from the legacies of colonialism, genocide, and racism.¹ Following through on all 94 of the Call to Actions in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is critical to ensuring health equity is achieved for Indigenous communities, and so that these communities can live safely and freely.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Pegeen Walsh
Executive Director
Ontario Public Health Association

More about the Ontario Public Health Association

OPHA is a member-based, not-for-profit charitable organization that has been advancing the public health agenda since 1949. OPHA provides leadership on issues affecting the public's health and strengthens the impact of those who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario. OPHA does this through a variety of means including influencing public policy, capacity building, research, and knowledge exchange. Our membership represents many disciplines from across multiple sectors. OPHA is also home to Nutrition Connections (formerly the Nutrition Resource Centre) which advances nutrition knowledge and collaboration.

¹ Power, T., Wilson, D., Best, O., Brockie, T., Bourque Bearskin, L., Millender, E., & Lowe, J. (2020). COVID-19 and Indigenous Peoples: An imperative for action. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 29(15-16), 2737–2741. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15320>