



**ST. KATERI PASTORAL CENTRE**  
**ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WHITEHORSE**  
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Prot.#: 030621c

June 3, 2021

To all the Faithful of the Diocese of Whitehorse,

**RE: Discovery of children's graves in the Diocese of Kamloops**

It is with profound sadness that I write to you about the discovery of children's remains at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in the Diocese of Kamloops.

As witnesses to Christ's love, I first ask that you stand in solidarity with First Nations members in Yukon and Northern British Columbia who, along with the members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, are deeply affected and grieving by this news. As Catholics, we must take ownership of our Church's history in Canada, and only by remaining present and active in our local churches, can each one of us contribute to reconciliation and to bringing the truth of residential schools to light.

As you may be aware, I was invited to participate in the ceremony with the shoes in Whitehorse on Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. I felt truly grateful and humbled for the opportunity to share in that experience. I would like to reiterate Chief Doris Bill's comments about the need for love and forgiveness. This is central to God's message to us through the death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ, and will be our guiding principle as we move forward with concrete actions.

This week I also had an interview with CBC Yukon on this subject of the findings and the church's subsequent role. The full interview is available for parishioners to hear on our diocesan website.

Over the coming weeks, I will:

- Ask to meet with Yukon First Nations leaders to discuss how the Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse can be an intentional partner in the process of reconciliation;
- Establish a Diocesan Committee for Reconciliation to move forward in planning a pastoral approach on this subject;
- Make available our archives and records regarding all residential schools in the Diocese as we did during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada inquiries; and
- Request our clergy and lay ministers to organize local prayer services and Masses within their communities in recognition of much-needed healing and reconciliation.

As the Diocese proceeds with these actions, I invite each of you to come forward in a spirit of humility, to accompany and listen to the experience of those suffering as a result of the residential school system, as you are able. You may also participate through personal prayer, meaningful conversations around the dinner table with family and friends, participating in organized prayer services within your church, or offering your time and expertise within your parish on this topic of healing and reconciliation.

I thank you for your understanding, and may God bless you, your families, and our indigenous brothers and sisters, as we struggle together during this difficult time. I remain,

Yours in Christ,



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Bishop Héctor Vila