



## RESPONSE TO NEWS OF UNMARKED MASS GRAVE

Over the years, I've presided at a number of funerals for children. They say that a parent never gets over the loss of a child and from what I have seen I would say that that's true. But I would add a grand-parent never gets over the loss of a grand-child, a sibling the loss of a sibling, an aunt or an uncle the loss of a niece or a nephew, a friend the loss of a friend of a classmate.

That we discovered the remains of 215 children in a mass unmarked grave at a residential school in Kamloops is a tragedy beyond words. When I first thought about speaking about this I thought I would speak from the chapel of reconciliation here at Christ Church Cathedral. But truth comes before reconciliation and I realized I needed to speak to you from here, from the columbarium – from this place where the remains of hundreds of beloved children of God, most of whom were white settlers to this land, are interred. As you can see there are markers, there are names, there are dates. Most of them lived to a good age. We are being told though that some of the children in this unmarked grave were as young as three. Their death is a large enough tragedy but even bigger than that is that their parents, their grandparents, their siblings, their aunties and uncles, their communities could not come together to mourn their loss, to honour them, to mark their graves. I fear that for many of them, their parents weren't even told of their deaths, may have gone on for years, for decades, wondering if their child was dead or alive, wondering what happened.

Six years ago, the truth and reconciliation commission recommended that each residential school be examined for the remains of children. Inaction and apathy has meant that this has not yet happened, and it is time, it is more than time to do this work, it is more than time to enact all 94 Calls to Action. But as we do this we should be deeply aware that for too many parents and grandparents, aunties and uncles, siblings and friends, it is too little, too late.

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