



# The Presbyterian Church in Canada

## A Statement Regarding Residential Schools

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Dear St. Andrew's (Calgary) Pres. Church,

In response to the devastating confirmation of unmarked graves on the grounds of former Residential Schools in Canada, [a statement was published](#) on June 15, 2021, written in consultation with the [National Indigenous Ministry Council](#), a Committee of the General Assembly, and signed by both the Rev. Dr. Dan Scott, Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly, and by the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator for 2019–2020. It speaks, through repentance and lament and in humility, for the lives of all the children who were lost, those we know who died at the schools and those still to be found in unmarked graves. The statement makes many commitments for the church to act upon.

**As a colleague in ministry, I am writing to ensure that you and those associated with the ministry you serve have seen, read and considered the statement, [available here](#).**

In various ways, the church has begun responding to the commitments outlined in the statement. However, any work regarding former Residential Schools and the land they are or were on must be done in conversation with and after listening carefully to the affected communities and in line with their wishes. Additionally, we work in consultation with the National Indigenous Ministry Council.

This work takes time and must be respectful of the impacted communities' wishes. We know there are cemeteries associated with some of the schools that The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran but we do not know for sure whether there are unmarked graves on the grounds of these schools, though it is likely. We are working on opening conversations around searching the grounds of both Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School and Birtle Residential School. The church has also begun looking into how to approach those affected by the schools that The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran but that closed before 1925. We have also contacted the United Church of Canada about how we will work together with regard to the schools The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran before 1925 but then became associated with the United Church of Canada.

You can learn more about the ongoing work for reconciliation and Indigenous justice as well as any news regarding this issue at the [Indigenous Justice page of our Social Action Hub](#). It is a living resource that we keep updated.

## **Get Involved**

We all have a responsibility to deepen our understanding of the ongoing impacts of anti-Indigenous systemic racism, of which residential schools were part, and to act. Here are only some of the ways to respond after reading the statement issued on June 15, 2021:

- Read the [Statement](#) publicly. Additionally, read Calls to Action 71-76 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- Learn about the [Ministries with Indigenous Peoples](#) of The Presbyterian Church. [Watch a worship service by Indigenous ministry leaders](#) to mark National Indigenous Peoples' Day.
- Seek to understand the harms of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Read the [Final Report and Calls to Justice](#) of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and use the PCC study guide on the final report: [Why work to decolonize?](#)
- Read the resources and support the work of Indigenous organizations such as the [Native Women's Association of Canada](#).
- Learn about the impacts of colonialism, why it was necessary for the church to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, and PCC-run residential schools. [Resources are online here](#).
- Learn about any schools operated near your community. As much as possible, seek information from Residential School Survivors, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
- Read about the work that has been done regarding the cemetery for the Regina Industrial School in "The Regina Indian Industrial School (1891-1910): Historical Overview and Chronological" by Douglas Stewart (available through Amazon).

Sincerely,

The Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald,

General Secretary, The Life and Mission Agency

416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 (extension 289)