

February 18, 2022

To: the people of the diocese of Islands and Inlets

Friends,

'Namgis First Nation [has started its inquiry](#) into the former St Michael's Indian Residential School grounds located on Cormorant Island.

We have been aware for many months of the community's intention to proceed with the work of examining the former grounds for potential burial sites. But, today, as they begin this work in earnest, I am calling on Anglicans of these Islands and Inlets to join me in the following:

1. **Repent:** It was us, Anglicans of these islands, that managed and operated St Michael's Indian Residential School. What took place there is our intergenerational responsibility to bear. Considering the judgement rightly laid upon the church, we are called to a collective and personal change of mind, heart and action, so that we do not repeat the sins of our past, and instead live fully into our baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being.
2. **Learn:** The history of residential schools is well documented. Commit yourself to learning this history. You can begin by reading about it on our [diocesan website](#). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [94 Calls to Action](#) must, for us, be committed to our collective memory as a guiding document for the work we do together. Please [read it](#) (whether for the first time or the tenth), paying particular attention at this time to the calls to action for faith communities. I also encourage you to take part in an upcoming offering of the diocese's [Intersections: A Dialogue Series](#) to better understand the racist history of this place we now call British Columbia.
3. **Listen:** Seek meaningful ways to make space for and to hear the voices of Indigenous peoples and what they are calling for from us, as a church and as people of this place today.
4. **Pray:** The people connected to St Michael's have suffered, generation after generation. The work they are doing together will, with God's help, bring some healing, but that healing has and will come at a great cost, in the retraumatizing of survivors and their families. Pray for these innocent ones. The ones who have died, the ones who walk in the shadow of these deaths, and those who are walking the path of healing and hope for themselves and for their people.

During its operation, children were taken to St Michael's from forty-five First Nations. Here are the names of the children documented as having died at St Michael's. You may wish to remember them and their families in your prayers, as a way of focusing your heart and mind on the human lives involved.

Name	Date of Death
Mona	Between January 1, 1902 and December 31, 1903
Samson Harris	January 12, 1923
Thomas Mason	September 19, 1925
Alfred McKay	January 1, 1932
May Nysok	April 9, 1932
Lucy Gordon	ca. January 1, 1933
Sophia Edgar	Between May 1, 1939 and May 31, 1939
Samson Edgar	Between May 1, 1939 and September 30, 1939
Eva George	ca. 1944
George L. Humchitt	August 30, 1944
Reggie Allan	May 20, 1948
Molly Irene Moon	August 23, 1961
Andrea Helen Alfred	June 4, 1965
Douglas Benson	Unknown
Jackie Archie James	Unknown

As you pray, remember that prayer must not be for us a trite gesture. We are called to **do** justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). Too often the church mixes this up and does kindness instead of justice. Our prayers must be accompanied by acts of justice, loving kindness and true humility.

5. **Work to transform the unjust structures and challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation (Fourth [Mark of Mission](#)):** As much as the residential schools are a tragic part of our legacy, many of the underlying structures and attitudes that led to their creation persist. The project of dispossession of Indigenous land, culture, language and life, have directly benefited settler society, and institutions like ours. Systematic racism and structural injustice are such that Indigenous children and youth in BC are [16.8 times](#) more likely to be "in care" than non-Indigenous children and youth, [seven times](#) more likely to live with food insecurity than non-Indigenous children, and [86 times](#) more likely to die in a fire than non-Indigenous children.

These are some current unjust realities that demand our action and advocacy. We must resist the temptation to relegate the horrors of residential schools to a dark chapter in our collective past, and instead respond with faith in action. This means using our voices—our privilege to call out and call on those with the power to change policies, laws and legislation that perpetuate the harm.



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We are a long way from a world in which every child of God shall 'sit under their own vine and their own fig tree and no one shall make them afraid' (Micah 4:4). For now, these are tangible ways in which we can walk alongside the 'Namgis First Nation in the coming days, weeks, months and years. With God's grace may we be agents of truth-telling, healing and transformation.

Bishop Anna

