

**OPEN LETTER TO:**

**Prime Minister Justin Trudeau; BC Premier John Horgan; ALL BC MLAs;  
Federation of Social Services; Mayors & First Nations south of the Malahat:**

Our debt to Indigenous citizens in Canada must be our first obligation and priority as a country. We have failed. We may continue to fail if we do not offer a full recognition of our responsibility as settlers and guests on these lands.

In 2018, 51 bodies of students in unmarked graves were found in a Manitoba campground amongst RVs and tents on the former grounds of the Brandon Residential School. Few took notice then, but today we must take notice and act in ways that will be uncomfortable. We must take down the racist and colonial systems, structures, beliefs and attitudes that forced assimilation and continue to do so. We thank the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation for leading the way in BC.

The Truth & Reconciliation Centre in Winnipeg has confirmed that 4,117 children died in Canadian residential schools and estimates that there are many more. Unmarked graves, broken communities, and intergenerational trauma reflect this genocide that has happened in our lifetime. We must demand justice and accountability from Canada and the religious organizations involved with the residential schools for each child who died or suffered a shattered life as a result. Without so doing, we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of our past.

We look deep in our hearts and challenge our privilege and stand behind and with Indigenous leaders everywhere to bring the truths and voices into the open. We hope that shining light on this dark history will assist in bringing hope and opportunity for all communities and support the healing of the trauma and pain.

Today, VCAPCC re-commits our pledge to stand behind and with First Nations communities and leaders in defining their future; in finding their children; in returning them home – and in realizing their aspirations.

We demand that all governments move forward with action, not just words. Now is the time to reflect justice in Canada by first following the leadership of the Indigenous peoples.



Melanie L. Duggan  
Chair, Board of Directors



Sandy Bryce  
Executive Director