

As we prepare to observe [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#) on June 21, I am remembering just over a year ago when the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation announced that 215 unmarked graves had been located on the grounds of the former Kamloops Residential School. Since then, thousands more unmarked graves have been found on sites of former residential schools. I pause regularly to remember the children who did not return home from residential school, and to acknowledge the ongoing grief of their families. Every child matters.

National Indigenous Peoples Day is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. Observing this day is intended to strengthen and encourage us in daily practices and action for truth, healing, and reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission ([TRC](#))'s [94 Calls to Action](#) and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls ([MMIWG](#)) [Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice](#) continue to name urgent need for action.

On June 21, I invite you to:

- Spend some time in silence to remember the children who did not return home from residential school.
- Give thanks for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.
- Learn more Indigenous history through the [KAIROS Blanket Exercise](#) and the [Anglican Church of Canada Reconciliation Tool Kit](#).
- View the video [Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen Lands, Strong Hearts](#).
- Read the [Report of the ELCIC Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice](#) (ELCIC 2022 National Convention, Bulletin of Reports Appendix 4).
- Pray for the work of the work of healing, reconciliation, and decolonization.
- Review [A Renewed Call to Reconciliation](#), issued by the ELCIC Conference of Bishops in June 2021.
- Reflect on your own call to action and your own opportunities to deepen relationships.

I invite you to pray with me:

Faithful God,

We remember the many, many, Indigenous children who did not return from residential school. Grant comfort in the midst of grief and trauma. We remember Residential School survivors, their families, their communities, and all who continue to yearn for healing. We give thanks for the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. Renew our commitment to the journey of truth-telling, mourning and responsibility and guide us in the ways of healing and love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson", preceded by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

If you are a former residential school student in distress or have been affected by the residential school system and need help, please know that Residential Schools Crisis Line (1-866-925-4419) is available 24 hours a day to provide support.