

EGSA at York University Statement:
Discovery of Residential School Burial Site in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
June 2021

The English Graduate Students' Association (EGSA) through its home at York University writes from the traditional territory of many Indigenous collectives and communities. We acknowledge our presence on Tkaronto, which has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. The members of our English Graduate Association find their homes in multiple localities, in Canada and across the globe, but we all, as members of a postsecondary institution, benefit from and are impacted by this land and its ongoing existence as a settler colonial state. As settlers and arrivants ourselves, our allyship with the Indigenous societies within North America must work toward unpacking and redressing acts of settler colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism which are implicit within Western educational institutions. As we seek to honour this land and its original caretakers, we also acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant. We stand in solidarity with the current treaty holders, the original caretakers of this land, and all Indigenous Peoples, collectives, and communities.

We write with sorrow at the discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children at an unmarked grave in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory on the site of Canada's largest residential school near Kamloops, British Columbia. We grieve with the victims and their families. The hidden burial of this country's most vulnerable persons is a reflection of both Canada's genocidal past and its continued and enduring failure to address the basic human rights of Indigenous Peoples and residential school survivors. Canada and its institutions cannot let the news of this discovery evaporate but must act decisively and immediately towards goals of reconciliation. We call on York University and other postsecondary institutions to stand up for the rights of their Indigenous staff, scholars, and students by centering Indigenous knowledge practices and to support calls for a federally funded investigation that would provide communities with the necessary resources to conduct similar searches at other residential school sites.

We encourage EGSA members to contact their MPs, MPPs, and local officials to demand justice, to have conversations with family and friends, and to reflect on how

the literatures we study and teach advance and obscure particular colonial logics. For those with the means to do so, consider donating to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (<https://www.irsss.ca/>) and the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (<https://ncct.on.ca/>), both of which provide indispensable resources and community support.

Contact information for local MPs can be found here: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en>; and MPPs, here: <https://www.ola.org/en/get-involved/contact-mpp>

Justice for victims and survivors is a multi-generational commitment. EGSA looks forward to continually working alongside colleagues across disciplines and institutions to ensure a safe and affirming future for all Indigenous persons.