



Roman Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse

Discovery of children's graves – Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation

Kamloops Indian Residential School - Diocese of Kamloops

Statement by Bishop Hector Vila

June 3, 2021

On behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse I extend my deep and profound sympathy to Chief Rosanne Casimir, members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, and to all those mourning the tragic discovery of two hundred and fifteen children buried at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential school.

This is an unthinkable loss that is being felt throughout our Diocese in Yukon and Northern BC, and across Canada. With this news comes a reminder that healing and reconciliation is an on-going process which takes time, and also concrete actions.

In order to move forward in our own Diocese, I am committed to collaborating in a First Nations-led process of reconciliation. Over the coming weeks I will be asking to meet with indigenous leaders to discuss how the Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse can be an intentional partner in this process. Within our own organization, I will be establishing a Committee for Reconciliation for planning a pastoral approach towards healing with the assistance of our staff serving in churches in Yukon and Northern BC. I will also make available our archives and records regarding all residential schools in the Diocese as we did during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada inquiries.

The cycle of abuse and trauma caused by Canada's residential school system touches us all. Through love and forgiveness, we can work together to end the cycle of violence and anger so that there may be true healing. We, as Catholics, stand in solidarity and prayer with all those suffering at this moment.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hector Vila", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Bishop Hector Vila