



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs  
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 1, 2021**

## **Grand Chief Arlen Dumas reiterates AMC call for the reclamation of First Nations children in Manitoba**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba** – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) immediately wrote to the Prime Minister on May 28, 2021, following the announcement by Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir of the discovery of a mass grave containing the remains of 215 children who attended the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. In this letter, Grand Chief Dumas acknowledged the difficult reclamation work and the grieving of the affected First Nations in British Columbia. Grand Chief Dumas also reiterated the longstanding AMC call for meaningful supports and reparations for the reclamation work that needs to be done in Manitoba for the many former students who died while attending the 14 recognized residential schools located throughout Manitoba and who may be buried in unmarked graves on former school grounds.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, “First Nations in Manitoba, along with all Manitobans, are grieving for the loss of these innocent spirits who were tragically taken from their families and Nations and murdered as an act of genocide under Canadian law and policies. While we await a response to our letter from the Prime Minister’s Office, the AMC is taking the lead to organize and mobilize First Nations, partners and allies for a reclamation project to bring closure and healing for the many families in Manitoba whose children did not make it home from these schools. We simply cannot wait for the governments of the day. We have already patiently waited. The broken hearts and tears streaming down the faces of our relatives as they heard about this recent discovery is too much to bear. We need action and we need it now.”

“We are grieving, however, we are also mobilizing. We will use our heartache and turn it into action. Now is a time of reckoning for Canada and the AMC will hold Canada accountable for these crimes. With a coordinated technical and legal approach, the AMC will assist First Nations to secure the resources to conduct forensic investigations using the appropriate technologies. Some of this work has been underway in Brandon and within a campground that was once a burial ground for Residential School students. What we need is the ability to conduct forensic investigations on all areas to ensure that all children are found, respected and honoured. They have already suffered so much, this is the least Canada can do, and if it takes AMC to lead the action, then we will.”

“The Truth and Reconciliation Calls (TRC) to Action have not been addressed since the reports were released in December of 2015. Calls to Action #71 – #76, are the call for action on missing children and burial information and how the federal government needs to work with First Nations, churches and provincial authorities to secure and locate documents related to the deaths of students. Call to Action #71 calls on all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies to make documents on deaths of IRS students available to the First Nations and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. To give some dignity and to pay some respect to our children, these are some of the concrete actions that all levels of government should have taken. Instead, we have watched countless politicians state that they will ‘continue to work with First Nation leadership.’ Continue? We’d need to start in order to be able to continue.”

“The AMC further intends to bring international action through the United Nations. There have been international tribunals under international law for crimes against humanity when mass graves are discovered in other parts of the world. To this end, the AMC has further undergone an international approach as well as a response to the atrocities that have been inflicted on First Nations through the IRS system and through other mechanisms under Canadian domestic law.”

Grand Chief Dumas added, "The AMC further requires accountability from the Catholic Church. All other Churches have apologized for their role in the Indian residential school system, however the Vatican has not. The federal government has essentially let the Churches off the hook for reparations and accountability, and Canada deliberately destroyed Residential School records, limited the terms of the TRC so that the Commissioners could not examine burials and investigate undocumented deaths. The AMC has not forgotten this and will continue to seek action for the Catholic Church to atone for their involvement in these atrocities."

"This is genocide. The AMC will not stand by and wait for a response. We have already waited for too long. The way to bring healing is action and that is precisely what we will do, right now," concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

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**About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Inineew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.