

KUC Heart Garden Prayer

The words of this memorial prayer are pointed.

We encourage you to reach out for support and know that you are cared for. Parents, you may wish to speak with your children before or after; now is a good time for a hug. Children, we are going to be remembering Indigenous kids who didn't have the safe, comfy schools and caring teachers they deserved. Know that **you** are safe.

We are here because we want to make sure all children are loved and cared for. We are planting hearts to remember children who needed help and didn't get it. We are giving school supplies to Minwaashin Lodge so that Indigenous kids have what they need for learning and know that we care. These are some of the things we can do to remember and honour the children who went to Indian Residential Schools. We can also tell our government and adults to hurry up and make sure that kids in Northern communities today have clean water and safe, comfy schools that are warm in the winter and have the right school supplies, like you do. You can also be kind to others and play. When you safely play, you are also honouring the children who went to residential schools.

Creator God,

We come before you on holy ground, knowing you created all, and declared it to be good. We stand on land taken from those who were traditional people here, the Algonquin Anishnaabeg nation, who have known this place through time, who have always known the goodness of the earth. We remember the transgression of the taking of this land, of the cruelty of colonization, and of the continued injustices facing original peoples here and now. Creator, we ask you to set our hearts ablaze with the want of justice and ready us to do the work required for it.

We gather in sorrow and shame, remembering the 215 children whose unmarked graves were confirmed on the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. We hold the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation and the Indigenous community in our hearts. We remember the people of Cowessess First Nation and children who attended Marieval Residential School. We know there are so many more. We pray for healing for communities and that you open our eyes and ears to the truth of what they experienced and continue to experience.

We mourn these and so many other innocent ones kidnapped, abused, neglected, and killed, far from their homes and all the love that they knew, needed, and deserved. God, we are moved to weep and rage for them, for their families, bereaved, their communities deliberately and cruelly emptied of children. And yet we ask you to remind we who are Settlers to make room and hold space for the immensity of anguish, anger, and grief carried by our Indigenous neighbours whose losses are so real. Let us not burden them more with idle weight of our tears or the show and noise of our outrage but rather let us shoulder our responsibilities in reconciliation. Let our ears ring with the unfulfilled calls to action. And as we gather to remember these children, missing and murdered, let us remember the many missing and murdered Indigenous women and youth even today.

God, we come in solemn repentance knowing and naming the complicity of our own church, our country, our ongoing social rules and governance, benefiting some while tearing others apart. Children paid the cruelest price of so-called nation-building and vicious Christianizing. God, we are told you so loved the world that you sent your own child to teach us in the ways of truth and justice. Yet our own faith sacrificed these children without mercy. Stir in us a spirit of contrition and compassion, understanding why the symbols and structures of our religion carry trauma for so many. Please give us sensitivity in our speech, discretion in our deeds, and courage to hear and

be corrected when we misstep along the path to reconciliation. Let us look within ourselves to examine our own roles in this shared and ongoing story of Indigenous relations.

God, as Christians, let us unflinchingly acknowledge the evil done, in your name, to Indigenous children and families through the Residential School system by those who knew better, by those who should have been the ones to protect. Remind us that we who are Settlers are not the centre or heroes of this story -- we never were that on this land. Make us humble in our reconciliation efforts; let there be no pride or boasting in this work. The church is not the Good Samaritan in this parable; in this version, church and state are both the robbers, priest, and Levite who harmed and ignored -- for generations. Knowing this, let us be humbled when the hand of friendship, even forgiveness, is offered by those we have so mistreated for so long.

Sustainer God,

In our gathering today, we seek to honour the spirits of the children who attended the residential schools. We pray for those who died. We honour their whole small selves, perfect as you created them. Let us pause in remembrance as we think of these children, unknown to us, but well known to you, beloved by their families. We hold their laughter and tears in our hearts. They just wanted to go home.

We remember those who survived. We pray for their families, friends, and descendants. We lament their suffering and honour their strength.

We respect and honour the resilience of Indigenous communities. We will heed requests to offer understanding, not pity, to see strength and endurance in the face of persecution and suffering that never should have been and must not continue. We celebrate the diverse Aboriginal, Metis, and Inuit peoples of Turtle Island and the gifts of their nations. We are humbled by the grace and hand outstretched by survivors willing to walk with us in reconciliation. Let us pause to consider and appreciate the depth of trust being offered. We must not let them down.

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Redeemer,

We stand in need of redemption, but today, in this, we cannot ask it of you, nor are we ready for it. We ask instead that you help us listen. Help us learn. Help us find in our hearts, homes, and church the humility and commitment to act rightly. God who has offered us redemption in the story of Christ, please light our way to clearly and vividly see what is necessary on a long and deliberate path to justice. In the face of evil done in your name to children, we will do our utmost to do good. We must act rightly, for the sake of the little ones whose names we do not know; for the children whose names are forever written in the hearts of those they left behind.

And O what good can we do? What is required of us?

We shall act justly, love kindness and compassion, and walk humbly together.

Lord, lead us in this way.

Amen

May our small gifts of school supplies support safe, comfy learning for children here and now. May our individual and collective actions grow peace and justice, using our voices, our deeds, our resources, guided not by our good intentions but by Indigenous leadership and direction.

May our Heart Garden stand as a memorial and also a promise of what we must undertake to do together.

Families, these children did not want to be remembered for something sad. They wanted only to be loved, to play and hope and grow as all children deserve. They wanted to go home. To honour them today, be kind. Do something fun. Find delight. Love.