

Inviting you to help with the Heart Gardens projects - 2021

We are being asked to contribute to Heart Garden memorials to remember the 215 children found at the site of the Kamloops residential School, and all Residential School victims, known and unknown. Below you can find a letter explaining how a Heart Garden helps us remember and show respect. KUC has made Heart Gardens in the past, and we are going to do it again.



Here are the ways you can participate:

Right away: paper hearts for home or larger displays

Create a paper heart with a message honouring the children who died. Bring it to the Royal Canadian Geographic Society at 50 Sussex Drive where it will join heart messages from across Ottawa.

This link will give you ideas and templates for paper hearts: [BCTF resource](#)

If you can't get to Sussex Drive, you can put the heart on your lawn. Alternatively, you can create an online message in the Virtual Heart Garden. Here's how to add one: <https://youtu.be/aTOSF-dX1oc>.

Here is how to see the Virtual Heart Garden hosted by Project of Heart:

<https://padlet.com/lhowe054/heartgarden>

You can also make hearts out of paper and/or cardboard which you can plant in the church garden on the 19th as we wait for the more permanent (see below) to grow.

For June 19th (or whenever we have an in-person outdoor event): felt or knit hearts

We are asking people to contribute new school supplies and backpacks for Minwaashin Lodge (details on items needed are listed in KFF). As a show of solidarity, we can also create smaller orange heart shapes (out of felt, or knitted/crocheted, etc) that can be attached or added to the backpacks for students. Please note these are **separate** from memorial hearts: bear in mind that these will be received by children going to school, so they should be plain orange. If you choose to add a message, it should be one of encouragement suitable for a child today.

Ongoing from June – September and beyond: wooden hearts for Heart Garden at the church

We are going to create a semi-permanent Heart Garden at the church to remember the children who died in the Residential School system. We hope this will help us honour their lives and be a continual call to action for us to participate in sustained efforts for reconciliation and restitution.

To start, we will be sending wooden hearts to Sunday school families. We ask you to make at least one heart with a message or drawing remembering a child. Please use art supplies that are permanent (Sharpie or permanent paint, or something we can spray or varnish). We will also be handing out wooden hearts at our June 19th event. These are to take home and add a thoughtful message or image. We will gather them for “planting” or displaying by September 30th (Orange Shirt Day). We would like to have **at least** 215, one for each child found at Kamloops; we will continue to add to them, remembering the thousands who perished in a cruel colonial system of church- and state-sanctioned genocide.

Below is the original call to action for Heart Gardens as a response to the graves found at Kamloops Residential School.



Dear fellow educators,

It is with sadness that we learn about the 215 children found at the site of the Kamloops Residential School. Our thoughts and hearts are with the families, community members, and survivors. We will never know the pain they feel, but we stand with them.

Yesterday, Charlene Bearhead, Director of Reconciliation at Canadian Geographic, and Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, called on educators across Canada to plant heart gardens at their schools to memorialise the 215 children and to publicly call Canada to action. See their letter attached.

We are writing to ask if you, your families, your students, the toddlers and preschoolers in your care, and your school communities would also consider creating hearts for a heart garden on the grounds of the Canadian Geographic building at 50 Sussex which is directly across from the grounds of Rideau Hall where we collectively planted a heart garden on June 3, 2015, at the closing ceremonies of the TRC, to memorialize the children who died in residential schools. Although we can not access the Rideau Hall grounds currently the connection to this place just across the street at Canadian Geographic gives us a connection so we can fill this adjoining space with the paper hearts that are so meaningful to Survivors, Elders, and family members and that create such a public display of honouring.

To support you in this work, you can find the information about the Heart Gardens and what they are on pages 3-5 of this [BCTF resource](#). Additionally, on pages 9 and 10 you will find **examples including patterns and templates for the hearts and messages**.

We are hoping to fill this space this week but will continue to grow the garden with additional hearts into the next. **Please take your hearts to the Royal Canadian Geographic Society at 50 Sussex Drive in Ottawa between 9am-5pm. You will see the receptionist through the glass and can buzz her to open the door. For Covid safety, please leave the hearts inside the door.** When the garden is taken down, the hearts will be gifted to Algoma

University to catalogue and display in their new Centre for Reconciliation. Some will also be displayed at Canadian Geographic as a constant reminder of the work ahead of us.

For those learning online, an initiative has been created so that virtual students can participate. This virtual heart garden will be hosted by the Project of Heart National Website. Please click on this [link to access the virtual heart garden](#). A short video tutorial on using the virtual garden can be accessed [here](#). **Please note that families who are learning on line but are also wanting to contribute to the heart garden at 50 Sussex are asked to please also drop your hearts off at the front door as outlined above to be added to the heart garden there.**

Thank you for your commitments. We respect and honour you and the work that each of you do, each day.

Please share widely on your email, social media, and other networks.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Smith, Founder, Project of Heart (*Recipient of the 2011 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching for Project of Heart*)

Lisa Howell, Teacher, WQSB and Part-time Professor, UOttawa (*Recipient of the 2018 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching for Decolonizing Pedagogy*)

