



Geography & Planning
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Department of Geography and Planning Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Statement

The collective leadership of our three distinct campus geography Departments and our unified tri-campus graduate Department of Geography and Planning wishes to affirm our commitment to solidarity with Indigenous peoples of Canada and beyond. This includes specifically our ongoing support for and development of geographical and planning scholarship and teaching that directly confronts Canada's settler colonial history and the ways in which this colonial legacy pervades and profoundly shapes the geographies of everyday life in this country.

During the last week, we have witnessed heartbreaking confirmation that remains of more than two hundred Indigenous children are buried on the grounds of a former residential school near Kamloops, British Columbia. This discovery has been made possible in significant measure due to the important and ongoing work of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation advocating for the rights of Indigenous families and communities from which the children were taken, for a full reckoning with the truth of their fate, and for honouring the memory of these lost children.

Sadly, this discovery, while horrific, is no surprise. Rather, it serves as confirmation again that thousands of Indigenous children in Canada were forcefully taken from their homes and communities and transferred into residential schools. Many of these children were subjected to monstrous sexual and racist abuses. Many never returned home. Others who did survive experienced life-changing trauma that has extended across multiple generations. The history of Indigenous residential schools is a poignant aspect of the broader organized, systemic architecture of settler-colonialism in Canada, and the recent discovery near Kamloops serves as a reminder that racism and racist dispossession are integral to the foundations of this country, and that the influence of organized cultural genocide continues to infuse contemporary Canadian geographies and the lived experiences of this nation's spaces.

In recent years, our various Departments and programs across the three campuses of the University of Toronto have initiated concerted efforts to recruit and retain Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty whose teaching and research expertise includes direct confrontation with and attempts to subvert colonial and post-colonial geographies, in Canada and beyond. We are honoured to include these faculty in our communities and they honour us with their teachings. We have also moved to enhance curricular offerings dealing with settler-colonialism and its immediate connections to geography and planning and to geographical and planning teaching and scholarship. These comprise aspects of ongoing efforts to decolonize our courses, our programs, and our disciplines. We have also introduced funding and other supports for Indigenous students. We pledge to continue and to enhance these and related efforts. Discovery of the remains of lost Indigenous children near Kamloops last week is a reminder of the vital importance of recognizing and reconciling our colonial histories and their imprint on Canadian geographies, on geographies beyond Canada's borders, and on our disciplines and the production of geographical and planning knowledge. This moment also

provides an opportunity to re-affirm our solidarity with Indigenous peoples and communities and to re-commit to the active subversion of ongoing and systemic anti-Indigenous racism.

As we re-affirm our commitments to teaching and scholarship dealing with Indigenous and post-colonial geographies, we also invite members of our community to continue to educate themselves and to take action. For those who have not read the report of Canada's [2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), now would be an appropriate time to do so. We urge all members of our community to consider ways to take action to express solidarity with Canada's Indigenous peoples, to commit to more than recognition of the past in order to confront the profound challenge of genuine reconciliation in the present, including through actively rebuilding and strengthening Indigenous nations and governments in Canada.

We remain an intellectually and otherwise diverse community of faculty, staff, and students spread across our three campus departments and within our common graduate department. There are and will remain differences in how all of us come to terms with these issues, individually, and institutionally. Even so, we share an ethos of seeking to actively challenge and subvert entrenched colonial legacies that underpin all we do as intellectuals, as teachers, and as professional geographers and planners. We are responsible and accountable for no less.

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