Justin Trudeau

Prime Minister of Canada

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Canada’s responsibility for the system of Residential Schools

Dear Mr Trudeau,

On May27th the finding of the remains of 215 Indigenous children on the grounds of the former Kamloops Residential School sent shockwaves worldwide, but it only proved what survivors of the system had been reporting for decades. The system of these Residential Schools is one of the darkest chapters of Canadian colonialism and institutionalized racism. It was an act of genocide.

Although the last school closed in 1996, Indigenous peoples still suffer from the intergenerational trauma to the very day. And even today, Indigenous children have to leave their homes to exercise their right to education, because they can’t get higher education at their reserves. The “Jordan Principle” was developed to overcome these injusticies, but your government is still preventing the Principle from becoming national law. Furthermore, Indigenous children are still being forcibly taken away from their families and communities to grow up in foster care or being adopted by mostly white families that can’t or even deny to offer these children their cultural heritage, their languages, and finally their identity. According to the last census in 2016 Indigenous children account for more than 50% of children in foster care, although they only make 7,7% of the population. Recent research by the *Children and Family Services* (2020) even report that 90% of children in foster care in Manitoba are Indigenous.

In 2008 former prime minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology for the history of the Residential Schools – but those words are void, if the Canadian government is not taking full responsibility. Your response to the finding of the deaths in Kamloops follows the same pattern of hypocrisy. If you call on the Pope to apologize for the crimes of residential schools, you only try to hide that it was the Canadian government that commission the churches to run these schools. Your promises of “reconciliation” and a new partnership with Indigenous Peoples are idle talk, if you are not complying with “Calls to Action” that have been issued by numerous commission and reports – especially by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in 2015, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007).

Your announcement of immediate action by providing $25 million to Indigenous communities to investigate Residential Schools sites, is just another vain promise, as you are referring to money that has already been part of $33-million commitment in the 2019 federal budget meant to address the TRC’s “Calls to Action”.

Indigenous Survivors don’t need false promises or ridiculous hand-outs. They deserve respect and recognition. Canada must face up to its responsibility.

Sincerely