

# BACKGROUND

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**National Indigenous  
Peoples Day  
JUNE 21**



**ON NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
DAY, WHAT NEEDED CELEBRATION  
WAS NO GENOCIDE AND  
NO MISSING CHILDREN**

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**HYMIE RUBENSTEIN**

# Introduction

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For generations, many Indigenous groups have celebrated their culture and heritage on or around June 21. [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#) is now annually marked by numerous nationwide activities on June 21, showcasing the richness and diversity of Aboriginal cultural expressions and stories.

As well as celebrating this richness and diversity, there was good reason this past June 21 to celebrate the discovery that Indigenous people, especially Indian Residential School (IRS) children, are not missing, were never subjected to genocide, and are not buried in individual and mass graves as claimed in recent years.

No doubt, countless unnamed Aboriginals have accepted this outcome with happy relief, even personal rejoicing. However, few are willing to do so publicly, fearing recrimination and retribution from the many others, including Indigenous leaders and activists, who have received these glad tidings with denial, remorse, or anger.

That Indigenous leaders, paid activists, and ordinary Indigenous people, supported by a mainstream media eager to peddle sensational stories in their quest for more readers, continue to expound the prevailing genocide and mass grave narrative even after it has been debunked by hard evidence should not be surprising given that doing so continues to protect their status, power, and economic well-being.

# Debunking Indigenous myths

One of the best examples of this denial of truth is the reaction to the “[discovery](#)” of soil disturbances in the basement of the Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Catholic Church near Manitoba’s Pine Creek Residential School that leaders and many residents suspected held the remains of band children who attended the local residential school. This news was eagerly publicized by legacy media preoccupied with revenue-generating scandalous news.

Some of the school’s former students have long spoken about abuse there, even relating “horror stories” about what they claimed happened in the basement of the church next door.

But the nature of the maltreatment, its perpetrators, and its victims have never been revealed except in the [vague terms](#).

To the Band’s credit, and unlike any other Indigenous community searching for the remains of such students, the RCMP was called in last October to assist with the investigation of the ground penetrating radar (GPR) soil disturbances, commonly called “anomalies,” found at the site.

But after searching for nearly four weeks in mid-2023, [no evidence of human remains](#) was found, just as no evidence has ever been found in the [handful of other excavations](#) using GPR conducted in allegedly mysterious burying sites outside the boundaries of known and named cemeteries.

With no accountability required and millions of dollars in federal funding to draw on, the Band’s [Chief Derek Nepinak somberly claimed](#) the negative outcome takes “nothing away from the difficult truths experienced by our families who attended the residential school in Pine Creek” and that “This does not mark the end of our truth-finding project.”

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# Rent-seeking and the search for missing children

**None of this spending has reversed any of the host of adversities and pathologies differentially affecting Canada's Indigenous population.**

Economists define [rent-seeking](#) as a process where one entity seeks to gain wealth from another through the shrewd or manipulative use of resources without adding any reciprocal contribution to overall productivity. (Rent-seeking should not be confused with the ordinary payment of money for using other people's property, an established and legitimate mode of exchange in capitalist countries unless the owner of the assets manages to swindle the renter.)

Most rent-seeking involves the widespread practice of getting something for nothing from the government, whether in capitalist or socialist regimes. Typically, it comprises taxpayer-funded social services and programmes whose effects are negative or regressive for all parties save the lead government lobbyists who manage to appropriate much or most of the rent.

For example, Canada's Indian Bands, now called First Nations, and various Indigenous organizations have long secured funds from the federal government for services producing no corresponding improvement in the life chances of their people. Indeed, these monetary transfers have only increased their recipients' social and economic dependence on the largess of local leaders and the state.

[According to Tom Flanagan](#), Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Distinguished Fellow, School of Public Policy, University of Calgary, in fiscal year 2015-16, the Conservative government spent about \$11 billion on the Indigenous file. Under Liberal stewardship since then, such spending has grown to more than \$29 billion in Budget 2023, or more than twice as fast as overall federal spending. The result has been an increase in annual Indigenous spending equal to about 45 percent of the federal deficit forecast in Budget 2023.

None of this spending has reversed any of the host of adversities and pathologies differentially affecting Canada's Indigenous population. Compared to other ethnic groups, these include the highest rates of criminal incarceration, unemployment, poverty, welfare dependency, homelessness, infant mortality, disease, suicide, school dropout, child apprehension, sexual abuse, single motherhood, alcoholism, drug addiction, and violent crime.

# Reactions to the third anniversary of the Kamloops “discovery”

*“...they have no historical or scientific credibility within the context of an Enlightenment system of truth-telling...”*

Reactions to the third anniversary of the May 27, 2021 [announcement](#) by B.C.’s Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc, legally called the Kamloops Indian Band, that the unmarked graves of 215 children were found on the site of what was once Canada’s largest IRS only reveal how outlandish and shrill this rent-seeking has become.

According to Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, May 27 will remain [“deeply disturbing”](#) for him because:

“There isn’t a single public school in Canada or in the United States that features a graveyard out back next to the football field. Canada is going through a transformative and ideological struggle at the moment, and the right-wing is vehemently denying the hard scientific evidence of the discovery of these unmarked graves. Residential schools were a very brutal tool of genocide to deal with the Indigenous presence in this country, through assimilating us into so-called ‘mainstream Canadian society.’”

In a statement released on May 27, 2024, Kamloops Band Chief Roseanne Casimir argued that:

“There have always been those who target Indigenous People in Canada, with systemic racism and white supremacy as foundational to Canada as the very federal laws that ripped our children away from home, in cattle trucks and police cars, to bring them to the residential schools.

“That said, three years later, we remain steadfast in our sacred duty as guardians to the missing children from the Kamloops Indian Residential School. From the beginning, we have articulated and exercised our jurisdiction. The investigation continues to comply with Secwépemc [Kamloops Indian Band] laws, legal traditions, worldviews, values, and protocols.”

While the assertions of Grand Chief Phillip and Chief Casimir may resonate within an Indigenous mythological framework passed on by “knowledge keepers,” they have no historical or scientific credibility within the context of an Enlightenment system of truth-telling, a framework viewed as colonially racist by those rejecting its application to Aboriginal issues.

**“...there is not even one example of a student ever murdered by a staff member at any residential school during their 113-year funding and oversight...”**

Contrary to Grand Chief Philipp’s claims, there were no IRS graveyards exclusively dedicated to the burial of its students and staff except in a few of urban locations like [Brandon, Manitoba](#). Instead, the mission churches on the reserves that preceded the residential school era had cemeteries attached to them for all community laity and resident clergy. These later became part of a common “church, boarding school, hospital, and cemetery complex” for all members of the faith, as Professor Scott Hamilton, an archaeologist recruited by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada to study this issue, [has shown](#).

Occasionally, orphaned IRS students who died at schools far from their home reserves were not returned home because of adverse weather conditions or a lack of transportation. Nevertheless, such children were interred in local graveyards following a formal Christian burial service.

Though “assimilating [Indigenous children] into so-called ‘mainstream Canadian society’” was the primary function of these schools, it was incompletely realized, as even the 2015 [Summary of the Final Report](#) of the TRC admitted when it concluded that “Despite being subjected to aggressive assimilation policies for nearly 200 years, Aboriginal people have maintained their identity and their communities.”

Concerning the use of genocide as “a very brutal tool ... to deal with the Indigenous presence in this country,” there is not even one example of a student ever murdered by a staff member at any residential school during their 113-year funding and oversight (1883-1996) by the government of Canada.

There is also no documented evidence of Casimir’s charge that “... federal laws ... ripped our children away from home, in cattle trucks and police cars, to bring them to the residential schools.” Moreover, only orphans and abused or neglected youngsters were forced to attend these schools. As for the rest, their parents or guardians were required to sign admission forms to ensure their acceptance. That there were always more applicants than spaces for them during the height of school attendance is proof that most parents eagerly sought the admittance of their offspring.

Casimir claims that “Elders and Survivors have always spoken of children dying and disappearing while at the [Kamloops boarding] school” and that “Men speak of, as boys attending Kamloops Indian Residential School, being woken in the middle of the night, and asked to dig holes that seemed like graves, in the dark, and not being told why.” Such stories have never been substantiated, even though they continue to be repeated.

On the contrary, much circumstantial evidence suggests such claims are false. Elementary logic—as opposed to Indigenous folktales—says they are



inconceivable. The Kamloops boarding school was not in some remote part of the province where nefarious deeds could have easily taken place; instead, it was just across the river from the city of Kamloops. It also received a constant stream of visitors, including the parents of students, chiefs, band councillors, and Indian Agents. The school also employed Indigenous workers. How could 215 children have been secretly buried with the whole of Kamloops and the entire Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc community turning a blind eye?

There is other indirect but critical evidence refuting Casimir's outlandish assertions. No named Indigenous relatives on the Kamloops reserve are frantically looking for named but missing IRS children. To repeat, admittance to the school demanded [signed applications](#), and students were also minutely followed in quarterly reports from entry to exit as required for the school to receive its operating funds from Ottawa.

As for Casimir's claim of her Band's jurisdiction over the search for the alleged buried children, if the local detachment of the RCMP believed they were murder victims, such control would never have been transferred to self-proclaimed Indigenous investigators because doing so could have easily led to a charge of dereliction of duty, if not criminal conspiracy, against the police themselves.

Casimir only vaguely shared the extent of her Band's investigation within the larger context of what she termed external "misinformation and targeted denialism."

Her claim that "The investigation continues to be carried out in compliance with Secwépemc laws, legal traditions, worldviews, values, and protocols" seems to have trumped actual research, reason enough for external actors to engage in "denialism."

The investigation is now past its third year and has seen the allocation of \$7.9 million in taxpayer funding from the federal government, part of the [\\$321 million allocated](#) to help Indigenous communities search burial sites at former residential schools and to support survivors and their communities. This period seems more than enough time and funding to question the veracity of her statement that "At this time, we are deep into the investigative work," a statement supported only by a vague assertion that:

"Our approach is multidisciplinary and includes the following: Archival and documentary research and analysis; Wenecwtsínem (truth-telling) with [school] Survivors; Archaeological and anthropological surveys and studies; Potential DNA and other forensic methods."

She also argued that these findings "are currently being kept confidential to preserve the integrity of the investigation" but are "consistent with the presence

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of unmarked burials.” This is yet another vague statement inviting denialism because there has been no public accounting for what became of the \$7.9 million by either the leadership of the Kamloops Reserve or the Canadian government.

Her brief generalizations also challenge her damning of “denialists” for presenting a mountain of countervailing evidence showing no missing children and no evidence of graves unmarked at the only time that matters, namely when the alleged burials took place.



# Debunking “residential school denialism”

The use of the term “residential school denialism,” an expression coined by historian [Sean Carleton](#) in 2021, is a logically absurd analogy because accepting that the Holocaust, the genocide of genocides, occurred does not simultaneously require supporting an IRS Indigenous genocide or vice versa. Specifically, this juxtaposition is an example of the logical fallacy called “faulty analogy.” However, Indigenous activists reject such criticisms because they are seen as rooted in modes of reasoning that are deemed colonial in origin, hegemonic in application, and culturally insensitive, even racist, in expression.

This arbitrary dismissal of any criticism helped make the Kamloops May 27, 2021, announcement Canada’s George Floyd moment, aided and abetted by hundreds of stories by mainstream media consumed with headlining sensational accusations.

Almost instantly, there were angry vigils and public displays of grief and shame, with Canadian flags on government buildings lowered to half-mast for nearly six months. [Statues of former Canadian heroes](#) were defaced, destroyed, or removed, alongside growing demands to rename streets and public schools. At least 85 Catholic Churches were [set ablaze or vandalized](#) both on and off Indigenous reserves.

Despite all this outrage, unfunded but meticulous historical research by dozens of objective scholars and other writers whose results have been published in two edited volumes and several hundred essays found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), all of it still shunned by most of the legacy media, reveals the Kamloops scandal and others like it as the largest hoax—or near willful self-deception—in Canadian history.

This careful scholarly research has found that no “missing children” went away to residential schools and were never heard from again. The suggestion that missing children were murdered by school personnel after being subjected to physical and sexual abuse or even outright torture has also been exposed as a hitherto unknown Nazi-style [blood libel](#).

These findings beg the following question: why is the Jewish Holocaust the best-studied mass murder event in human history? At the same time, its nearly 500-year alleged Canadian Indigenous counterpart has been so well hidden that the name of even a single victim is unknown.

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**“Even Kimberly Murray... has dismissed the assertion that children are “missing” because they were murdered and tossed in unmarked graves.**

Even Kimberly Murray, the federal government’s special interlocutor on the missing children, unmarked graves, and burial sites, has dismissed the assertion that children are “missing” because they were murdered and tossed in unmarked graves. On March 21, 2023, she confirmed the absence of any missing children—as opposed to countless forgotten ones—in [her testimony](#) before the federal government Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples when she proclaimed:

“The family ‘doesn’t know where their loved one is buried. They were taken to a sanatorium [or] an Indian residential school. They were just told that they died. The children aren’t missing; they’re buried in the cemeteries. They’re missing because the families were never told where they’re buried. Every Indigenous family needs to know where their child is buried. When we find that and we know that they’re going to have a little bit closure now, they know the truth and they have some answers; that’s what keeps us going.”

Though there is no evidence that thousands of children’s deaths were not reported to their parents, and lots of [evidence to the contrary](#), Murray’s statement repudiates the established Indigenous narrative about missing children.

The latest revelation from the Kamloops Indian Reserve emerged on May 18, 2024, when it was announced that its offices would be closed on [May 23 for a Day of Reflection](#) because that date was when the results of the GPR study were presented to its officials. The following words accompanied the May 18 notice:

“With the help of a ground penetrating radar specialist, the stark truth of the preliminary findings came to light—the confirmation of 215 **anomalies** were detected.” [emphasis added]

On the other hand, the May 27, 2021, press release referred to above contained the following words:

“This past weekend, with the help of a ground penetrating radar specialist, the stark truth of the preliminary findings came to light—the confirmation of the **remains** of 215 children who were students of the Kamloops Indian Residential School.” [emphasis added]

There was no commemoration of the Kamloops “discovery” for the second year in a row, accompanied by an inexplicable transformation of “remains” to “anomalies”—soil disturbances of unknown origin or content—a clear repudiation of the original “discovery” of missing children buried in unmarked graves.

# A false rationalization for the absence of buried remains

Another repudiation, a likely attempt to rationalize the Kamloops rhetorical pivot from “remains” to “anomalies,” has recently been made by Chief Terry Teegee, head of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations. Teegee now [suggests](#) the bodies of residential school “victims” in his province may never be found because they were incinerated: “Some of these residential schools or institutions had incinerators so there could [sic] be any potential of finding any remains.”

Speaking on City News in Vancouver, Chief Teegee said he’s not sure how many “victims” there will ever be known due to a lack of proper record-keeping by school authorities and provincial governments. This assertion is erroneous, given that students were carefully tracked from admission to eventual discharge, as noted above.

Such iron garbage drums, still commonly used for burning refuse across the globe, are a far cry from the Nazi incinerators employed to burn the remains of millions of Holocaust victims murdered in the gas chambers located in concentration camps across Central Europe between 1941 and 1945. Despite their incineration, the names of most of these victims are [known](#).

Unlike his timid Catholic Church peers, Calgary Bishop emeritus Fred Henry has expressed many doubts about such residential school claims over the years, and [he strongly rebuked Teegee’s theory](#):

“This new claim of incineration would be truly laughable if the matter were not so serious,” wrote Henry in an email to *The Catholic Register*. “What took the Chief so long to come up with this one? Makes me wonder what’s next?”

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# National Indigenous Peoples Day should embrace the good news

*Eventually,  
it will be  
recognized  
that Canada's  
relationship  
with its first  
settlers has  
been unique  
in human  
history...*

As Canadians of all ethnicities recognize or actively celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, the absence of mass graves, missing children, and the deliberate attempt to genocidally murder thousands of Indigenous children should be joyfully shouted from the rooftops rather than met with calls to keep searching.

Regrettably, this expectation will not be realized given its unstated underlying motivation: for too many of its supporters, such hunts are less about finding missing children than collecting rent from a compliant government.

If those claiming to be looking for long-dead children would start by searching where they are most likely to be found—provincial death record repositories – they would quickly find them. Indeed, almost none of these children are missing, only lost and forgotten in the fullness of time.

Alas, this has never been a search for missing children but rather a never-ending treasure hunt aided and abetted by the mainstream media.

Invented and promoted by unknown and unnamed Aboriginal knowledge keepers, underwritten by a compliant federal government consumed by the soft bigotry of low Aboriginal expectations masquerading as respect for “Indigenous knowings,” and constantly publicized by a compliant and incurious legacy media unwilling to carefully probe any of the alleged findings, tales like those debunked here reveal that this fruitless search for missing children is very much alive.

But there is still hope for change. As more evidence is gathered to dispel the still prevailing narrative that Canada has brutally and inhumanely treated its Aboriginal people, the tide may well begin to turn. Eventually, it will be recognized that Canada's relationship with its first settlers has been unique in human history: no country in the world has treated its Indigenous peoples more respectfully, generously, and altruistically than this one. Hopefully, such recognition will mark the beginning of a new partnership among equal members in the ongoing effort to build a better country for all its people, one where truth-finding rooted in objectivity, scientific understanding, and critical thinking reign supreme and where unsubstantiated or discredited horror stories are relegated to the superstitious mythological domain where they belong.

That would indeed be something to celebrate on some future National Indigenous Peoples Day.





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