

*Edited version of prepared remarks for Gathering to Remember / M̀awand̀oseg
M̀amidonenim̀an*

Good morning. Kwe. Bonjour.

My name is Claude Brulé, President of Algonquin College.

I want to thank the College community for coming together today at this gathering to honour and reflect on the discovery of the buried remains of 215 young victims found in Kamloops – as well as the victims and survivors of residential schools across our country.

On behalf of Algonquin College, I want to start by offering my deepest condolences to the Tk'émłúps te Secwépemc [tea-Kem-loops Tay suh-Wep-muhc] First Nations for their devastating loss.

We are stronger together. And amidst this tragic discovery, it is crucial for our community to connect – to support and engage one another.

I'd now like to welcome our special guests, including Elder Bertha Skye – and the musical duo Twin Flames – who you will

hear from shortly. I also want to recognize attendees from our Executive and Leadership Teams, and our Board of Governors.

Again, I want to thank everyone for participating in this important gathering – and for all your contributions, from the music and poetry to the words spoken here today.

Of course, Words do no justice to the sheer scope of this tragedy.

Nor can words fully express the pain it is causing to Indigenous people across Canada – especially those with personal and family connections to the residential schools system.

Words cannot bring back to life these young victims – nor ease the suffering they experienced in this world.

But words do have power. They can carry profound weight. They can build bridges. They can transform hearts and minds.

For starters, our words can acknowledge the trauma, desolation and destruction Canada's residential schools have had on Indigenous communities from coast-to-coast.

Words can convey empathy. They can form the basis for understanding.

Words can also help us face hard truths about our country's past and also our present state of relationships. They can help us remember – and keep us from forgetting. They can help us process the pain and implications of the grim discovery in Kamloops.

But as the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words.

Algonquin College is making a donation of 215 clothing items to Minwaashin Lodge, an Ottawa based Indigenous Women's Support Centre – one for each of the young lives lost in Kamloops. The Minwaashin Lodge provides a range of programs and services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis women and children – regardless of status – who are survivors of domestic and other forms of violence, and who may also be suffering the effects of the residential school system.

To learn more about how you can contribute towards the donation visit the Minwaashin Lodge website.

Speaking of action, on National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, I will be updating the College community on our own efforts working towards Truth and Reconciliation, and some of our plans to further embed Indigenous knowledge and culture into the foundations of who we are as a College – into the ways we think and conduct ourselves, the ways we learn, the ways we problem solve . . . the ways we chart a path forward.

Words and actions – taken together – can create powerful stories. And stories have true power to heal, teach and transform.

So let us not forget the story of these 215 lost children – and let us make a commitment to learn the stories of those who suffered similar indignities at reservations across this country. The stories of lives lost and the stories of survivors. And let us not forgot the words and actions of the authorities who fostered these tragedies.

And let us create a new Canadian story. One based on empathy and education, respect and reconciliation, truth and atonement – a shared story informed by pain, loss and mutual understanding that compels us towards a better today ... *and* a better tomorrow. A story based on connectivity and conversation... one grounded in learning, respect and dignity...

a story that fosters optimism and serves as a catalyst for change.

Miigwetch. Thank you. Merci.