

County calling on feds/church for release of documents, investigation

Written By **Sam Odrowski**

At the regular meeting of the County of Dufferin Council held on June 10, 2021 Council unanimously adopted a motion that recognizes that the residential school system perpetrated a genocide on indigenous children and the Government of Canada as well as the church were complicit in this national tragedy.

The motion goes on to say that many churches except the Roman Catholic Church have apologized for their role in the residential school system and it calls on the Catholic Church to be petitioned and/or legally compelled to provide the truth about their involvement.

The approved motion also asks that the Government of Canada demand ?in the strongest possible terms? the release of all church documents in Canada and at the Vatican that pertain to actions taken at Canadian residential schools. In addition, the motion requests that Pope Francis apologize to indigenous Canadians for the Church's actions.

Another key component of the motion states that the County of Dufferin demand that the Government of Canada in conjunction with Canada's indigenous people determine a plan to investigate all residential school sites as needed to find any lost or missing children.

Lastly, the motion requests that the Government of Canada take all necessary steps to provide for equitable access to clean water, safe housing, health care, education and safety and security for all of the country's Indigenous population.

The following statement was issued by Dufferin County Warden Darren White and members of County Council on Thursday, June 10, following the motion's approval.

?Today, right now, this period in time is a crossroads for us. It's time for us to determine our direction for the future. Do we let hate take hold, or do we stand for something better? What type of country do we want to live in? One of hate, or one of peace?

?Leadership starts with us. We have the ability to set a course to a better way through our actions. It's not an easy task, but it is a necessary one, and one we can do.

?We must continually strive to re-commit ourselves to the tenants of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all that we do. Whether we are talking about issues of a planning nature, for example the Cayuga Snipe Chief's announcement of a moratorium on development in the Haldimand deed lands, or about the 215 innocent children who were found at a residential school site in Kamloops. There is no room for contradiction in our policy or our direction. We cannot demand righteousness on one hand while stonewalling on the other.

?There is a learning curve here. A steep one in some respects and one that some will struggle with more than others. I know there has been much to learn from my perspective and I know that there is still so much that is still to come. I suspect many of you feel the same. While the onus is on us to actively participate in that learning, it's so important that we realize what we really need to do more of is listen.

?If we as leaders cannot commit at the very least to this, perhaps we should consider if we deserve to hold the seats we have at all.

?To our Muslim Brothers and Sisters, we offer this:

We were all so very saddened to learn of the terrorist attack in London, ON that took the life of four members of a family and left a nine-year-old boy injured.

We mourn with you and share in your grief, and can only hope that we can help soothe some of your pain.

?Please know that for every one person who would strike out in anger and hate, those who stand with you in peace and love and understanding number in the hundreds

Please don't despair, together we are better than the hatred of one.

?It's time for us to speak up, so that ignorance is not the loudest voice of all,? the statement concluded.