

June 8, 2021

EMALB Statement on the Kamloops Residential School Tragedy

The Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board and Branch extends its deepest condolences to all Indigenous individuals and communities, especially to the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. News of the discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children in a mass grave on the site of a former residential school in Kamloops is a tragic reminder of a dark chapter in our nation's history and how systemic racism affects our society currently.

Our country's deplorable legacy with respect to the residential school system is only one aspect of the traumatizing effects that Indigenous peoples have endured. We must look at ourselves as we witness the grief and pain of the families, the communities, and the residential school survivors. As we reflect upon issues faced by the Indigenous communities, we must renew and reaffirm our commitment to truth and reconciliation. As health care professionals, it is imperative that we examine how our system inflicts harm in addition to the assistance we render. Our history has a direct effect and relevance to the health of Indigenous peoples. We have seen how our inattention to and ignorance of implicit bias, racism and inequality has predictably led to poor health outcomes for the most vulnerable among us.

As a health care regulator, the EMALB has spoken out against systemic racism, but our work does not end there. Through education, collaboration and respectful communication, we are determined to ensure our processes are culturally safe, appropriate and oriented toward restorative justice. The Board and Branch will continue to explore and implement changes to our work and perspectives that ensure transparency, cultural safety, humility and self-reflection are integral components of our operations.

We emphatically call for all Emergency Medical Assistants to join us in this effort to adopt cultural safety and humility into our professional milieu. We need to participate in a collective effort to eliminate barriers to care, advocate for social justice, and honour the strength, achievements and pride of our Indigenous people.

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Chair

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