

**Xyólhmet ye Syéwiqwélh**  
Taking Care of Our Children

**Commemoration Ceremonies**  
Fraser River Heritage Park

**Who** Community Partners

**What** Invitation to Sto:lo Commemoration Ceremonies

Dear Community Partners,

Funeral and memorial services are scheduled for the missing Stó:lō and Indigenous children and unmarked graves and burials of students of the former St. Mary's Residential School sites in Mission, BC. The ceremonies will be held on Friday, September 29th, Saturday September 30th, and Sunday, October 1, 2023 at the former site of the Old St Mary's Residential School at the Fraser River Heritage Park at 7494 Mary St, Mission, BC.

It is with deep respect that the Xyólhmet ye Syéwiqwélh committee extends this invitation to our community partners. We are inviting you to the ceremonies to witness the funeral and memorial services. At the same time, we ask that protocol shared below is followed. With humility, we urge visitors to follow the strict protocol to ensure that residential school survivors, their families and communities have space to focus on healing.

Since 2021, there has been important archival, oral historical and on-site remote sensing work to learn about and identify missing Indigenous children and unmarked graves and burials at three of the former Residential School sites within S'ólh Téméxw, the Stó:lō traditional territory. The Stó:lō traditional territory covers S'ólh Téméxw is the halq'eméylem name for the shared asserted territory of the Stó:lō and extends from Yale to Langley, BC on both sides of the Stó:lō or Fraser River. The former residential schools that were in operation within S'ólh Téméxw included the two St. Mary's Residential School sites in Mission BC, opened in 1867 and closed in 1984, that were operated by the Roman Catholic Church of Canada and the second one operated by the Canadian federal government; the Coqualeetza Residential School in Chilliwack BC, opened in 1886 and closed in 1940, operated jointly by the Women's Missionary Society and the Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Church and, after 1925, by the United Church of Canada; and All Hallows institutions in Yale, BC, opened in 1890 and closed in ?, operated by the Sisters of the Anglican Church.

The Xyólhmet ye Syéwiqwélh committee, representing the Stó:lō Nation Chiefs Council, Stó:lō Tribal Council, Independent First Nations, and residential school survivors are inviting residential school survivors, their families and communities to these ceremonies. There are no words that capture the pain and devastation that the children, survivors of Residential School and their families have experienced. The ceremonies are a step towards healing. We hope to bring a

sense of dignity and respect for the children's spirits who have been waiting and we hope this brings a sense of peace for survivors of Residential School.

## Protocol

- There are absolutely no photos, videos, drawings, recordings or anything that depicts the ceremony.
- Please arrive early and plan to stay for the entirety of the ceremonies. There is no end time for the ceremonies. Timing in ceremonies is not scheduled. They will end when they end.
- Please stay seated throughout the ceremonies that are happening on the floor. It is appropriate between speakers to quietly step away if needed.
- Some people are not familiar with traditional foods. If you are feeling unfamiliar, please serve yourself small portions - feeding guests is an important part of the ceremonies
- If you are given a gift, please do not refuse a gift - gifts are a custom and a part of the ceremonial work.

To learn more about the archival, oral historical, and on-site remote sensing work in search of identifiable unmarked graves, please visit <https://www.stolonation.bc.ca/>

This sensitive initiative is being led by Xyólhmet ye Syéwiqwélh, which means Taking Care of Our Children, a group of representatives from the Stó:lō Nation Chiefs Council, Stó:lō Tribal Council and Independent First Nations. Please visit the [commemoration website](#) to learn more.

## Agenda

Friday September 29th, 2023

at the Fraser River Heritage Park - 7494 Mary St, Mission, BC V2V 6Y9

12:00 PM

- Opening Prayer
- Lunch
- Invitation for Residential School Survivors to connect and visit in a relaxing atmosphere
- Snacks, water and coffee and tea will be available
- Guided Walks around the grounds will be available (more information to follow)

5:00 PM

- Opening Prayer and Song
- Opening Remarks
- Overview of Xyólhmet ye Syéwiqwélh - Taking Care of Our Children and the Commemoration Ceremonies

- Overview of oral, historical and archival work, including ground penetrating work done to date
- Calling of Witnesses
- Dinner Song

7:00pm

- Dinner
- Closing Remarks
- Closing Song

*Saturday September 30th, 2023*

at Pkw'xe:yles, new St. Mary's Residential School Mccombs St, Mission, BC V4S 1L7

Daybreak

- Burning

at the Fraser River Heritage Park - 7494 Mary St, Mission, BC V2V 6Y9

9:00 AM

- Opening Prayer and Song
- Overview of Commemoration and Housekeeping
- Calling Witnesses
- Xyólhmet ye Syéwiqwélh - Taking Care of Our Children. A weaving of funeral and memorial work for the children.
  - Through a vision of Cyril Pierre, he has been working with Indigenous youth to carve a canoe with figures wearing a paddle jacket and vest, with paddles that represent the seven sacred teachings.
- Youth Canoe Presentation
- Eulogy, Cyril Pierre
- Witness Response

3:00 PM

- Dinner
- Closing Remarks
- Closing Song

4:30 PM

- Time for Other Nation Ceremonies (please contact Francine Douglas at [francine@istolo.net](mailto:francine@istolo.net))
- Invitation for Residential School Survivors to connect and visit in a relaxing atmosphere
- Snacks, water and coffee and tea will be available

*Sunday, October 1, 2023*

at the Fraser River Heritage Park - 7494 Mary St, Mission, BC V2V 6Y9

9:00 AM

- Opening Song and Prayer
- Breakfast

10:00AM

- Thank you and acknowledgements
- Traditional Giveaway

12:00PM

- Song and Prayer
- Lunch

1:00PM

- Invitation for Residential School Survivors to connect and visit in a relaxing atmosphere
- Time for Other Nation Ceremonies (please contact Francine Douglas at francine@istolo.net)
- Snacks, water and coffee and tea will be available

**Organizing Committee:**

Helen Joe

Grand Chief Kat Pennier

Cyril Pierre

Priscilla Wells

Lori Kelly

Katherine Charlie

Ashley Pierre

**Advisors**

Steven Point

Gwen Point

**Event Support**

Francine Douglas - 604-997-4913 | francine@istolo.net