



Whitehorse, June 18, 2021

Supporting our Two Spirit Community Members

Dear QYS community members,

As we celebrate Pride this month, we want to recognize that June is also Indigenous History Month, and June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day. This is an opportunity for us to celebrate and honour the Two Spirit people in our communities, and those who have called Yukon home since time immemorial. Although we are holding off on in-person events right now, we look forward to gathering to celebrate our Two Spirit community with you when we can safely do so.

In addition, this June we mourn the 215 children whose bodies were found at the site of a residential school on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory (Kamloops, BC). As of this writing, remains have also been found at the site of a residential school on the territory of the Muskowekwan First Nation in Saskatchewan, and 104 more potential graves identified at a former residential school on the territory of the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation in Manitoba. We need to believe survivors when they tell us we can expect more will be found as searches continue, including here in Yukon.

This has been a jarring reminder of past trauma and ongoing colonialism for many Two Spirit and Indigiqueer people and their communities. Like people and organizations across the country, Queer Yukon Society is taking this discovery as a call to action; to recommit and dig deeper into decolonizing our organization, to ensure Two Spirit and Indigiqueer people feel welcome and supported as their whole selves, and to continue to learn about the history and effects of colonialism, and to encourage our non-indigenous members/community to do the same. In addition to recognizing this time of mourning at our Pride events, we are encouraging our LGBTQIA2S+ community to donate to CAIRS (the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools), which provides counselling services to survivors and to their families, and we will be providing a donation link or physical donation jar at Pride events through the end of the month and whenever they are rescheduled.

The Board of Directors is committed to incorporating the Calls to Action from the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) and the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#) in our strategic plan and programming, and supporting the implementation of [Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy](#) and the [2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan](#). We encourage our members -- especially those who are non-Indigenous -- to join us in reviewing these reports and holding our governments, and ourselves, accountable to the needs of our Indigenous and Two Spirit



community members. In Yukon, residential schools were operated by the Catholic, Anglican and Baptist churches with funding from the federal Indian Affairs Branch, and we urge all denominations and levels of government to account for their roles in this genocidal system and to make appropriate amends. Queer Yukon additionally joins the call from Indigenous communities across Canada for Pope Francis to apologize for the Catholic Church's role in the residential school system, as the only denomination which has not already done so.

We are committed to listening to our Two Spirit and Indigiqueer community members and to ensuring those voices are reflected throughout the organization. We encourage you to bring your ideas, inspiration or concerns to the Queer Yukon Board of Directors (board@queeryukon.com) at any time.

If you are in distress or need a listening ear, these resources may be helpful (these resources are not associated with Queer Yukon Society):

- The Indian Residential School Crisis Line (1-866-925-4419) is a national, 24-hour toll-free support service for residential school survivors and family members, operated by trained Aboriginal crisis counselors.
- Youthspace.ca, is a confidential online chat line for all 2SLGBTQIA youth under 30, available from 6pm to midnight (PST) every day.
- The Trans Lifeline (1-877-330-6366) is a peer support line staffed by trans people for trans and questioning peers. You can call even if you're not in crisis or not sure you're trans.
- Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon (CMHA) offers free counselling sessions by appointment (to book call (867) 668-6429) and a confidential volunteer-operated support line (1-844-533-3030) available from 2pm to 10pm daily.