

To Joan Brown, Chief and Council and Elders
Penelakut Tribe

On behalf of Cowichan Valley Region family physicians, specialist physicians and staff in Cowichan Valley Island Health facilities, we wish to extend this message to you and the Penelakut Tribe.

We acknowledge with heavy hearts your work to raise awareness of the Kuper Island Industrial School and the recent confirmation of over 160 unmarked and undocumented graves on your grounds and foreshore.

We write this to express our deepest feelings of solidarity and support for our Indigenous friends, coworkers and neighbours that we have the privilege to know, patients and clients that we have the honour to serve, and all of the community members who we have not yet met but hold in our hearts and minds, as we stand alongside all of you in this difficult journey.

No words can express the horror of the trauma that was inflicted in the residential school system in our country through many decades of state and church sanctioned cultural genocide. We know that elders and knowledge keepers in all of the Nations have told us time and again about the undocumented deaths that happened in these institutions, and that these recent confirmations are only the tip of the iceberg. We acknowledge that all the Nations in whose traditional territory we are privileged to work, play and raise our families, have had family members who were forcibly taken to the Kuper Island Industrial School or other residential schools, and are personally affected by this latest confirmation.

As health care professionals and leaders, we reaffirm our commitment to take action to eliminate systemic racism, listening to communities to learn when we have faltered.

We urge our fellow physicians and staff to continue on the journey of cultural safety and humility, to understand more about the dreadful history that surrounds us. We are encouraging all in our networks who are able, to join in the March for the Children that you have organized in Chemainus on August 2nd.

Even if we are not able to be there in person, we will certainly be there with you in spirit.

In solidarity,

Alice Gelpke and Dr. Michelle Weizel, Island Health Cowichan Valley Executive Director and Executive Medical Director

Emma James and Dr. Maki Ikemura, Island Health Cowichan Valley Director and Medical Director

Dr. Bryan Bass and Dr Jan Malherbe, Board Co-chairs, Cowichan Valley Division of Family Practice

Dr. Tracey Stephenson, Dr. Brendan O'Malley, Dr. Christiaan Avenant, Dr. Susan Barr, Executive Committee of Cowichan District Medical Society

Dr. Shannon Waters, Island Health Medical Health Officer, Cowichan Region



cc. Chief William Seymour, Cowichan Tribes
Chief James Thomas, Halalt First Nation
Chief Georgina Livingstone, Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation
Chief Richard Thomas, Lyackson First Nation
Chief Roxanne Harris, Stz'uminus Nation
Chief George Harry, Malahat Nation
Chief Councillor Brian Tate, Ditidaht Nation