



## **Press Release,** December 19, 2020. Calgary, AB **We demand an apology from Erin O'Toole and Conservative party of Canada for the legitimization of Residential Schools.**

Member of Parliament, and Conservative Party leader, Erin O'Toole, spoke to students attending Ryerson University and referred to residential schools as an intended means to "provide education" but "became horrible" as time went on. O'Toole disregards the initial policies and curriculum of residential schools when making this statement. O'Toole claims that residential schools were never meant to be nearly as destructive as they were; however, he fails to acknowledge that education should not require being stripped of family, religion, language, and culture. According to The Canadian Encyclopedia, "The purpose of residential schools was to educate and convert Indigenous youth and to assimilate them [through abuse] into Canadian society." O'Toole does not acknowledge the fact that residential schools were created to Europeanizing Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples and attempting to erase their culture by implementing European culture and religion for present and future generations.

A cultural genocide as defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) is "the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group" - which is exactly what residential schools were intended for by prohibiting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children from practicing their culture. With residential schools being the most common source of initiation for inter-generational trauma within the First Nations, Inuit and Metis, it is disrespectful and inconsiderate to imply that the initial purpose of residential schools was to educate. Education consists of respectfully allowing access to knowledge in multiple subject matters; education does not consist of forcefully assimilating an ethnic group to abide by guidelines that an external or colonizing party has put into place.

The First Nations, Inuit and Metis did not deserve the injustices and trauma that residential schools gave birth to. O'Toole's comments suggest that it is okay to disregard or minimize the trauma that survivors of residential schools have endured. O'Toole's comments permit and encourage the potential and exponential growth of racism. Former TRC Commissioner Wilton Littlechild and survivor of residential school, says he is concerned about "growing racism [within] Canada". Senator Murray Sinclair adds that "racist and white-supremacist groups are attempting to deny the validity of the Indigenous story".

O'Toole does not have the right to justify a curriculum that was flawed, immoral, and intentive to breach human rights from the immediate beginning. O'Toole's statements do not aid, but rather contradict the apologies and compensation that the Canadian government is trying to provide. Dr. Mukarram Zaidi states that "the Conservative Party of Canada owes an apology to the Indigenous community for legitimizing the sexual, mental, emotional, physical abuses alongside the thousands of fatalities that are at the hands of the Canadian government due to residential schools".

### **For further information and comments please contact:**

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**I-CARE Taskforce:** More than 50 faith groups and community organizations are coming together to form The Task Force to fight hate, racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Christianophobia, Xenophobia, Colonialism and Homophobia impact every person regardless of their faith, colour, or gender.