



Hello GTCA members,

We are unfortunately not able to celebrate Canada Day with you at our annual, in-person picnic on the Gorge this year.

We would, nevertheless, like to wish you all a good day, and a thoughtful and respectful day, as we honour the country we call our home.

We -- Indigenous peoples that have lived here for thousands of years as well as others that have arrived and settled here during the past centuries, decades, or days -- have benefitted from the bounty provided by this land. We do well to express our gratitude for what we have received and to celebrate all that we have built for the wellbeing of all Canadian citizens.

That being said, we know that history and human behaviour is complex -- that all nation building, here in Canada as well as around the world, is accompanied by attitudes and behaviours that are cruel, unjust and bigoted. As we, the inheritors of our history, celebrate our country and its positive achievements, let's also take time to learn about the trauma that was inflicted on many of us, trauma that exists in people personally as well as in our the way we function as a society.

As I'm sure we all know, there are currently hundreds of gravesites being found on the property of former residential "schools". These are places where Indigenous children, forcibly taken from their families, died under terrible conditions. As these revelations, long familiar to Indigenous peoples, are being brought more forcefully to the attention of other Canadians, we would do well to not only mourn what has been done but to also consider what we might do to work towards overcoming the persistent effects of traumas such as these. As stated by a Mohawk of the Six Nations, "Now you know about them. You know about us. You are beginning to understand what we have gone and are going through. So stand up. Celebrate Canada Day if you want. But celebrate it because we have been found. Celebrate it because our children are being recovered. Celebrate it because you don't want this country to repeat what they have done."

And, here in the Gorge Tillicum community (and elsewhere too), we invite you to consider these words from Cowessess First Nation Chief Cadmus Delorme in conversation with Ian Hanomansing on CBC:

"From a First Nation perspective, I love living in Canada. I went to university, I grew up on Cowessess, I have the best job I think I ever wanted, being chief. It's not an easy task. But there is an accidental racism and ignorance in this country when it comes to history. You know, Indigenous people -- and I'm speaking from Cowessess perspective -- we don't want to live in our current state. We want to be part of the economy. We want to be part of the growth... the social lives.

"... We're asking that you stand beside us, that as we are gaining our control again - as Indigenous people - in our Treaty relationship, that we have better understanding. That our kids going to school understand the impact that residential school made, but also even pre... what great economy Indigenous people had prior to Treaty. This country would be so much more well-off, when Indigenous ideology and understanding is welcomed in, and not just brought in on certain days of the year.

"I would never tell somebody what to and what not to celebrate. You know, in 2021, we all inherited this. Nobody today created residential schools. Nobody today created the Indian Act. Nobody today created the Sixties Scoop. But we all inherited this. And if we want to say we're proud Canadians, then we will accept the beautiful country we have today, and we will accept what we all inherited. And what I would challenge is:

Everybody on Canada Day in this country, if you say you're a proud Canadian, read the Truth and Reconciliation 'Calls to Action.' Over 100,000 residential school survivors told their story - including my parents - and they created the Truth and Reconciliation 'Calls to Action.' Bring that into your personal life, your social life, your business life. And read the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 'Calls to Action.' There's 231 Calls to Action. If we can all own those a little bit in this country, in one generation we would overcome so many challenges today, that our next generation won't inherit this. We will make them more as Dreamers.”

Let's celebrate our land, our people, and our home and work to remedy past wrongs and build an even better, stronger, more caring and inclusive Gorge Tillicum neighbourhood, British Columbia, and Canada.

We look forward to seeing everyone along the Gorge next summer.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Wynn-Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vera Wynn-Williams
GTCA President, on behalf of the GTCA Board of Directors

P.S. If you are moved to do so, you might want to make a charitable donation to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre here in our neighbourhood. (See the Donate option at <https://www.vnfc.ca/>). The VNFC, “with 135 staff, hosts more than 20 programs on a regular basis through 10 departments. VNFC programs run the gamut from medical to educational and development programs." (Saanich News)