

A Prayer for Indigenous Children  
On National Child Day  
20 November 2021

## OPENING SONG

**N'we Jinan Artists - "WE WON'T FORGET YOU" // Sk'elep School of Excellence, B.C.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOYYkvIWbng>

**Artists:** AKITA ABRAHAM / TIFFANY FRIESEN / TYRA GREGG / DENAYA BENNETT / TRYNITY ROSETTE / KAYA PIRES SEMIAH LATRANS / MAYSON GEORGE / SHAYA HANAMAAYER / RILEY FRIESEN / CASH CHARTERS

### LYRICS

*SHAYA HANAMAAYER*  
NOT LONG AGO OUR PEOPLE WERE TAKEN  
AWAY FROM THEIR HOMES, OUR CULTURE WAS FADING

*TIFFANY FRIESEN*  
LEFT ON OUR OWN, SO MANY CHANGES THE FUTURE UNKNOWN, FORCED INTO PRAYING

*AKITA ABRAHAM*  
PUT IN THE DARK, AND LEFT ALL ALONE LIVING IN FEAR, THE SHADOWS WERE COLD SOME RAN  
AWAY, AND SOME MADE IT HOME OUR PEOPLE WERE STRONG, OUR PEOPLE WERE BOLD

*KAYA PIRES*  
IN A DARK ROOM, THEY WERE FEELING PUNISHED IT'S A HARD TRUTH, THAT WE HAVE TO  
STOMACH GAVE AN EDUCATION BUT IT REALLY WASN'T  
NOW WE LOOK AHEAD, WE CAN START THE DRUMMING

*RILEY FRIESEN*  
LEARNING LANGUAGE THROUGH SONG AND DANCE THE PAIN THEY FELT, LET'S HONOUR THAT  
BY BEING GREAT, AND KEEPING TRACK  
OF WHAT ELDERS TEACH, LET'S WALK THE PATH

*MAYSON GEORGE*  
TO THE SHUSWAP NATION THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS IT MAY TAKE SOME PATIENCE IT IS  
OUR HOME, IT IS OUR LAND

*CASH CHARTERS*  
IN OUR LIFETIME, WE WILL CELEBRATE WHO WE ARE LIKE EVERYDAY  
THERE'S SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE IN THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES, SO WE'RE GIVING THANKS

### CHORUS



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DA-EH-MESS-LEP-EH-DEM  
WE WON'T FORGET YOU DA-EH-MESS-LEP-EH-DEM  
WE WON'T FORGET YOU  
YOU WERE SITTING IN THE DARK  
NOW WE'RE LETTING IN THE LIGHT  
TQELT KUKPI  
TQELT KUKPI  
WE FOUND OUR LOVE NOW EVERYTHING IS FINE YOU WERE SITTING IN THE DARK  
NOW WE'RE LETTING IN THE LIGHT

*MAYSON GEORGE*  
NOW WE FEEL FREE, DREAMING AND WISHING WE WALK ON THE LAND, HUNTING AND  
FISHING

*TYRA GREGG*  
OUR LANGUAGE IS TAUGHT THROUGH DRUMMING AND SINGING BUT IT'S STILL SO SAD, OUR  
PEOPLE GO MISSING

*TRYNITY ROSETTE*  
IS THERE AN END TO ALL OF THIS MADNESS?  
FINDING THE STRENGTH THROUGH ALL THIS SADNESS

*DENAYA BENNETT*  
PUT TROUBLES ASIDE, EMOTIONS WE BALANCE BY SHOWING OUR VOICES, WE GOT THE  
TALENTS

*SEMIAM LATRANS*  
THIS IS THE START OF NEW LIFE  
WE'LL UNDO THE WRONGS AND WE WILL CHOOSE RIGHT OUR HOME IS HERE AND IT IS SO  
BRIGHT  
WE SEE THE RIVERS, WE'LL NEVER LOSE SIGHT

*TIFFANY FRIESEN*  
BRINGING BACK THE TRADITIONS WE SING AND RAP FOR THE MISSION THE DESTINATION IS  
LIVING  
AND INNOVATION FOR THE CHILDREN

*CASH CHARTERS*  
IN OUR LIFETIME, WE WILL CELEBRATE WHO WE ARE LIKE EVERYDAY  
THERE'S SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE IN THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES, SO WE'RE GIVING THANKS

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*CHORUS*

DA-EH-MESS-LEP-EH-DEM  
WE WON'T FORGET YOU DA-EH-MESS-LEP-EH-DEM  
WE WON'T FORGET YOU  
YOU WERE SITTING IN THE DARK NOW WE'RE LETTING IN THE LIGHT  
TQELT KUKPI  
TQELT KUKPI  
WE FOUND OUR LOVE NOW EVERYTHING IS FINE YOU WERE SITTING IN THE DARK  
NOW WE'RE LETTING IN THE LIGHT

*BRIDGE*

OUR SCHOOL'S A PLACE WE GO  
WE FEEL SAFE AND WE FEEL BETTER AGAIN  
A HOME AWAY FROM HOME  
WE'RE HAPPY HERE AND TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN YOU'VE SHOWN THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE  
WHEN TOUGH TIMES GET YOU DOWN, LET US BEGIN AND WALK THE LONGEST ROAD  
WE ARE HERE WITH YOU, WE'LL NEVER FORGET NO NO NO  
NO NO NO  
WE'LL NEVER FORGET  
NEVER FORGET  
NEVER FORGET

*CHORUS*

DA-EH-MESS-LEP-EH-DEM  
WE WON'T FORGET YOU DA-EH-MESS-LEP-EH-DEM  
WE WON'T FORGET YOU  
YOU WERE SITTING IN THE DARK  
NOW WE'RE LETTING IN THE LIGHT  
TQELT KUKPI  
TQELT KUKPI  
WE FOUND OUR LOVE NOW EVERYTHING IS FINE YOU WERE SITTING IN THE DARK  
NOW WE'RE LETTING IN THE LIGHT

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## OPENING PRAYER

God of all Goodness,  
We lift up all children today in prayer,  
especially First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children,  
as we mark National Child Day.  
On this day to honour all children,  
we thank you for the precious gift of the child,  
created in your image and likeness,  
imbued with dignity and grace.

We express our sorrow  
for all the ways in which we harm children  
rather than protect them,  
we restrict children  
rather than promote their agency and capacity.  
We ask for your forgiveness  
and for the grace to love, honour, and respect all children.  
May we always remember that children are a blessing to us  
and we have a sacred duty  
to help them flourish in body, mind, and spirit.

We ask all this through your Son,  
the model for all children,  
our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
now and forever.  
Amen.

## SCRIPTURE (Mark 9:42-43, NRSV)

<sup>42</sup> “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup> If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.

## REFLECTION

These sharp words of condemnation from Jesus ought to shake us up, just as the revelations this year of unmarked graves at residential schools ought to shake us up. First, we learned of 215 unmarked graves at the Kamloops Residential School, and then 751 graves at Cowessess First Nation. Thousands more graves remain to be uncovered across the country. Over the past several months, we have paused to reflect on the historic harms done to Indigenous children, to reflect on the violence of colonization. Harm, however, does not only live in the past. We also need to reflect and take action against the harms currently being done to children, especially through the disproportionate socioeconomic inequalities experienced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children in Canada. These children bear the image and likeness of our Creator God and yet, we have put stumbling blocks before them.

In our scripture passage, Jesus condemns those who place stumbling blocks before children, those who prevent the little ones from belief in him. Access to Jesus, belief in him, is access to the fullness of human life. In Jesus, through Jesus, by following the example of Jesus, we are conformed to the fullness of our humanity. We come to know Jesus, to love him, and in knowing and loving Jesus, we grow to be like him, and we live as we were created to live, as beloved sons and daughters of God.

On National Child Day we commemorate the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1954 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. In Canada, we have made commitments to realize the rights of every child, to protect and provide for them, and to remove obstacles to their full participation in society. The Convention guides us but as Mary Ward women, we must take action, rooted in our faith, to prevent the myriad stumbling blocks found in this world that stop children from becoming who they are created to be. Each day we have the opportunity to help children flourish, to grow to their full potential, to live the fullness of their humanity.

Let us ask ourselves with deep humility:

In what ways have I contributed to the harm of children, either deliberately or by failing to act against injustice and evil? How will I commit myself to fighting injustice and inequity and to advocate for the rights of all children?

*(Pause for reflection and sharing)*

## INTERCESSIONS

Let us offer our prayers now before our God who always hears us when we cry out:

We pray for the flourishing of all children, especially First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children who disproportionately experience inequalities that perpetuate hardships. 41 percent of all Indigenous children and 18 percent of all children live in poverty in Canada. May we be emboldened to take swift action to reduce inequalities in our society so that all children may thrive. Lord, in your mercy,

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all children who were harmed historically by being forced into residential schools or into the child welfare system, for those who are currently in care, and for the healing of the effects of these harms that are felt across generations. We acknowledge our complicity in present and historic abuses of children and we beg for forgiveness. Lord, in your mercy,

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the healing and resiliency of all children who have been harmed by violence, abuse, or neglect, especially children who have experienced sexual abuse by a member of the Catholic Church. We pray for forgiveness, healing, and transformation of pastoral relationships within the Church that they may fully honour and respect the dignity of the child. Lord, in your mercy,

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the conviction to prioritize the voice of children in all settings where decisions are made – in our families, schools, communities, churches, and governments – that we listen to their voice, respect their opinions, and humbly make decisions in their best interest. Lord, in your mercy,

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

We pray for a conversion of heart for ourselves, that we may recognize and transform our prejudices, biases, and tendencies toward racism and discrimination, so that we may heal division in our society and give to all children what they need to flourish. Lord, in your mercy,

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

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We pray for the wisdom, integrity, and political will at all levels of government to realize the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, especially those that pertain to Jordan's Principle and reform of the child welfare system. May we do what is right for all children to realize their rights, but especially for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children. Lord, in your mercy,

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the protection and care of the land, for the safety of all land defenders, and for the renewal of our hearts and minds that we may apprehend the sacredness of the land and the interconnectedness of all creation. May we leave the land as a blessing to future generations. Lord, in your mercy.

**Response: Hear our prayer.**

## PRAYER IN THE WORLD

You are invited now to make a commitment to take this prayer out into the world. You may wish to act in one or more of the following ways:

- Visit a local memorial to the children who died in residential schools and offer a prayer and a symbol of your commitment to the process of truth and reconciliation.
- Advocate for the implementation of [Jordan's Principle](#) and [reform of the child welfare system](#) by writing to the [Prime Minister](#) or your [Member of Parliament](#).
- Learn about [Shannen's Dream](#).
- Talk to your children about their [rights](#).

## CLOSING PRAYER

God of compassion, healing and transformation,  
we trust that you will make all things new.  
Present in our prayer today,  
we ask your blessing on the lives of all children.  
Nourish in them a sacred vitality that can never be diminished,  
surround them with your love.  
Embolden us to honour the lives of all children,  
to know, respect, and realize their rights,

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to support their capacity and giftedness.  
Inspire all of us with energy, wisdom, and commitment  
to act in the best interests of all children,  
to reduce inequalities, and to promote their flourishing.  
Amen.

## CLOSING SONG

N'we Jinan Artists - "HOME TO ME" // Grassy Narrows First Nation  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgaYz8YWsO8>

Artists: SHARICE BRUCE / DYLAN FOBISTER / JIMI FOBISTER / PRESTON PAUL / DARWIN  
FOBISTER / JANESEA KEJICK / DAMIEN KEJICK / LINDA FOBISTER / PAUL CEDRIC OTESKAN / JOSH  
BIGBLOO

### LYRICS

*JANESEA KEJICK*

KEEP THE OLD WAYS THAT WE'VE ALWAYS  
HAD IT STILL LIVES INSIDE  
THIS IS A PLACE, WHERE WE LOVE THE LAND  
LET'S WORK TO SHOW OUR PRIDE

*JIMI FOBISTER & DARWIN FOBISTER*

KEEP US SAFE, KEEP US FREE  
LIKE IT USED TO BE  
DON'T WANT TO BE TIED DOWN  
WE FIND LOVE WHERE WE'RE FROM  
AND BEAT AGAINST THE DRUMS  
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL SOUND

*PRESTON PAUL*

FROM THE GROUND UP, WE'LL FIND A PATH HOME  
FEEL PULLED BY THE SUN, WISH I CAN GO  
WE LEARNED FROM THE PAST NOW WE CAN GROW  
WE'RE PROMISED A CHANCE LET THE PLANS SHOW  
GO BIG, GO FAR, THERE ARE NO LIMITS  
I WANNA SEE CHANGE..SO MY SOUL LIVES IT  
THEY CUT DOWN OUR TREES WHILE WE BLOW KISSES



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DEFEND OUR HOME WHILE THEY DISMISS US

*CHORUS*

*SHARICE BRUCE & DYLAN FOBISTER*  
GETE ISHKONIGAN  
IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME  
TAAPSHKO ENDAAYAAN  
IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME

*SHARICE BRUCE*

DON'T BE AFRAID  
WHEN YOU'RE FALLING IN FAST  
THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE UNKNOWN  
I HELD ONTO MY CULTURE  
IT'S BEEN CALLING ME BACK  
THERE IS A STORY OF HOPE

*JIMI FOBISTER & DARWIN FOBISTER*

WINDS OF CHANGE, LONG AGO  
HEAR THE CHANTS, FAR AND LOW  
OUR VOICES CRIED OUT FOR RAIN  
THEN IT RAINED, BROUGHT US LIFE  
GAVE US FAITH, GAVE US SIGHT  
TO SEE THAT WE SHALL REMAIN

*PAUL CEDRIC OTESKAN*

LET YOUR SPIRIT SOAR AS FAR AS YOU CAN  
TRY NOT TO BE REMINDED BY THE SCARS FROM THE PAST  
RISE FROM THE RUINS, KEEP PROTECTING THE LAND  
DON'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED, CAN'T NEGLECT WHAT WE HAVE  
STAND TOGETHER AS A NATION, EXPRESS WHAT WE FEEL  
TRUE CONVERSATION AND ADDRESS WHAT IS REAL  
CONNECTED TO THE LAND, WE ARE ONE WITH EACH OTHER  
THIS IS OUR HOME TO DISCOVER

*CHORUS*

*SHARICE BRUCE & DYLAN FOBISTER*  
GETE ISHKONIGAN  
IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME  
TAAPSHKO ENDAAYAAN  
IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME

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SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO FIND THE WORDS  
TO SAY YOUR HOME TO ME

*PAUL CEDRIC OTESKAN*

GOTTA STAY ON POINT LIKE THE FASTEST ARROW  
BRING HOPE TO THE PEOPLE OF GRASSY NARROWS  
WANT PEACE IN THE LAND, CAN'T GO BACK TO BATTLES  
8TH FIRE IN ACTION, CASTING SHADOWS  
FROM THE OLD TO NEW, LET US SHOW YOU THE TRUTH  
LIGHT UP THE PATH, THERE'S A GLOW IN THE YOUTH  
BOOZHOO TO THE WORLD, THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE  
SO LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

*CHORUS*

*SHARICE BRUCE & DYLAN FOBISTER*

GETE ISHKONIGAN

IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME

TAAPSHKO ENDAAYAAN

IT FEELS LIKE HOME TO ME

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO FIND THE WORDS  
TO SAY YOUR HOME TO ME