

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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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
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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)

⁴² "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. ⁴³ 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