



Michael Hurcomb

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE OF TRUTH

Residential Schools and Our Path to Reconciliation

On May 28, 2021, evidence of approximately 200 unmarked graves was found near the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in Kamloops, on the lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. In the following months, as areas around other residential schools began to be searched, the number of graves of previously unaccounted individuals began to grow. It currently stands at more than 1,800, though that number is expected to continue to increase in the coming months and years.

In late summer, when the *TRENT Magazine* editorial board sat down to discuss and plan this edition, each member brought forward the topics of truth and reconciliation and residential schools. It may have been the first time that we all had unanimously suggested the same topic for coverage. It was definitely the first time that we had unanimously suggested the same topic for our lead story.

And it is no surprise. What Canadians are starting to understand about residential schools is harrowing. It is also an important piece of truth that we need to address if we are ever to be serious about reconciliation. And it is a story that all Canadians need to understand if we are to ever successfully promote healing and moving forward as a nation. It is, however, not my story to tell—which is why I reached out to alumni and community members for some difficult discussions.

I want to thank Elders **Doug Williams '69** and **Harvey McCue '66**, residential school survivor **Shirley Williams '79**, and young leader **Jarret Leaman '05** for sharing their time, their thoughts, and their words. I learned a lot. I felt a lot. I recognized how essential these conversations are to taking serious steps towards reconciliation.

Because, with the finding of so many unmarked graves, we are only now even beginning to scratch the surface of truth.

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A conversation with **Shirley Williams '79** on page 11.

We are including some of my conversations with Indigenous leaders—as well as our talk with David and Sarah Patterson (see page 30)—on our *Trent Voices* podcast. Be sure to check out our podcast site at trentu.ca/alumni for over 100 alumni interviews. And don't forget to follow us on social media for all the latest in alumni news: @trentalumni on Twitter @trent_alumni on Instagram @trentuniversityalumniassociation on Facebook The Official Trent University Alumni group on LinkedIn

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