

**For Immediate Release**

Start Me Up Niagara  
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## **A TIME FOR REFLECTION**

[**ST. CATHARINES, ON, JUNE 17, 2021**] These are unfortunate times for which we find ourselves. Recently, the bodies of 215 Indigenous children were discovered in unmarked graves on the grounds surrounding the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. Many of these deaths are undocumented. As a country, we as settlers have a very long way to go to atone for the actions of those who came before us. As calls for the search of the other 130 residential school grounds grow, please keep those experiencing intergenerational trauma, ongoing injustice, and for those still searching for answers in your thoughts.

My heart is saddened amidst the recent news of the hate-driven Islamophobic attack and senseless murder of four innocent people in London, Ontario. Please keep the surviving victim and the family in your heart. If you or someone you know is struggling as a result of this attack, please reach out to Naseeha Mental Health. They have a hotline available to those looking to speak with someone.

*If you pray, pray for those who lost their lives and the families left behind.  
If you meditate, please find a place for them.*

I wholeheartedly believe that we as individuals can change our thoughts, words, and actions and can express and encourage warmth and empathy in those we surround ourselves with by standing up for injustices when we witness them. We can surely make better days by acknowledging past injustices and acknowledging the hurt inflicted on others by our actions and inaction. I genuinely believe that we can counter the racism, bigotry, and raw hatred we continue to witness by treating everyone we encounter with compassion and dignity.

In contemplation of human disconnectedness, author Leo Buscaglia once wrote, *"too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."* So let's find small, honest, and meaningful ways to connect and grow as a more thoughtful community.

If these tragic events have negatively impacted your mental health or well-being, please contact the **Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) Mobile Crisis Team** at **1-866-550-5205 (ext.1)** to help you find the tools and resources so that you may begin the healing process.

Start Me Up Niagara currently resides on unceded land. Therefore, we would like to recognize and acknowledge the land we currently operate in the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples' traditional territories.

Laura Dumas  
Executive Director,  
**Start Me Up Niagara**

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If you would like more information about this statement, please call Sabrina Hill at 905 932-9777 or email [mediacom@startmeupniagara.ca](mailto:mediacom@startmeupniagara.ca)