Memorial Service Remarks

Rabbi Dan Moskovitz
Friday, June 4th 10:45 AM

Because of COVID and the requirements of social distancing we were limited in the number of speakers and dignitaries that could be physically present with us this morning.

So, I'd like to begin by acknowledging

Michael Lee, MLA
Vancouver - Langara

Cathy McLeod, MP
Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo

Who are joining us via the live stream – we are honoured to have you virtually present and we know that your hearts are joined with ours in this time of tremendous grief and national reflection.

We all know however that this morning's memorial service is not about those of us who are here, physically or virtually – rather it is about those 215 souls, children who died in the Kamloops Residential School who cannot be here and the thousands more who's bodies remain to be found.

We stand here today on a sports field of an elementary school, the sound of children at play fills this space nearly every moment of the school day – the silence of this field now cries out to us for those precious children who's childhood was cut short; who's school experience was not like that of those at Vancouver Talmud Torah – where our students are immersed

in their own our language, culture and traditions. Our hearts break today not just for the loss of life, the break for the loss of childhood, the loss of innocence, the loss of joy, of play, of family and heritage that was stolen from these children by the misguided aims of our nation.

It was a different era, it was a different time but if our people, the Jewish people have learned anything from our own history of trauma and persecution it is the words of Philosopher George Satayan who wisely cautioned, “Those who do not study history are bound to repeat it”; and we the Jewish people have echoed that warning with the moral imperative learned from the Shoah, the Holocaust – Never Again.

We have learned and we know in our souls that the greatest tribute we can offer these children and their families is not words of condolence but acts of conscience.

The purpose of prayer is to lead us to action, to make our prayers real, not in heaven but here on earth. So this morning as we gather, as we pray and as we mourn – let all the words, all the memories and the haunting silence of a playground call us to action; in their honour, in their memory, so that something as horrible as the Residential Schools and the abuses they perpetrated will never, ever happen again.