



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Acknowledges Williams Lake First Nation in British Columbia: Potential Human Burial Sites Identified at Site of Residential School

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. is acknowledging the identification of human burials connected to the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School in British Columbia.

Chief Willie Sellars and Councillors of the Williams Lake First Nation announced the uncovering of potential human burials. Ground-penetrating radar, along with techniques, helped to identify 93 sites of potential human burials. A spokesperson shared that while some of the sites may be associated with a historical cemetery, 50 appear to have no association with it.

MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee expresses grief over the discovery of the 93 sites in British Columbia.

"I send condolences to the community of Williams Lake First Nation in British Columbia regarding yet another horrific discovery of unmarked graves at the site of the former St. Joseph's Mission Residential School. I also sympathize with all the First Nations citizens who are impacted by this news and who may have loved ones buried in any of the sites that have been identified," shared MKO Grand Chief Garrison Settee.

"I commend the leadership at Williams Lake First Nation for working to uncover the unmarked graves connected to the St. Joseph's Residential School," said Grand Chief Settee. "This is difficult work to carry out. I expect we will find graves at *all* residential schools. It's essential this challenging work continue to take place so the spirits of our ancestors can rest."

The St. Joseph's Mission Residential School operated from 1886 to 1981. It has since been demolished. The Roman Catholic Church ran the school from July 1891 to March 31, 1969. The federal government managed it until it closed.

Anyone affected by their experience at residential schools, and those who are triggered by the latest reports, can call the national Indian Residential School Crisis Line to receive support. People can access emotional and crisis referral services by calling the 24-hour national crisis line at 1-866-925-4419.

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