



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

For immediate release
June 24, 2022

MKO Acknowledges 50 Years Since the Loss of Youth from Bunibonibee Cree Nation Due to a Tragic Plane Crash in Winnipeg

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is issuing the following statement to acknowledge June 24, 2022, is the 50-year anniversary of the passing of young people from the Bunibonibee Cree Nation due to a plane crash in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The names of the students who died are **Mary Rita Canada** (age 18); **Wilkie Muskego** (age 16); **Roy Sinclair** (age 16) and his sister **Deborah Sinclair** (age 14); **Iona Weenusk** (age 21); **Margaret Robinson** (age 16); and **Ethel Grieves** (age 17). **Rosalie Balfour** (age 16) was a member of the Norway House Cree Nation but had also grown up in Bunibonibee Cree Nation.

The students were on their way home to enjoy their summer break, they had been attending schools in Portage la Prairie and Stonewall.

Grand Chief Garrison Settee states:

“Today marks 50 years since a plane went down in Winnipeg, ending the lives of eight First Nations young people from Northern Manitoba. On behalf of all MKO First Nations, I acknowledge the Bunibonibee Cree Nation and all the families who have been impacted by the loss of their loved ones.

June 24, 1972, was one of the darkest days for Bunibonibee Cree Nation. We will never stop wondering what those eight young people could have achieved had they not been victims of that plane crash. I know there are still questions around the cause of the crash, and I hope one day these questions may be answered.

The loss of these young people connects strongly with Canada’s dark past. These young people from Bunibonibee were required to leave their home community to pursue their education. Our young people should be able to complete their education in their own First Nations.

Last year, Bunibonibee Cree Nation officially opened their new school, the 1972 Memorial High School. This new facility provides a space in which young people can pursue their educational goals without having to leave their home community.

MKO continues to stand in solidarity with all First Nations that are impacted by the loss of innocent children and youth.

It is important we continue to talk about and share our knowledge of the legacy of residential schools. This plane crash and the loss of these young people is one impact of the residential school system in

Manitoba.

My thoughts and prayers are with the Bunibonibee Cree Nation and all those who have been impacted by the plane crash that altered so many lives 50 years ago.”

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