



Williams Lake
FIRST NATION

St. Joseph's Mission Investigation

Activity Summary for the period of September 3 to September 10, 2021

Geophysical work continues at the site of the former St. Joseph's Mission Residential School (SJM). A large portion of the existing cemetery area has been analysed with Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), and teams have mapped out the existing graves, and taken detailed recordings of headstones. The detailed recording works have been supported through records obtained from the Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin archives, and the investigation team greatly thanks the organization for their support and access to related to the investigation.



Photo: Aerial View of the cemetery at St. Joseph's Mission Residential School



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Mapping and documentation related to structures at the SJM, has largely been completed. This includes detailed geospatial mapping of the barns, pens and fences, and areas which contained historic buildings. Extensive photography of the interior and exterior of the buildings has been undertaken, as well as aerial drone imagery. Teams will be analyzing these photographs over the coming weeks for any connection to former students at SJM.



Photo: Julia Flinton and Leo Michel, mapping buildings at St. Joseph's Mission Site

A comprehensive archival database is in development, which will focus on students who attended the St. Joseph's Mission. This database will contain thousands of documents, including student enrollment records, photographs, baptismal, census, and other records. This will enable the team to access detailed student information, in real time, and help to cross reference deaths and disappearances with any unmarked graves or burial sites identified at the SJM site.



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A total of three interviews with former students of the SJM have been completed, and the results of these sessions have been integrated into plans for future ground analysis. Five more interviews are scheduled for later in September. The team encourages survivors, or family members, to reach out via phone or email sjmission@wfn.ca, if they would like to schedule interviews or provide information. Wellness and health supports are available at all times, and WLFN is working closely with Three Corners Health and other organizations to develop comprehensive community wellness plans related to the SJM investigation.



Photo: GeoScan teams setting up Geophysical equipment, at SJM.

WLFN will be in attendance at the Tk'emlúps sponsored Caretaker Communities Forum, which will be held in October, 2021. We are grateful for the opportunity to attend this event, and will continue to work alongside other communities as we progress through the investigation.