



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12/07/2021

WILLIAMS LAKE FIRST NATION ISSUES RELEASE REGARDING ST. JOSEPH'S MISSION GEOPHYSICAL RESULTS

Chief and Council of the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) today announced that WLFN will be postponing the release of the preliminary geophysical results from Phase 1 of the St. Joseph's Mission investigation. Earlier this month, WLFN had indicated that the results from the investigation of the former residential school would be released on December 10, immediately after the ground penetrating radar contractor had discussed the data from the work program with WLFN Council.

"After engagement with St. Joseph's Mission survivors, our members, and other communities we had initially concluded that it would be best to make full disclosure of our results immediately after we received them," states WLFN Chief, Willie Sellars. "However, since we made our announcement that there would be a public session to reveal the results on December 10, a number of communities have come forward and made it clear that they do not have the necessary health and wellness supports in place to address any issues that might arise from the release of these results. It has also become clear that people around the province are still struggling in response to recent natural disasters and we wish to avoid causing people affected by these disasters any additional stress or suffering. For these reasons we are persuaded to delay the public release of the results until the New Year."

In August, WLFN commenced its initial work program at the site of the former St. Joseph's Mission residential school. The first phase work program utilized ground penetrating radar and other technologies, focusing on a concentrated area that forms roughly three percent of the total St. Joseph's Mission land base. In addition to the geophysical studies, WLFN conducted extensive interviews with survivors of St. Joseph's Mission and their families and has reviewed any available records from the former residential school.

"Even though we're only beginning to scrape the surface of this investigation, this has been an exhausting exercise for everyone involved," adds Chief Sellars. "We feel a strong responsibility to be responsive to the needs of those affected by our work, especially in relation to the mental and physical welfare of the St. Joseph's Mission survivors and their families. Between now and the New Year, we will continue with our research and other work. It has been a challenge to obtain records from St. Joseph's, but there are indications that our requests to release all records are finally being heard by the Government of Canada."



Williams Lake
FIRST NATION

PRESS RELEASE

The revised date for the release of the preliminary St. Joseph's Mission geophysical results has been tentatively set for **Tuesday, January 25th, 2022**. Additional details regarding the time and venue for that meeting will be forthcoming in January.

Mental health supports are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at:

KUU-US Crisis Line 1-800-588-8717

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line 1-866-925-4419

Hope for Wellness 1-855-242-3310 or connect to the online chat at www.hopeforwellness.ca

As well as additional health support links:

<https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/health-benefits-news/mental-health-and-wellness-supports-covered-by-health-benefits>

<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use>

<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/residential-schools>

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