

# First Nations Summit

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
JANUARY 25, 2023**

### **FNS saddened to hear of additional potential unmarked gravesites at St. Joseph's Mission Residential School site**

*(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), Vancouver, British Columbia* – Leaders of the First Nations Summit (FNS) are deeply saddened and horrified by the identification of sixty-six 'reflections' which display characteristics indicative of potential human remains at the site of the former St. Joseph's Mission Residential School south of Williams Lake.

"Words cannot express our continuing sadness for the lost children whose unmarked gravesites continue to be found at former residential school sites such as St. Joseph's Mission. It is horrifying and unconscionable to understand the thousands of children cast aside in what has been confirmed as a Canadian genocide. We continue to stand with the Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) as they progress through the various stages of their investigation into the unmarked grave sites within their traditional territory. Our thoughts are with all of the First Nations communities whose citizens attended this dreadful institution," said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive.

"We know the Indian Residential School system was created to strip the 'Indian out of the child'. Residential schools were quite simply a direct attack on First Nations people and communities, especially our cultural practices and languages, with an end goal to assimilate us into Canadian society," added Political Executive member Hugh Braker. "The horrific physical and emotional abuses suffered by our children who attended residential schools continue to have devastating inter-generational impacts on our people and our communities to this very day. This genocide will go down as the largest blight on Canada's colonial history."

"Our thoughts also go out to all of the First Nations communities whose children went missing at the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School. We also hold up our hands to Kukpi7 Willie Sellars and the WLFN leadership and technical team for undertaking this culturally sensitive work and for their actions to ensure the investigation leaves no stone unturned. To date, the federal government has not provided adequate funding to communities undertaking this work. We encourage the federal government to provide all necessary resources needed to complete this critical work. This work must continue to conclusion to provide our communities and citizens closure," concluded Robert Phillips of the FNS Political Executive.

The FNS recognizes that these continuing discoveries could cause trauma for Indian Residential School survivors and their families. We encourage those who suffer emotional distress as a result of this information to contact the Indian Residential School Society (IRSS) 24-hour support line at 1-800-721-0066 or visit their website at [www.irsss.ca](http://www.irsss.ca).

-30-

*The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca).*

#### **For further information:**

Cheryl Casimer, FNS Political Executive  
Hugh Braker, FNS Political Executive  
Robert Phillips, FNS Political Executive

778-875-2157  
604-812-2632  
778-875-4463

