

January 26, 2023: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ktunaxa solidarity with T'exelcenc

Standing with survivors as knowledge is confirmed and shared

ʔa-kiskaqʔit / Cranbrook, B.C.:

This week, the Chief and Council of Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) released the preliminary geophysical results from the second phase of the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School investigation. In a presentation [shared online by the WLFN](#), Chief Willie Sellars shared results and noted there is an abundance of evidence they are examining: Geophysical, documentary and forensic.

Kathryn Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation Council Chair, and Nasuʔkin Joe Pierre of ʔaqam, expressed solidarity with the T'exelcenc (people of the Williams Lake First Nation).

"Our hearts go out to those survivors who are directly impacted by any knowledge confirmed and shared by these researches," said Kathryn Teneese. "And to all attendees and every relative of those who attended St. Joseph's."

"Our survivors are standing with your survivors," said Nasuʔkin Joe Pierre of ʔaqam. "We know how residential schools have impacted our people and our Nations, and realize we are in this journey of healing together."

The Ktunaxa community of ʔaqam was also the site of a residential school--Kootenay Indian Residential School--which was closed in 1970. Like St. Joseph's in Williams Lake, it was primarily run by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of the Roman Catholic Church.

ʔaqam Community began an investigation involving ground-penetrating radar (GPR) into the ʔaqam Cemetery in February of 2020. The cemetery is adjacent to the current St. Eugene Mission Resort, (the building that was once the Kootenay Indian Residential School).

"We began our work in ʔaqam Cemetery as part of our caretaking and maintenance duties," Pierre said. "This is our community cemetery, in use to this day and into the future. We realized the wooden crosses were being lost to the elements, so we began the careful work to re-establish the appropriate markers.

"We are, like Williams Lake First Nation, intent on investigating in the right way by listening to our Elders for guidance and consulting with experts in data gathering and analysis."

Teneese added, "As our Nations walk together through these ongoing projects, and the information they reveal, we would like to acknowledge Williams Lake First Nation for their sensitive handling of



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this work, and to send the T'exelcemc and all residential school survivors and their families our wishes for ongoing healing.”

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society operates a crisis line to assist those impacted. The 24-hour Crisis Line is 1.800.721.0066. <http://irsss.ca/>

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Queries:

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About Ktunaxa Nation Council

Ktunaxa Nation Council is comprised of elected officials from ?akisq̓nuk First Nation, Yaqan Nu?kiy (Lower Kootenay Band), ?aqam (St. Mary's Band) and Yaqit ?a:knuq̓t̓it (Tobacco Plains Band) First Nation Communities. www.ktunaxa.org

<https://www.facebook.com/williamslakefirstnation/videos/1210388376563814>

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