



## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2022

### **T̂silhqot'in Nation comes together to heal in response to the confirmation of 93 unmarked graves at St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake, British Columbia.**

**Williams Lake, BC:** In response to the confirmation of 93 unmarked graves at St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake, British Columbia, at the former Indian Residential School, the T̂silhqot'in Nation is coming together to heal and continue our work to develop our own governing body to support our children and families for a brighter future.

The 93 burials identified by ground-penetrating radar represent a survey of only a small portion of the grounds at St. Joseph's Mission (14 acres of the 470-acre site).

The T̂silhqot'in Nation held a healing ceremony for our members this afternoon led by our Ts'iqi Dechen Jedilhtan (T̂silhqot'in Women's Council) to honour survivors, their families and the children that did not return home. The Nation will continue to support our people to overcome the dark history and legacy of Residential Schools.

The beginning of January marked the second anniversary of the federal Bill C92 child and family legislation coming into force. Bill C92 recognizes Indigenous People's jurisdiction to legislate in the area of Indigenous child welfare. The T̂silhqot'in Nation has been exercising our rights to self-determination and developing our own system to support our children and families.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair, T̂silhqot'in National Government**

"Once again our Nation is coming together to promote healing and support each other as we acknowledge the horrors of the Residential School system and the blatant injustice and genocide that was inflicted on Indigenous People. This investigation has only begun to scratch the surface of the atrocities that were committed at St. Joseph's Mission. It's the tip of the iceberg. Some of these burial sites are not even on that property. We need to have all Nations involved moving forward so that we can uncover the full truth. The T̂silhqot'in Nation is a healing Nation. Our healing journey started when our T̂silhqot'in War Chiefs gave the ultimate sacrifice for our people during the Chilcotin War of 1864/65 and the injustice and genocide we see confirmed again today at St. Joseph's Mission is the reason why our War Chiefs fought so hard to protect our people. Our Nation is committed to develop our own governing body to support our children and families here at home

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## T̓SILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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and based in the traditional knowledge and ways of our people. For us, that is the only way we can heal and ensure a brighter future for our people.”

### **Nits'il?in (Chief) Otis Guichon, Vice-Chair, T̓silhqot'in National Government**

“What happened in Canada with Residential Schools will never be okay. It is a disgrace. However, as a Residential School Survivor myself, I must stress the importance of healing. When we heal, we can help others heal. That is what I have learned. Our Nation hosted a Sacred Fires healing ceremony today to support our people through this difficult news. These healing ceremonies not only provide healing, but help us begin the work we have in front of us in a good way. I am very proud of our people and the work we are doing right now to support our children and families. Our goal is to make a difference for future generations of Indigenous Peoples and that starts in the home with supporting families.”

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