



June 3, 2021

STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC CONCERNING THIRD-PARTY INVESTIGATION OF MT. ELGIN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

It has come to our attention that an organization called '**Celebration: Event Facility and Museum**' has issued a press release to the public announcing their intent to conduct a ground penetrating radar search at the site of Mount Elgin residential school. The individual who owns this business also says that he has partnered with our First Nation in this matter.

We would like to make the following very clear:

- » The above organization has not been formally recognized by Chief and Council of Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. This business has provided misleading and inaccurate information and is a business unknown to the First Nation.
- » We have not had any discussions with the individual who owns this business regarding any type of work on this highly sensitive issue.

Since the announcement of the discovery of the mass grave containing 215 Indigenous children's bodies at Kamloops Residential School, our First Nation has been working tirelessly behind the scenes with allies to prepare a plan to present to our community - to consult openly and respectfully on how we - together, as a Nation, can move forward to investigate the grounds that have been identified within the community. This type of historical undertaking cannot be rushed and requires input and consultation from all members of our band, as well as neighbouring bands in Ontario through Quebec.

Our Nation is not an island. It's a very real possibility that any remains found on our grounds will be the loved ones of another tribe. Mount Elgin was the heartbreaking destination of many Indigenous children who were forced to attend from all across the Nation. We owe it to our relatives to speak to them on this matter - to announce our intent in a loving and honest way so we can work together to honour their spirits.

We, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, have not partnered with any individual or entity as of today, June 3rd, 2021. However, when we are prepared to take the next steps to investigate these crimes which were committed against our people and their children, it will come directly from us - not from any third parties on social media.

At this time, we would like to advise any members of the public who are interested in contributing financially to the work to please contact our financial Comptroller for our First Nation. Please be aware that any other methods of donation you may encounter are not genuine; they are not sanctioned by us and will not reach us. All donations collected will be put toward our cause - of which we will notify the public, after due diligence and consultation with all concerned parties.

Jacqueline French

Chief Jacqueline French

