

MEDIA RELEASE

Beauval Indian Residential School Ground Penetrating Radar Search Finds Several Possible Unmarked Graves of Infants

For Immediate Release

August 8th, 2023

English River First Nation, Treaty 10 – In August 2021, English River First Nation (ERFN) began searching the site of the former Beauval Indian Residential School (IRS) using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR). Phase 1 of the search is now complete and covered a large area in and around the school grounds cemetery. The GPR findings have produced several positive hits or Areas of Interest (AOI's) at this site, which are consistent with what we now believe are 83 possible unmarked graves.

“It is with sincere sadness that we announce that upon further investigation and study of these possible unmarked grave sites, most of them were labeled as “child-sized” or “sub-adult” in length. Further to this, 12 of these unmarked graves average only 2.5 feet in length, which is consistent with the burial of infants, and in line with several witness accounts of infant births, and subsequent deaths, by survivors of this school,” says English River First Nation Chief Jenny Wolverine.

A special council of community members, elders, and survivors are providing guidance and direction on next steps. Additional sites that have been identified by survivor accounts and will be searched by the GPR team over the next year. A vast number of records pertaining to the Beauval IRS have been made available to the National Centre of Truth and Reconciliation, including handwritten records in French, which are currently being translated and analyzed. This process is expected to continue over the next 2-3 years. It is hoped that eventually these records will identify these children and the First Nations they belong to.

“Our Elders and survivors are requesting privacy for the next two weeks to ensure that proper protocol and ceremony can be done to honour the lives of these babies and children,” says Chief Wolverine. “We kindly ask that the public and media respect the privacy of the First Nation and the community of Beauval, as our community members process this highly sensitive and delicate matter.”

Members of the media are invited to attend a press conference on Tuesday, August 29th, 2023, at the English River Business Complex, south of Saskatoon. Media inquiries will be addressed once our survivors and their families have had proper time to honour their lives. Photographs approved for broadcast of the Beauval IRS, its' students, and its' cemetery are being provided to media in the meantime. We thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time.

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