

MEDIA RELEASE

ERFN Elders Council Confirms Survivor Accounts of Infant Births and Deaths at Beauval Indian Residential School

For Immediate Release

August 8th, 2023

English River First Nation, Treaty 10 – The English River First Nation (ERFN) Elders Council expresses sincere sympathy and offers prayers to everyone affected by the findings of the Beauval Indian Residential School (IRS) Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) search. We are fully aware that this news will impact all survivors and their descendants across the country; our thoughts are with each of them.

We are shocked, but not surprised by these findings. Horrifying and gruelling stories of abuse from survivors have been circulating in our communities for generations. We can confirm that we have heard heart-wrenching survivor accounts of physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse, including stories of children dying under suspicious circumstances, and even babies being born and dying at this school. These findings verify the stories collected from elders and survivors and we believe that the ongoing review of the records will further corroborate our survivors' stories.

These children and babies are no longer lost. They were never forgotten, and we find some relief in that they have been discovered. Their final resting places can now be properly marked and cared for. We believe that the spirits of these little ones were calling out to us, and their calls were finally heard, and they've now been found. Their spirits can now be honored, fed, and prayed for as proper protocol and ceremony dictates.

The nation-wide calls for Truth and Reconciliation led to a desire to search and provide proof of our oral history. The truth must be revealed before true reconciliation can begin. We have always known the truth about the IRS system. We have always believed without a doubt the stories of our parents, our grandparents, and our ancestors. It is with great hope that revealing these terrible truths will lead to a new kind of healing, followed by true reconciliation.

We call on all people, governments, and other institutions to take notice of what has happened and how it continues to affect our people today. There are many people suffering to this day as a result of what has occurred at this school and others like it across the country. It is time for

the governments and institutions of today to take a serious approach in working with all First Nations' people wherever they are at and to provide the programs, services, and resources to help us heal.

Members of the media and public are asked to respect the privacy of ERFN and Beauval while they allow survivors to process and perform ceremony for those lost. 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 process this tragic discovery. 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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