



## BACKGROUND

### Preliminary Work Plan for Investigation at the Former St. Paul's Indian Residential School Site

The Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) is planning to conduct an inquiry and field investigation at the site of the former St. Paul's Indian Residential School. The investigation is being launched to bring healing and care for residential school survivors and is a critical part of the reconciliation process.

According to public records, 12 unidentified students were confirmed to have died while attending St. Paul's Indian Residential School between 1904 and 1913. The goal of the investigation is to find the location of each of these children, and bring them home to rest.

The context for this investigation is unique from other residential school settings, in that extensive development has occurred within the past 60 years on the property or properties of interest. Unlike other residential school sites which are located on First Nations reserves, the St. Paul's Indian Residential School site is currently owned by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver. While other residential school settings have quickly been the subject of ground-penetrating radar studies, this setting will require more background research before field investigations begin.

It should be made clear that the results of the St. Paul's field investigations should in no way be seen to validate or invalidate the experiences of its survivors. Whether or not unmarked graves are found, there is enough documented oral and archival evidence to say that these burials do or did exist.

This work plan will occur in phases, with a plan for each phase approved and supported by the Skwxwú7mesh community through Council. The intent is to proceed in a methodical manner so that no lines of inquiry are overlooked, and to use all available evidence to direct the field investigations.

The first phase consists of gathering of all records related to the school throughout its history. These records will come from many sources, including all levels of government, the Catholic Church and religious entities affiliated with St. Paul's. This information will supplement the limited data that the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw has been able to access to date through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

Most importantly, the process will gather records and accounts of the experiences of survivors who attended the school and whose accounts may assist in helping to narrow down, or expand, investigation search areas. Based on informal conversations with some Skwxwú7mesh residential school survivors, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw leadership established a need to develop a formalized interview process with the survivors who wish to volunteer to tell their stories.

Once all available information is collected, reviewed and analyzed, the workplan for the site investigation will be finalized. This will involve remote sensing searches in defined areas of

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interest, and may include ground-penetrating radar studies or other suitable methods. When results are analyzed, and with the support of the Skwxwú7mesh community and Council, excavations will be conducted to verify the results.

If remains are found, they will be carefully and sensitively removed and safeguarded by the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw until they can be reburied. Any additional analysis on the remains will be with the support and approval of the Skwxwú7mesh community and Council.

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