



Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k

PRESS RELEASE

Media Inquiries:

Joe Delaronde
Political Press Attaché
450- 632-7500 ext 63251
MCKMedia@mck.ca

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

Kahnawà:ke Mohawk
Territory
P.O. Box 720
J0L 1B0

Tel: (450) 632-7500
Fax: (450) 638-5958

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Fr. Lajoie consultation results released, Community Vote tentatively set for March 25-26

For immediate release

(Kahnawake – 21, Enniska/February 2022) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to advise the community that the results of the community consultation have been completed regarding the issue of the remains of Fr. Leon Lajoie, who was buried on the Territory in 1999.

Due to the exceptional circumstances of the request from Kahnawa'kehró:non asking that the remains be removed from the Territory, the Council of Chiefs decided to consult the community. The consultation was carried out between November 17, 2021, and December 3, 2021.

The Council of Chiefs would not usually consider reversing previous decisions but is treating this issue very differently due to several factors, including questions/concerns regarding the original Council decision granting the burial; trauma surrounding allegations; discovery of the initial 215 indigenous children; and issues concerning membership.

An investigation into the allegations against Fr. Lajoie has been carried out by King International Advisory Group on behalf of the Jesuits of Canada. The outcome will be provided to the community in the upcoming weeks.

Within the consultation, respondents provided several different reasons for their opinions through additional comments. Importantly, there was significant commentary that such a decision be made by the community AFTER the investigation is completed. Therefore, the Council of Chiefs has confirmed the decision to move forward with a community vote to determine the outcome of the issue, which will be held after the investigation summary is provided to the community. The preliminary dates for the vote are Friday, March 25, and Saturday, March 26. PlanIt Consulting will oversee and coordinate the community vote independently from the MCK and will announce further details in the upcoming weeks.

The Jesuit Order and Diocese of St-Jean-Longueuil have confirmed that if the community declares the remains should be removed, they will lead all legal actions towards a resolution and absorb all related costs. Should relocation be confirmed, they wish to move Fr. Lajoie's remains to the Jesuit Cemetery in St-Jerome.

The consultation results summary can be viewed at www.kahnawake.com/lajoie.

"It is very important that community members have as much information as possible in order to make an informed decision," stated Ietsenhahenhs Tonya Perron. "It's clear that this is a sensitive issue, so the decision should not be taken lightly."