

# BIKIIWEWINIG NINDAWAASHISHIIMINAANAK

BRINGING OUR CHILDREN HOME INITIATIVE

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MESSAGE

## Message from Ogiimaakaan

The following were precursor events before the introduction of Chiefs-in-Assembly Resolution #21-17 at Sioux Lookout, Ontario.

On May 28, 2021, the 215 unmarked graves were found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. So began the impetus of searching unmarked graves across Canada's former residential schools. Not all 139 residential schools have not all been investigated for unmarked graves.

In the northwestern region, survivors and families were searching for missing children and family members for decades without government assistance. There are communities that have missing children that attended Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. There are missing children and missing patients from the Sioux Lookout Zone Indian Hospital. Children and patients never went home after medical care.



Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug

Shortly after the federal funding announcement to support searching for missing children at former residential schools, Lac Seul First Nation proactively prepared and submitted a proposal to search for missing children at the former Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. The former residential school is in Lac Seul's Treaty #3 territory. Lac Seul submitted the proposal on August 25, 2021, to Indigenous Service Canada.

### Resolution #21-17 Introduced

It was during the Chiefs Assembly on September 22, 2021, that a resolution was introduced to support the Lac Seul's First Nation Bringing Our Children Home Proposal. Resolution #21-17 was introduced for consideration. Without much hesitation, Chief Donny Morris moved the resolution, and it was seconded by his colleague, Chief Lorraine Crane. The resolution was unanimously approved. The Chiefs-in-Assembly authorized Lac Seul to lead the Bringing Our Children Home Initiative.

An interview with Chief Donny Morris, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug on May 7, 2022.

Chief Morris said, "I heard people being taken out...need to locate members. We need to help those suffering silently and prepare to support them. If members cannot be repatriated, sadly that would be the final resting place and the site should be commemorated. As an example, when the Sioux Lookout new hospital site was determined, the partner First Nations brought soil from their

communities. Maybe we will do the same, bring soil from our communities to smooth over the graves of missing children and patients that never made it home. We need closure for members, families and communities."

Chief Morris further commented, "Lac Seul was given the lead. The Initiative needs to bring closure, close the gate like. We need to move forward thereafter. Mental Health Support will be much needed in the healing for recovery. The government needs to understand the residential school trauma. The government staff do not visit First Nation communities. No one from the government wants to come to our communities. There does seem to be more ministerial support but not much from the bureaucracy."

In final, Chief Morris said, "The 3-year funding is not enough time to complete the work in searching for missing children. The effort to find the unmarked graves will go beyond the government's funding timeline. There are First Nations with different spiritual perspectives, both Christian and traditional that will be considered in bringing closure to all.

Thank you

Chief Donny Morris

## UPDATES

# Elder, Survivor, Advisor

Acknowledgement and Honor of 215 children found in Kamloops, B.C.; Acknowledgement to the community of Lac Seul for taking on the courageous task of leading the initiative, "Bringing Our Children Home." We have begun the journey of, "Bikiwewinig Nindawaashishiiminaanak" My name is Ruby Morris, I have been honoured with these titles for the organization: Elder/Survivor/Advisor. It is my duty to explain the expectations for each of these roles. I will begin with an explanation role as an elder.

## ELDER

To begin, I would like to share my understanding of the definition of a traditional elder using the 7-generation time line.

/Great Grandparent/Grandparent/ParentXChildren/Grandchildren/Great Grandchildren/

1st            2nd            3rd            You            5th            6th            7th

An elder uses the knowledge of the past by learning from the teachings of his/her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, you pass on the teachings to your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, you will know you have succeeded when they turn around to look at you and you see a reflection of yourself. It is with humility and honour that I present my role as an Elder. My life experiences and training have given me a lot of knowledge and wisdom to fulfill the role. I grew up in traditional territory in my primary years. We lived with extended family with no interference from the outside world. Our elders in our extended family system provided teachings and continuous role-modelling for what they taught. I would like to share some of those teachings.

- Be thankful to the Creator each morning
- Pray and sing to the beauty of the world
- Fulfill and feed your spiritual needs
- Daily walk with seven teachings
- Respect all values and beliefs
- Know that children are gifts of the Creator; learn from their logic and innocence
- Play with your children; dance with them; sing with them; make them understand life is beautiful
- Respect all things; animate and inanimate
- Know the gifts that sustain life; air, warmth, land, and water
- You are unique and born with a purpose
- Learn from your actions and mistakes; life is a cause and effect situation
- Keeper, teacher of cultural teachings and language
- Life is a journey of learning, role-modelling, teaching

- Understand the effects of sympathy and empathy
- Be kind and be patient
- Knowledge of our history keep us informed of our identity

Some events that take place in the bicultural world that have an effect on the role of an elder

- Considered an elder at 65; old age security and pension come into effect
- Your hair turns gray and change in feature appearance
- Elders are placed in long-term care homes
- Indigenous language and culture are not important and need a lot of help from all Indigenous people
- There is a need to harmonize the traditional and contemporary teachings
- Extended family system needs to be strong again even in bicultural lives
- Need to revisit the parenting skills; child care organizations are growing
- Modern conveniences are enjoyed and shared by our people

These are a few of the things I have learned to walk with on my journey of life. Other factors will influence your understanding, experiences, and knowledge on an ongoing basis and have to be prepared to adapt/adopt constant change in this bicultural environment. The elders also come across different world views, geographical locations, and upbringing and this will create their perception as an elder.

I plan to share the knowledge and experience with the working team of “Bikiiwewinig Nindawaashishiiminaanak” to learn and understand about the teachings of our ancestors. It will assist them when they come in contact with community members during their travels.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Spring Gathering Rescheduled

Unfortunately, we were forced to reschedule our Spring Gathering due to flooding conditions. We are working to reschedule this important event to August and the new date will be announced shortly.

### Survivors' Working Circle

Our Survivors have now met for their initial Working Circle Meeting. A date for the next one will be determined shortly and dates announced. We are still looking to welcome additional Survivors from several communities that have yet to send representatives. If you know of any Survivors that are interested in joining us, please contact Lauren Augustine at 807-738-4762 or lauren.a@bikiiwewining.

## CONTACT

A phone line was established for all Survivors of Pelican Lake Indian Residential School to share their stories, records and information.

**807-738-3282**

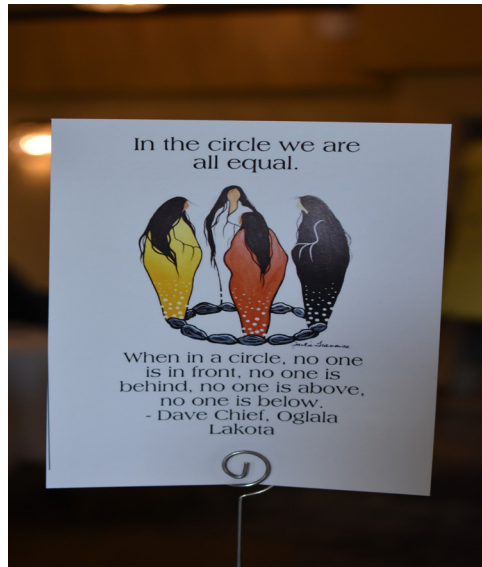
Please call the National Residential School Crisis Line at **1-866-925-4419** if you or someone you know is feeling distressed.

[Bikiiwewinig-Nindawaashishiiminaanak.org](http://Bikiiwewinig-Nindawaashishiiminaanak.org)



# Survivors Circle Gathering in Thunder Bay, ON

June 7-9, 2022



Thank you to all of those who attended the June 7-9, 2022 Bringing Our Children Home Survivor Circle Gathering, a special thank you to the Survivors who came out to tell their stories.