Ancestral Remains

Okanagan-Lower Similkameen Indian Band Territory/Cawston, British Columbia: In keeping with traditional Syilx Smolqmix governance and protocols, the Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) has worked tirelessly to respectfully address the disturbance of ancestral remains uncovered the afternoon on Monday, February 29th, 2016. We are now entering our fourth month of efforts to find a good way to complete recovery and repatriation of the ancestral remains. Several weeks ago, Premier Clark told Chief Keith Crow that her government would engage in a meaningful and responsive way. That has not yet happened. The Province continues to delay progress, deny responsibility, and hide behind its laws.

Chief Crow stated, “Our priority is to look after our relatives and return them to their rightful resting place,” adding that the law requires that the Crown meaningfully engage with Syilx Title, Rights and Interests matters. In this case, that engagement is with the LSIB Chief and Council. Chief Crow added, “We have been committed to working together to ensure a proper and peaceful resolution. Our patience is running thin. The Province must come out of hiding and be accountable.”

Although this site was reported to the Heritage Branch in 1952 and again in 1972, it was never mapped by the Heritage Branch or registered in the land title office. This omission and failure has brought us to today – a painful situation that was entirely avoidable.

Provincial legislation itself provides a specific route that protects not only this very significant Syilx place of ancestors’ rest, but also considers the current registered fee simple property owners and the possible payment of compensation to them. This route can and should be followed immediately in the interests of all parties – LSIB, the Syilx People, the Crown, and the current fee simple property owners.

As Chief Crow has explained, according to our Syilx teachings and protocols, time is of the essence. Failure to act is not an option.

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