

E 1/17/2020

Secretariat
Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada
Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage Directorate
Parks Canada Canada/Government of Canada
30 Victoria St, 3rd Fl. Office #2
Gatineau, Quebec J8X 0B3

Dear Secretariat,

This correspondence is to acknowledge that the Muskowekwan First Nation is submitting a formal letter to seek nomination as a National Historic Site to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada for the former Muscowequan Residential School. The former "IRS" situated on Muskowekwan First Nation territory stands in its original 1931 form at coordinates *NW14 27 14*, located on the #15 highway near Lestock, Saskatchewan.

The Muscowequan Residential School site evolved over time. Initially constructed of wood in 1886, it was replaced by a sizable stone structure in 1895 housing over 100 students annually. The main stone structure burned and was replaced in 1931 by the substantial brick structure that we see today in 2020. This building was designed by the Government of Canada's then residential school architect Roland Orr. It is an imposing, institutional colonial era structure that symbolizes a history described by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as one that contributed to a systemic cultural genocide. In this regard the Muskowekwan First Nation feels strongly that the Muscowequan Residential School story needs to be commemorated and told in perpetuity so that this history can never be forgotten.

The school was operated by the Catholic Church's Oblate Fathers, Grey Nuns and Oblate Nuns until 1969 when it was taken over by the federal government of Canada. It continued operating until final closure in 1997. During that span of time an estimated 10,000 indigenous children from ages 5 to mid-teens were placed in the Muscowequan Residential School. These children were taken from their families under forced compliance to the IRS system. They came to Muscowequan from First Nations communities across central Saskatchewan and from as far north as Dene territory.

This building is the last remaining intact residential school in Saskatchewan. Significantly too, it is one of the few remaining in Canada of the 139 former residential schools that comprised the culturally damaging school system that was imposed upon indigenous peoples across Canada.

Guided by the ***TRC's Calls to Action*** and by our Elders, our Council and community members, Muskowekan First Nation intends to repurpose the historic residential school building and the site into a place of commemoration, healing, and cultural learning.

There are an estimated sixty or more unidentified, unmarked graves of indigenous children who died at this school on the site. It is our intent to honour and commemorate these children who never made it home to their families through annual commemoration, and a permanent memorial at the site.

To date, Muskowekan First Nation has undertaken documentation and preliminary stabilization of the former residential school building as essential preliminary work to the larger project of preserving and repurposing the building and site.

Documentation and research work has been done in partnership with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (University of Winnipeg) Carlton University Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism (laser scan documentation and Studio design work producing design options for the repurposed centre) , University of Alberta and University of Saskatchewan departments of Anthropology (ground-penetrating radar to locate human remains of missing and unidentified children) and Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, and Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, Historic Places Program (2016 condition assessment and grant to seal the building from weather and potential vandalism)

In 2017, the National Trust for Canada listed the former Muscowequan site on it's annual list as one of the *Top 10 Endangered Places In Canada*.

All of this work, and support has inspired and motivated us to move forward with accomplishing our vision for this site.

We look forward to working with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada's National Program of Historical Commemoration to commemorate the former Muscowequan Residential School site as a national place of memory, conscience and historical importance for all Canadians to appreciate and learn from.

This is a very important project for the people of Muskowekan First Nation, for indigenous people across Canada, and for non-indigenous people. We want people to come and experience and learn from this very moving and evocative historic place.

If you should require additional information please call or email. We appreciate this opportunity to work in partnership with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, very much.

Sincerely,

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