



Office of Chief and Council Government of Siksika Nation

Siksika Nation Chief and Council Update: July 2021

July 1 - Siksika Nation Chief and Council Tribute to Nation Members

Siksika Nation (June 28, 2021) Siksika Nation Chief and Council organized a tribute on July 1st, 2021 for Siksika Nation members who attended Indian Residential Schools (I.R.S.) The half day agenda included a blessing at two former Indian Residential School sites located in Siksika, a convoy, an opening address from Chief Ouray Crowfoot and invited guest Chief Cadmus Delorme from Cowessess First Nation as well as residential school survivors address from Ruth Scalplock, Clement Leather, Vincent Yellow Old Woman and Dr. Vivian Ayoungman.

The discovery of the 215 child remains at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and the 751 unmarked graves in Cowessess First Nation has urged many First Nations to come forward including Siksika Nation. Since the first discovery there has been a total of 1,333 remains of children recovered on Residential School properties.

The tribute was open to the public and included members from the community and visitors from neighbouring communities who gathered together at 9:00 am outside the Holy Trinity Catholic Church at the location of the St. Josephs Indian Residential School. The convoy included a procession of cars, led by Chief and Council, from the old Crowfoot School location and to Old Sun Community College, which was another residential school in Siksika.

Attendees came out wearing orange in honour of all Children, past or present despite the heat wave. Siksika Nation Chief and Council would like to thank all those who came out to support the tribute including staff, volunteers and visitors.

July 6 – Work related to Indian Residential Schools in Siksika

Siksika Nation Chief and Council consider the work related to the residential schools extremely delicate, as we are dealing with survivors who may be reliving some of the traumatic events that happened during their residential school experience, as well as those children who never made it home.

The work regarding these children who didn't survive is extremely sacred, and there are traditional protocols & procedures related to that work. The necessary work may be conducted over many months as we had multiple schools on the Nation and we have a large land base.

Siksika will release information when Chief and Council have deemed the time appropriate. Please respect our process and allow our team to do the work without expecting "results" to prematurely be made public. Siksika Nation will inform the media if and when we have any information approved by the Nation deemed available for release.



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July 7 – National Museum of the American Indian Repatriates Two Objects to the Siksika Nation

Siksika Nation, Alberta – (July 7, 2021) Siksika Nation leaders met with representatives this week from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian to repatriate a Prairie Chicken Society Headdress and a Weather Dance Robe, sacred items that were taken over a hundred years ago after the Canadian and American governments banished ceremonial practices and property in an effort to eradicate Indigenous peoples and their way of life.

In a ceremony held earlier today in Suitland, Maryland, Siksika Nation Chief and Council representative Councillor Kent Ayoungman and Ceremonial elder Herman Yellow Old Woman attended the historic occasion and were delegated to collect the Natowa’piists (sacred items) on behalf of Siksika Nation and return them home.

“The repatriation of our cultural property is necessary to the revitalization of the Siksika way of life and remains a top priority for Siksika Nation Chief and Council, who work with various public and private collections on repatriating Natowa’piists back to Siksika. It is a special thing to see these items coming home and to be a part of this process.” expressed Councillor Ayoungman who credits the work and persistence of Herman Yellow Old Woman who began the process over thirty years ago and to leadership, both past and present, who supported Yellow Old Woman along the way.

Siksika Nation was notified in May 2021 that the repatriation request was approved and that the sacred items would be returned back to the Nation. The headdress was accessioned into the Museum of the American Indian in 1908 and the collector is unknown. The Weather Dance Robe was acquired by William Wildschut from Yellow Old Woman, a noted Siksika Weather Dancer in 1924.

This journey has been a personal one for Herman Yellow Old Woman, who is the great grandson of the Weather Dance Robe maker, Yellow Old Woman. He was known as a Weather Dancer—a medicine man who maintains a spiritual connection with Natosi (the sun) and whose primary function is the control of the weather during ceremonial occasions, such as the Sundance. The Weather Dancers’ ceremonial responsibilities also include providing blessings for community members.

Herman Yellow Old Woman, a Weather Dancer like his great grandfather who received his transferred rite in 2016, is extremely honored to be included and excited to see these sacred ceremonial items return home and be utilized once again in Siksika ceremony.

“These items have been gone for almost 100 years, so the thing that is amazing for us, is these materials (Natowa’piists) are going to go right back into action. There are transfers that will take place, sweats that will take place when we get them home. The Sundance is coming up in the next two weeks and they will be transferred and put right back into circulation, so today is an



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honour. It is very emotional.” Explained Yellow Old Woman who participates in the annual Akoka’tsin in Siksika.

“You can feel the power and spirit in these bundles and I feel excited for our Nation, our people. The Prairie Chicken Society are going to be able to see and use this headdress the way our ancestors did a hundred years ago and I can imagine our ancestors and how excited they are.” shares Yellow Old Woman who invites all Siksika Nation members to attend the Akoka’tsin and welcome back their old relatives.

Siksika Nation would like to also acknowledge the work of the Department of Homeland Security for the safe transport of these sacred items through the border despite COVID-19 restrictions and the National Museum of American Indian who has worked diligently with Siksika Nation on having these items returned safely to Siksika.

“Repatriation has always been one of the highest priorities for the National Museum of the American Indian,” said Machel Monenerkit, the museum’s acting director. “Our repatriation policy embodies our mission and vision, and we are proud to have worked with the Siksika Nation to ensure the return of these objects.”

July 16 - Siksika Nation Fair 2021 scheduled for September

Mark Your Calendars: The Siksika Nation Fair 2021

- Baseball/Golf – September 10, 11, 12
- Rodeo – September 17, 18, 19
- Powwow/Handgame – September 24, 25, 26

The Siksika Nation Fair 2021 will look a little different this year. Due to COVID-19, the committee has staggered the dates of the annual fair. As restrictions ease up, the committee remains committed to protecting the community and visitors and will continue to monitor all COVID-19 updates and recommendations set out by Siksika Health Services. The committee will provide more information in the coming weeks including how to register.

July 21, 2021 - Apply for the Siksika Nation Entrepreneur COVID-19 Relief.

Siksika Nation members who own a business can now apply for Siksika Nation Entrepreneur COVID-19 Relief. Go to SiksikaNation.com to download a copy of the form, fill it out and email to: treasuryboard@iksikanation.com by the July 28th deadline.

July 22, 2021 - Statement by Siksika Nation on Grassy Mountain Appeal

Siksika Nation – On June 17, 2021, the Joint Review Panel (JRP), consisting of the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC), released the *Report of the JRP on the Grassy Mountain Project*. The Grassy Mountain Project required a number of provincial approvals to proceed. The AER portion of the JRP Report concluded:



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*In our capacity as a panel of AER ... we deny Benga's applications under the Coal Conservation Act and related applications under the EPEA [Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act], Water Act, and PLA [Public Lands Act]. Without approval of the provincial applications, **the project cannot proceed.***

Benga Mining Ltd. has filed an application to appeal the AER decision denying approval of the Grass Mountain Project. Siksika is not participating in the appeal. Further, as the Government of Alberta has not addressed Siksika's concerns about coal projects in the Crowsnest Pass region, Siksika will continue to oppose any other efforts to pursue coal mines.

For more information on Siksika Nation Chief and Council:

Please visit SiksikaNation.com and follow Siksika Nation Administration on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for regular updates and statements from Chief and Council and Siksika Nation related news, programs, services and opportunities. We also encourage you to reach out with questions, comments and concerns in-person, mail or email.

Siksika Nation Chief and Council

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