

Transcript of Media Questions

15 July 2021

The event at Kamloops on 15 July 2021 consisted of a two-hour ‘public presentation’ followed by a ‘media event’ in which journalists were permitted to ask questions. The journalists’ questions can be viewed online at the end of the full 2 hour and 22 minute version, as well as in a CPAC version which covers only the 16 minutes of journalists’ questions. After the journalists’ questions there were one-on-one interviews with select media outlets.

The 2 hour and 22 minute version opens with Neetu Garcha’s question (see below). The CPAC version also includes preliminary remarks by Racelle Kooy in which she mentions that she had co-chaired the Assembly of First Nations General Meeting a week earlier in which two emergency resolutions involving Kamloops had been passed.

Neither online version includes the one-on-one interviews with select media outlets.

For the two versions, see these links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unQBkNgQc4M>

<https://www.cpac.ca/episode?id=cc4fc929-1875-47ee-ac05-257305c08830>

Racelle Kooy: So I’m going to call forward Kukpi Rosanne Casimir. I’m going to call forward immediately as well National Chief. I’m going to call forward as well immediately as well Sarah Beaulieu. Sarah Beaulieu, I’m asking you to the stage right now. Thank you so very much. And I say that right now. Thank you.

If you haven’t noticed I, some of you may recognize me. It was my joy and pleasure to serve as um, co-chair for the [Assembly of First Nations](#), so I’m used to wrangling. I love to do it in honour and service of our First Nation communities, our leadership and our, our people.

So are we now into the feed, Mike, for the media event? Can they hear me? Perfect. So thank you very much. For the people who are online, thank you for your patience. Again, what we’re going to ask that you do. I know that there’s some people in the feed who are, they were anxious.

I’m going to ask for co-operation in the room, please. Hello everybody. We’re getting started now, so I ask you to wrap up the conversations or take them outside of the room, please. Thank you so very much.

Thank you very much. So we understand and I respect that people were anxious and wanted to participate and ensure that they could participate remotely, so there are some people who signed up in the media dedicated Zoom meeting room, and we

welcome you there, but we ask that you turn off your cameras and mute yourself. And for the media wishing to participate today, that you have your cameras on, that you have also named yourself of your full name as well as your media outlet. So I want to make sure that's sure. I also want to um relate just a little midlife thing. I am absolutely reliant on a person over there because looking at that screen, uh I have great prescription reading glasses but they ain't gonna help at this point in time. So I am going to rely on my colleague over there to signal me for questions. When we go to you for question, again, even though you have named yourself, we're going to ask that you verbally name your full name as well as your media outlet, who you're directing the question to, and then your question. We only have time for a question per person per media outlet, to be very clear. I know, when I say that I know that there is different uh people, like whether it's CTV or Global, we have regional, local. But we'll take questions as best as we can. But we just ask for your co-operation at this time.

So let me get my glasses on. OK, Dora.

Uh, well, actually we'll go to the room here first for the first question. If there's anybody here, you can come forward to the microphone for a question. Please identify yourself. Your full name, plus your media outlet, who you're going to direct the question to, and then your question. Then we'll go immediately over to online, Nora, then we'll go to another question in the room. If you're getting a one-on-one interview, we're going to ask that perhaps you refrain because you're going to have that one-on-one interview. For those who do not, we will take a question for. Again we're not, we're looking for one question per person. Thank you so much. Please proceed.

Oh, just one second. Microphone please. Check, check, check. Check. Check, check. There we go.

Neetu Garcha: Hi there, my name is Neetu Garcha. I'm a journalist with Global News. First of all, my heart and my thoughts are with you, Chief Casimir, and the entire Tk'emlups te Secwepemc uh First Nation. My condolences to all of you. Um, it was mentioned, and perhaps, Sarah, you're the best person to answer this question, that part of the reason these 2 acres out of 160 were selected for this GPR survey was because a juvenile rib bone and a tooth were discovered. Do you have any details on when those were discovered, and by whom? Um, and if I can ask a follow-up after I would appreciate No? OK, that's OK.

RK: I'm very strict on this one. You get one question. Make it good. Thank you.

NG: Thank you.

RK: So we're going to Sarah Beaulieu right to my, first question to my right, please.

Sarah Beaulieu: Um, the juvenile tooth was excavated I think in the late 90s or early 2000s uh in a shovel test pit during uh an archaeological excavation by Simon Fraser University. The juvenile rib uh surfaced uh in the same area in the early 2000s and was brought in to the museum by a tourist. And it was identified. Yes. Identified as a juvenile rib bone and then documented subsequently from there.

RK: Thank you so much. We're going to go over now to Lindsay Shepherd online. Nora, can you confirm am I just asking the question from the chat, or is she addressing? So from the chat this is uh Lindsay Shepherd is from what media outlet please? Identify yourself in the chat, Lindsay Shepherd, of what media outlet you're from. We'll go to the next question on the floor, thank you so much. True North? So, Lindsay Shepherd from True North. The question is for Sarah. Excavation plans to gain forensic evidence.

SB: Sorry, one more time?

RK: Excavation plans to gain forensic evidence.

SB: I think with regards to forensics and anything else, social justice issues, uh it needs to be community led. Um it wouldn't really be a question for myself to answer, but Chief Kukpi.

RK: Thank you very much. We're going to go to the floor. Please identify yourself, what media outlet, and who you're addressing the question to, then your question

Dirk Meissner: Hello, it's uh Dirk Meissner. I'm a reporter with uh Canadian Press, and this question's to uh Chief Casimir. It kind of goes on to the question just before. Uh, you had one of the Survivors today say, Leave the site alone, leave it undisturbed, leave it, don't disturb it. We're kind of hearing throughout this today that you might have to do more work which includes excavation or digging. What more, I'm asking, what more are you planning to do?

Rosanne Casimir: Um, thank you for the question. So I do know that um we at TtS are community-driven. We do know that our membership has been grappling with the information that has been shared, and we do know that every step that we do take moving forward we're going to be having the community consultation with our membership. And of course you know there's been many questions surrounding you know the, it being a crime scene, and what those steps. First and foremost it is about love, honour and respect and, and dignity moving forward.

RK: Thank you very much. We have Julio Rivas from EFE, I believe it is, EFE, and he asks, for Chief, National Chief Archibald, uh, who will investigate crime scenes and what are the askings of the federal government? So, Chief Archibald, National Chief Archibald.

RoseAnne Archibald: What's the second part?

RK: Who will investigate the crime scenes and what are the, what are you asking of the federal government?

RA: These are crime scenes, and so we, we need some kind of independent investigation. We know that, for example, the RCMP are a part of children being taken from their families and communities, and so we need some kind of independent investigator on this process, and we need also international uh examination into these crimes. We did have a recent resolution passed at the AFN AGA on the uh

International Criminal Court being involved in this process, and so there are a number of moving parts that we still have to figure out. An investigation must occur, absolutely, and the federal government, their role is to make sure that records are provided, that they work with First Nation communities on the ground. Uh as Chief Casimir just said, this has to be a community-driven process, and so we would look to the federal government certainly to provide the resources that we need to conduct thorough investigations. We heard earlier about forensics, uh investigations of the sites. There are many layers to this, and the federal government in one way is in a conflict of interest because they, it was their policies that actually initiated residential schools in Canada. At the same time, they have to be accountable. They have to be responsible. And so these are conversations that I am going to be having at some point with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Members of his Cabinet. We'll keep you posted. Meegwetch.

RK: Thank you so much. We're going to go to the floor.

Jill Macyshon: Uh, my name's Jill Macyshon. I'm with CTV National News. And this is a question for you Dr, is it Sarah Beaulieu? Um, we had initially in the beginning phases heard of 215 potential unmarked graves. We just want clarification. Uh, 200 anomalies now. Is it more of a, are we understanding now more of the actual grave site as opposed to what we first saw in uh late May?

SB: No, nothing's changed. With ground penetrating radar we can never say definitively that they are human remains until you excavate, which is why we need to pull back a little bit and say that they are probable burials, they are targets of interest for sure. They, they have signatures, multiple signatures that present like burials, um but because of that we do need to say that they are probable until one excavates.

RK: Thank you very much. Going to online, we have Zang Lee(?) from CityNews for Kukpi. Can your community provide similar communities with costs of investigation?

RC: Uh, thank you for that question. I know um right now I can't exactly say what those numbers are until they're approved from the federal government, but we do know that there is a lot of work that needs to get done from every, every aspect from you know looking at the costs that we've incurred to date, having to put up um security and um you know security at many levels, and also looking at the um levels of professionals that we need to bring in to do those steps, and as we're going through each of those steps um I know all those costs are going to be confirmed as we go through step by step. We have put forward a preliminary budget, and are working on a comprehensive budget to date. And I know most recently the provincial government made that announcement as well, and I know that um part of that budget has also gone to the province as well.

RK: Thank you so much. We'll go to the floor now please.

Robin Gill: Robin Gill, the Globe National News. This is for Rosanne. Given the age of the school, uh given how difficult it might be to find those records, how difficult is this going to be to actually identify, should this be actually a grave site?

[NOTE: Chief Casimir was going to answer, but Racelle Kooy quickly bent over and whispered something to her.]

RK: We're going to refer that question to Don Worme, who is our legal counsel, to provide technical support. Can you repeat the question, please?

Robin Gill: Given the school is very old, given the fact that record-keeping may not be accurate, how difficult is it going to be to actually identify should there actually be remains in those graves?

Don Worme: Well, I think what we can say firstly is that it's undeniable that those are graves. There's no question that there have been children gone missing. Our Knowledge Keepers from this community have told us so. We believe them. The work that needs to follow up on that has been outlined by Dr Beaulieu. It is uh difficult work. But I think what you have borne witness today is a diligent community, is a powerful community that has worked extremely hard at revitalizing themselves, not just their culture and their language, but indeed their families and their people. I think that what you have seen is a fiercely independent uh nation, one that is more than capable and exceptionally competent to engage in the sacred work as it's been described going forward. We are ready to engage in this work and we have the experts on hand to be able to uh to be able to get on with the identification of these individuals and to conduct, as would be culturally appropriate, what type of excavations or exhumations that we have to go forward in terms of identifying these souls. Finally, uh once identified, there is of course a measure to be able to determine, uh not just their identity, but where are their homelands and where would they be repatriated to. You heard from Kukpi that the children who were interned at this place came from all over British Columbia, and indeed northern, northern uh Alberta and, and, and the Yukon as well. The work that is necessary is being done by competent people. You have the Culture and Language Department who have been extremely busy on this. They remind us of the cultural protocols that we are obliged to follow in the work going forward. Yes, there are concerns that there are differences in wishes, that some people wish the place to remain undisturbed. There are others who are calling for the identification of these people because they know that these are their children. We need to balance those competing interests. And with the assistance of and the capabilities of this community and the experts that they already have this work will be done.

RK: Thank you. I have a question from Alex McQueen from the Toronto Star. He is directing it to Kukpi, but given what is being asked I'm going to redirect it to our ground penetrating radar specialist because it's about what are the factors to determine numbers of graves and ages of children. So Alex McQueen, we are redirecting your question to our technical expert, Sarah Beaulieu.

SB: With regards to determining number of graves, uh as I went through on the slides it was ruling out different anomalies um such as root systems, stones, rocks, anything else under the surface that didn't present as a potential burial. With the notion of the targets of interest being children, the majority of the anomalies were between .7 and .8 metres below the surface, which is fairly shallow. It fits with the Knowledge Keepers' descriptions of children having to dig graves for one. Um, it also fits with, when you have a juvenile burial, uh because they are smaller in length they typically

are not dug as deeply. Um, so the length would have been taken into account in addition to the depth with the burial as well um to determine um if the targets of interest were potentially children.

RK: Thank you. We'll go to the floor.

Katie Nicholson: Katie Nicholson, CBC News. Uh this is for Kukpi Casimir. Um you mentioned you are still waiting to hear from the Prime Minister, and I wonder if you could maybe sort of expand on what it is you expect from the PMO in terms of leadership on this.

RC: What I would expect is um you know communication, direct communication you know with our local government, and you know I would really hope that he does take us up on our um invitation for him to come September 30th and to you know come and hear our Survivors' stories and to you know acknowledge what happened here, where it started here in Canada, and with us having to carry that message forward and to where we are to date.

RK: Thank you. We'll take one more question from the floor and we're wrapping up with that. Oh, I see another person actually, so we'll take, we'll go here, and then there, and then we're wrapping, wrapping up. Thank you so much. Go ahead.

Hi, sorry, Sydney Chisholm, Castanet, Kamloops.

RK: I'm sorry. Uh, you've got your mask on, and that's great, but it's a little muffled.

Sorry, Sydney Chisholm, Castanet, Kamloops. Uh sorry. I was just hoping to clarify, has any site been excavated yet, and is the 215 number still accurate?

RK: Sarah Beaulieu.

SB: As far as excavation for these burials, nothing has been excavated yet. The number is 200. So once the survey was completed um I received, subsequent to the, the survey, uh archaeological reports that um discussed impact assessments and excavation that had been done in the, in the same area, and so had to rule out where those excavations had taken place in the early, late 90s, early 2000s, and see if they um you know impacted where I had done my survey, which is why um I concluded with 200.

RK: Thank you very much. We'll take a final question here.

Kim Mackrael: Thank you so much. Kim Mackrael from the Wall Street Journal. This question is for Dr Beaulieu. Uh, and I'm sorry if I'm not pronouncing that correctly. I'm just wondering if you could walk through a little bit about how you became involved in the first place. Um, did the community ask you to come in, and what, what were the steps you took that led to uh the actual finding?

SB: With this particular site, um, when I, I worked closely with Dr Eldon Yellowhorn at Simon Fraser University, he's a professor in the Indigenous Department there, um, who has a relationship with Tk'emlups te Secwepemc here, um, and because of the

work I've done and his knowledge of, um, what I do with GPR, uh, it was a recommendation through there where I was invited to survey for Tk'emlups te Secwepemc.