



# TAKLA NATION

HEALTH ■ PROSPERITY ■ TRADITION

## **Lejac Residential School Reunion: Celebrating Friendship, Honouring Survivors**

This week, a historic event is taking place in Prince George on Lheidli T'enneh traditional territory. Survivors of the Lejac Indian Residential School are gathering, not in sorrow, but in strength and solidarity.

The Lejac Residential School Reunion is being held June 27–28 at the Prince George Civic Centre, bringing together over 500 registered attendees from 17 First Nations. The event is hosted and organized by Takla Nation in collaboration with the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, with funding support from Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC). We are also very thankful to receive generous donations to cover the costs of the second day.

This is the first reunion of its kind for Lejac Survivors, and it carries a clear and beautiful message:

“Celebrating Friendship.”

Walking Together, Honouring Our Strength, Healing Our Spirit

This event is grounded in the idea that for many children who endured the harsh and isolating conditions at Lejac, the friendships they made were vital to survival. These bonds became a lifeline and today, they are being honoured in a setting created for reconnection, remembrance, and renewal.

The gathering is not intended to be triggering or ceremonial in nature. Instead, it has been carefully designed to be a soft and welcoming space, where Survivors can simply be together again. It's a celebration of resilience and a powerful reminder that Indigenous community and kinship continue to endure.

“This isn't a memorial. This is about honouring each other, honouring our journey, and reconnecting,” says one of the organizers. “For many of us, the friends we made at Lejac were the only sense of family and safety we had.”

Cultural and wellness supports will be available throughout the event, and Chief John Allan French of Takla Nation will speak on Saturday, reflecting on the journey that brought this vision to life.

At the heart of this work is Takla Nation's Youth and Elder Department, led by Tamatha French, which includes the Residential School Healing Program. For the past four years, Tamatha has

worked with deep care and determination to bring healing opportunities to the community, always guided by the vision and direction of Chief John Allan French and Takla's leadership.

Together, they've made healing a top priority. From Keyah Healing Camps with individual families, to community-wide updates, to video documentation of all major healing initiatives, Takla has built a strong foundation for reconnection and cultural restoration.

Importantly, much of this work has been supported through Takla's own-source revenue, a reflection of the Nation's unwavering commitment to the well-being of its members.

Now, by collaborating with surrounding Nations, Takla has helped bring this reunion into being an act of collective strength, vision, and healing.

"Healing our community members is at the forefront," staff member shares. "And this reunion is one of the ways we are doing that — by walking together, not alone."

Lejac Indian Residential School operated from 1922 to 1976 near Fraser Lake, B.C. Children from many northern Nations were taken from their homes and placed there. The pain of that trauma still echoes, but the strength of Survivors and their choice to come together today, is a powerful act of reclamation.

This reunion is a first. And it will not be the last. It's a beginning of sharing, of reconnecting, and of honouring each other in a way that only those who lived it can truly understand.

To all the Survivors and families joining this weekend:

We see you. We honour you. And we walk with you.