

## **Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith**

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April 4, 2016

### **Regarding Land Owned by the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith and the subsequent development on two parcels in the Fort Resolution area.**

The Diocese of Mackenzie – Fort Smith has recently become aware of development on two (2) of its church owned properties – one in central Fort Resolution immediately beside St. Joseph’s Church (the St. Joseph site), and the other on a property on Mission Island (the Mission site). On March 29, 2016, the Diocese wrote these four parties concerning the issues.

- GNWT – MACA – South Slave Regional Office;
- Mayor of the Fort Resolution- Hamlet;
- Chief of Deninu Ku’e First Nation;
- Regional Superintendent of Public Works.

In this letter, documentation was provided regarding maps and land title, and then a requirement that all further development immediately cease on these 2 properties. Further, the Diocese is seeking an explanation from all of the above on how the current building development occurred without any prior notification, discussion or authorization from the Diocese to develop on its properties. It was also stated that it would be appreciated that a response be received as soon as possible.

While there has been some initial phone conversation with the office of the Senior Administrative Officer (the SAO), as yet we have received no formal correspondence on the matter.

In regards to the St. Joseph’s site, several large trailers, various large pieces of machinery equipment, and a chain-link fence have been erected on the property. These appear to be a construction-landing site for a major development across the street.

In regards to the Mission Island site, we understand that the development on the related church property began the Fall of 2015. We also understand the leadership was at that time made aware that some of the land in this location of the development on Mission Island was church-owned. Recent media reports characterized the development on Mission Island, “...for cultural revitalization and healing work.”

The Diocese strongly supports initiatives that provide recreational and other opportunities for community gatherings for healing, family and personal retreats, and community celebrations by the Deninu Ku'e First Nation, other Aboriginal groups, community groups, and various levels of government.

Notwithstanding the above, the issue of course is that, regardless of the type of development, the property owner has legal and moral responsibility for the stewardship of the property. This is partially reflected and carried out through the annual payment of taxes, and insurance coverage which is the responsibility of the property owner, and are currently up-to-date.

We look forward to hearing back directly from the leadership involved in the development on these lands.

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