



TOWN STATEMENT

Niagara-on-the-Lake Addresses Upcoming Demonstration Regarding the Negro Burial Ground / Niagara Baptist Church

For Immediate Release

June 16, 2023

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is aware of the upcoming demonstration that is anticipated to occur on Sunday, June 18, 2023, on Queen Street, regarding the Negro Burial Ground / Niagara Baptist Church located on Mississagua Street between John Street and Mary Street.

Background

This burial ground is the final resting place of Niagara Baptist Church Parishioners, many of whom were a part of Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic Black community, including enslaved people, freedom seekers from the United States, Black Loyalists, free people and their descendants.

In March of 2022, a delegation was made to Town Council requesting Town support in locating graves at the Negro Burial Ground. The Town was supportive of this request.

Since then, Town Staff have worked collaboratively with various partners and authorities, including the Friends of the Forgotten (FOFT), a community group whose vision is to make the Niagara Baptist Church burial ground a point of pride as a respectfully restored, serene memorial and historic site that honours the parishioners buried there, their role in the Town's heritage, and the importance of Black history in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Friends of the Forgotten are fundraising to help lead the burial ground's long-term restoration and preservation process and contributed funds to complete a Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment.

In January of 2023, the Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment began, and it was recently completed in May 2023. (This Stage includes reviewing geographic, land use and historical information for the property and the relevant surrounding area, visiting the property to inspect its current condition, and consulting with the Ministry.) Town Staff will share the results of the Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment with Town Council at the end of June to determine the next steps for this project.



Archaeological Assessments

Staff and the FOTF worked with a licensed archaeologist to conduct a Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment through funding raised by the FOTF community group. This process was done in consultation with the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO).

If approved by Town Council, a formal Stage 2 Archaeological Assessment would be the next step which would need to be commissioned by the Town under the guidelines of the BAO and the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism (MCM). An RFP would be issued for this work once funding is in place.

The Town will continue to work cooperatively with these parties as it respectfully investigates and restores this important burial site and resting place for those buried there. Fundraising efforts are ongoing.

Next Steps

Proper process and due diligence are essential to successfully restoring and commemorating this site. The Town understands the importance of this historic burial ground and is committed to a respectful investigation and restoration process that meets all legislative requirements.

For more information, including an opportunity to donate, please visit the Town's website by clicking [here](#) or visiting www.notl.com/recreation-events/community-initiatives-events.

For more information on the FOTF group, their efforts and how to contribute, please see the FOTF website at <https://negroburialgroundnotl.org/index.html>.