

Another burial site found along Grand, remains left unprotected

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Writers

The Haudenosaunee Development Institute (H.D.I.) is moving to take control of the discovery of 100-year-old human remains found on private property in Brantford Sunday.

A post hole digger dug up human bones around 1 pm Sunday on Birkett Lane.

Leslie Neudert, 24, was building a fence for the homeowner of the property near Mohawk Street and Birkett Lane when he came upon the remains.

"I was just digging post holes and I stepped on the shovel and these bones poked up," said Neudert. "I thought they were roots or something so I pulled them out and I thought, 'hey, that must be a dog.' I started pulling them (bones) out and I got to the jaw bone," said Neudert. "I didn't see any canines (teeth) so I went right to homeowner."

The burial was discovered at a depth of about two

feet, he said.

Neudert, who is Mohawk and lives in Brantford, said he was digging his eighth hole when he made the discovery of about 36 bones, including ribs, vertebrae, and a jaw bone.

Police sectioned off the area into the evening while a coroner and anthropologist looked through the remains, said Ruby Montour, who was at the scene.

She said the anthropologist told her and others at the scene the remains were from an aboriginal adult.

By Monday morning, the police tape was gone and the site left unsecured and H.D.I. were on scene to determine what to do with the discovery, including the HDI's archaeological monitor Wayne Hill.

Hazel Hill, interim director of the HDI, said she was at the property to ensure the Confederacy's protocol of non-removal was adhered to.

"The burial will remain intact," she said. "We'll follow through with whatever we

need to do to protect the area and take care of the people whose remains have been disturbed." She said the site will be monitored.

Hill said she contacted Michael D'Mello, registrar of cemeteries with the Min-



Remains of an aboriginal person were found by a contractor digging post holes at a Brantford home Sunday. (Submitted photo)

istry of Consumer Services, and told him the provincial Cemeteries Act does not apply in Haudenosaunee territories, calling the Act "racist" and "outdated."

Under the Cemeteries Act, said Hill, the ministry removes native burials and "do whatever they want with them. We told D'Mello, 'no, you don't get

to do that anymore. You're not going to remove any more of our people.' They don't have any kind of respect for our people."

She said she also wanted to speak to the homeowner about his future plans for

continuing to build the fence but he was nowhere to be found Monday morning. There was no answer when The Turtle Island News knocked on his door seeking comments.

Neudert said the homeowner hired him to build a perimeter fence in order to keep the man's dogs from wandering off the property.

Hill said if the fence building were to continue, the HDI would want to conduct a few more test digs to ensure there are no more burials in the area. The remains were discovered at the bottom of a sloping hill, among a few small trees that dotted the property. The hole was covered with blue tarp on Monday morning and the bones had been wrapped in tinfoil.

Tracy Prowse, associate professor of physical anthropology at McMaster University who has been digging and excavating remains since 1989, says wrapping bones in foil is not an uncommon practice. "Usually tin foil is used to keep the bones intact if they're a little bit fragile. It can act like a mold around the bone instead of in a bag where they can get tossed around." She said it does not harm bones. "There's no chemical reaction or anything. It shouldn't harm the bones in any way," said Prowse.

Meanwhile, Brantford Po-

lice are taking no responsibility for the remains or site, said Constable Natalie Laing. "It was deemed not a criminal investigation which means that the scene is turned over to the home owner," she said. It's private property, she added. Laing said police tape around the site was removed late Sunday night. "Now what happens is that the home owner is responsible for the bones.

"What they (the homeowners) do is work in connection with the Ministry of Consumer Services. Under that umbrella is the Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Services Act." The next steps are determined by the home owner liaising and receiving information from the ministry, she said.

Regional Coroner Dr. Jack Stanborough, said that the remains have been officially deemed of "archeological interest."

He said it's up to the cemetery registrar to re-enter the remains in appropriate places and fashions.