



Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k

PRESS RELEASE

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MCK concerned by high levels of lead detected in maple sap

For Immediate Release

(Kahnawake – 27 Enniskó:wa/March 2026) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to inform the community that high levels of lead have been detected in maple water/sap samples collected at the Kahnawà:ke Survival School (KSS) grounds. These findings are deeply concerning and require immediate community awareness.

The Kahnawà:ke Environment Protection Office (KEPO) conducted initial sampling in mid-March, following requests from the Council and community members who raised concerns related to the industrial processing facilities in St. Catherine during the February 2026 Special Community Meeting. Following initial results, KEPO staff visited the KSS grounds on-site to evaluate the school's maple processing equipment and collected two additional samples on March 23 from a single tree. One sample was collected using a plastic hose draining into a plastic bucket, while the other was collected in a metal bucket.

The laboratory results were received on March 25 where the plastic bucket had a lead reading of 10 ug/L (micrograms per litre); with the metal bucket showing 40 ug/L. For comparison, the threshold value for drinking water is 5.0 ug/L.

With levels already above the standard, and the potential for further concentration during processing to maple syrup, KEPO immediately alerted KSS and advised against consuming the maple sap or syrup.

While results across samples have been variable, they continue to indicate a concern with the maple sap. KSS has been notified of the findings and has been instructed not to process or distribute any maple sap or syrup at this time.

“These results are extremely alarming, and it was critical that the community be informed as soon as possible,” said Ohén:ton Í:rate ne Ratitsénhahienhs Cody Diabo. “We are doing more testing, and we will keep the community informed as this concern remains evident.”

During KEPO's review, it was noted that lead contamination has been a long-standing concern within the maple syrup industry, often linked to lead solder or lead contamination in materials used in collection and processing equipment such as spiles and buckets. KSS indicated that they are using relatively new equipment (5 years) and did not think that it would contain lead, which suggests further required investigation.

“Unfortunately, it does appear that the maple trees themselves are being impacted by lead. Additional investigation will be needed to confirm the findings and identify the source, and it is possible that the maple syrup season at KSS may be lost,” said Director of Kahnawake Environment Protection Office Patrick Ragaz.

KEPO and the MCK encourage any community members who are currently tapping maple trees and would like their sap or syrup tested for lead to contact KEPO at environmentprotection@mck.ca.