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PRESS RELEASE

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MCK announces additional test results regarding lead levels near the Eastern boundary of Kahnawà:ke

For Immediate Release

(Kahnawake – 14 Seskehkó:wa/September 2026) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) Terrapure Working Group wishes to inform the community that on September 10, 2026, we received preliminary findings from air quality testing conducted in multiple areas near the Eastern boundary of Kahnawà:ke. Representatives of MCK, the Kahnawà:ke Environment Protection Office (KEPO), and the Kahnawà:ke Education Center (KEC) have since met to review the findings.

The preliminary data indicated an elevated concentration of lead in an air sample collected from the Eastern Boundary. Utilizing Coriolis air sampler data (a high-performance device used to capture, separate, and concentrate airborne biological particles), the initial results show that when wind is blowing from the East (from St. Catherine towards the community), concentrations of detectable lead exceed the annual target threshold established by Quebec. In one sampling event (consisting of numerous six-minute sample periods over the course of three hours), the average reading collected from the Coriolis air sampler was over 150 ng/m³ (nanograms per cubic meter). The Quebec threshold of 100 ng/m³ represents an average level of exposure over an entire year, meaning someone exposed to levels over 100 ng/m³ on average over an entire year may be at higher risk.

Six other sampling events occurred over a four-month period that were well below the annual threshold value. The results are influenced by several factors — including wind direction, wind speed, and weather conditions. When the wind was blowing from the west (i.e.: from the community towards St. Catherine), levels were well below the threshold. Wind direction is most often from the West – this occurs approximately 80% of the time. Eastern winds (towards the community) occur approximately 20% of the time. The higher reading occurred when the wind was blowing in this direction. KEPO has been collecting daily 24-hour filter samples from the area for the past two months. These samples have now been delivered to an Environment Canada lab for analysis. The results from these samples will provide more information on the lead levels in the air and the duration of exposure.

The Kahnawà:ke Environment Protection Office (KEPO) also recently compiled analytical results from approximately 200 soil samples collected during an environmental sampling campaign this summer on the Kahnawà:ke Survival School (KSS) grounds (including the old campus). The results demonstrated high levels of lead at the Eastern border of Kahnawà:ke extending into the old campus, with a tendency for levels further West to drop.

At the existing campus, levels in the “AB” range were found. This means that the lead concentrations found are in a range suitable for residential and institutional use, but above background concentrations found in natural soils.

Detectable levels of lead were found in all soil samples. The highest readings, closest to the border, were above industrial threshold values.

The MCK stresses the importance of getting the air and soil quality analyzed due to the proximity of the school and residents.

The MCK will be hosting a special community meeting on Wednesday, September 16, at the **Royal Canadian Legion Mohawk Branch 219 from 6-8pm** to discuss and elaborate further on the results. The MCK notes that a more detailed testing analysis has been ongoing over the summer, where more comprehensive results will become available in the near future.