



Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek

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Date: August 2, 2024

RE: IRS Unmarked Graves Searches: Capping of Funding for Lead Communities

Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Nishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) is the Lead Community for the McIntosh Residential School Unmarked Graves search. Wiikwogaming Tiinahtisiwin is a Survivor-led project established to begin the healing process and journey for past students at McIntosh Residential School. The ground search for unmarked graves was to begin summer 2024 and includes several complex search sites on land and in the water.

On July 18, 2024, an official announcement was made by the Government of Canada in which a funding cap was placed on Residential School Searches of \$500,000 per year as opposed to the initial commitment of \$3 million. The funding cap will prevent Grassy Narrows with moving forward with the ground search this summer the way it was planned out. It may even lead to a complete halt in operations. This reduction in funding exhibits how out of touch the Government of Canada is with the needs of our First Nation People and the reality of the diverse nature of each Residential School search site.

Grassy Narrows First Nation has operated on the verbal commitment by Canada to support the McIntosh Residential School Unmarked Graves search efforts with the required funding. The Government of Canada has consistently communicated that the funding amounts that have been accessed in previous years would be available in the current fiscal year and into 2026 as well. Grassy Narrows views this verbal commitment in the same manner as Canada's commitments to various other Communities that entered into multi-year funding agreements at the outset. Grassy Narrows and Wiikwogaming Tiinahtisiwin have operated under the same financial expectations as the other Communities and expect Canada to honour their verbal commitments.

This generational travesty was caused by the Government of Canada, and the Government of Canada has an obligation and responsibility to do everything in its power to right its wrongs. This includes providing ALL necessary funding to locate unmarked graves at former residential school sites and bring the children home to their rightful resting place.

As we waste time fighting for money that has already been promised, we risk losing more Survivors, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers that hold answers to this part of Canada's dark history.

Chief Rudy Turtle, Grassy Narrows First Nation