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April 7, 2025

## **Re: Funding for Missing Children & Unmarked Burials Investigations**

To the Leaders of Canada's Political Parties,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Survivors' Secretariat, we urge your leadership in securing sustainable funding for the search for missing children and unmarked burials. The recent denial of our 2024/2025 funding request is a failure by the Government of Canada to uphold Calls to Action 74-76 and advance reconciliation.

Indigenous peoples in Canada have long been among the most vulnerable—not by chance, but because of generations of systemic discrimination and historical injustice. Confronting these injustices is not just a moral obligation but a fundamental step toward a just and equitable Canada. Investing in this work is an act of accountability—one that fosters trust, strengthens national unity, and proves Canada's commitment to truth and justice.

As leaders guiding Canada forward, reconciliation must move beyond words to action. Canada has the opportunity to lead globally in truth and justice, but that requires real investment. Denying funding undermines this commitment and damages trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Whereas providing sustainable funding for this work sends a clear message to the international community that Canada takes human rights, justice, and reconciliation seriously.

Despite raising concerns with CIRNAC, we have been met with inaction. Our funding request was denied based on a false premise of surplus, following our public advocacy against the July 2024 funding cuts to the Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund. These decisions have had a direct and harmful impact on our ability to continue this critical work.

Time is running out. Many Survivors are in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. The urgency of this work is tied to uncovering the truth within their lifetime. For over a century and a half, Indigenous children suffered in institutions that should have protected them. The children who never returned home are not just part of history—they are part of Canada's present and future. Their absence is a wound that remains open, and without action, that wound deepens, further damaging the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canada. Today, we ask for your leadership in ensuring their experiences are acknowledged, their remains found, and their spirits brought home.



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Since 2021, the \$10.2 million in funding from Canada has enabled us to make significant progress in our search at the Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School. However, our work is far from complete. We have not been able to search all grounds associated with the Mohawk Institute, nor have we been able to fully analyze our ground search data. We also have significant archival research to complete, including gaining access to the promised 24.1 million new documents held by Canada, along with finalizing how we will preserve this information for future generations.

A nation's strength is measured not by how it ignores its past, but by how it chooses to confront it. Canada has a choice: to leave this chapter unfinished or to stand with Survivors and Indigenous communities in bringing these children home with dignity. The world is watching, but more importantly, history will remember what Canada chooses to do next.

Sincerely,

Laura Arndt,  
Secretariat Lead  
Survivors' Secretariat