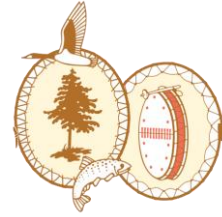




Canada



NEWS RELEASE

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FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR GROUND-PENETRATING RADAR (GPR) EFFORTS AT SITES OF FORMER FORT GEORGE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Cree Nation of Chisasibi, Eeyou Istchee, QC – July 20, 2022 – A total of \$225,655 from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) will fund ground search efforts at the sites of residential schools in Fort George, Eeyou Istchee, Minister Marc Miller announced today on behalf of the Government of Canada, alongside Chief Daisy House from the Cree Nation of Chisasibi and Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty of the Cree Nation Government.

This funding will support the residential school response coordinator, who will conduct local research, facilitate engagement, and gather knowledge from Survivors and their families. Funding will also contribute to memorialization as deemed appropriate by Survivors, their families and community members.

“The Cree Nation of Chisasibi is undertaking a multi-level approach to discover the truth, and to advance healing in their community,” said the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Crown–Indigenous Relations. “Their “Investigation, Remediation and Commemoration of the Fort George Residential School sites” initiative exemplifies the strength and determination of the community. Our government is committed to supporting these initiatives so communities can continue to undertake this work the best way they see fit, and at their own pace.”

In collaboration with Cree Nation Government, the Cree Nation of Chisasibi plans to search for children who never made it home from Fort George Residential Schools, honour their spirits, and work towards closure for the Nation’s collective healing. Additional funding will be requested for technical services such as light detection and ranging commonly known as LIDAR, ground penetrating radar (GPR) as well as historical photo analysis.

The funding announcement comes just one month after Chisasibi officially announced the community will move forward with a ground search of five identified sites of former Anglican and Catholic residential schools. This process may take from two to three years due to the terrain at the sites.



Minister Miller, Chief House and Grand Chief Gull-Masty also visited Fort George Island, the sites of the former residential schools, and cemeteries on the island. The Minister was able to meet personally with Survivors and former students of the Fort George Residential Schools.

Chief House said finding lost children on Fort George will be a life-changing step in the Nation's healing journey, especially when it comes to intergenerational trauma. "Our reality as *Eeyouch* is that Fort George Residential Schools altered most of our lives," said House. "We have all heard stories from our relatives about the challenges of these schools, and we know there are children who never made it home."

The Cree Nation Government confirms that it will continue to stand in support of the very delicate decision to search the grounds of the former Fort George Residential Schools, ensuring that proper support networks are in place will be essential and part of this journey. Programs such as this one announced today are critical to the ongoing efforts. "These activities will undoubtedly stir some very difficult emotions for families and friends of children who have not returned but also for Survivors whose stories of their past that will be revived," cautioned Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty. "We are doing our part to move forward. Reconciliation is a two-way street that does not simply end after an apology. Meaningful actions to facilitate our healing journeys must come from all sides."

Operated by the Catholic and Anglican churches, the former Fort George Residential Schools were significant.

As Pope Francis is expected to visit Canada next week, Chief House continues to push the church to share their records and open their archives.

"At this point, we are done asking. We demand for the release of all church records," said House. "When the Catholic Church shares the entirety of the records they hold, only then can we truly talk about reconciliation. *Eeyouch* want answers. We want a clear picture of what happened. These heavily guarded archives hold so many missing pieces of our true history."

For more information on GPR at residential schools in Fort George, visit: www.chisasibi.ca/GPR.



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