

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canadian Archaeological Association Working Group on Unmarked Graves Condemns Defunding of National Advisory Committee on Residential School Missing Children and Unmarked Burials

February 25, 2025 — The Canadian Archaeological Association Working Group on Unmarked Graves (CAAWGUG) stands in support of the National Advisory Committee on Residential Schools Missing Children and Unmarked Burials (NAC). We express our deep concern and disappointment over the Government of Canada's decision to discontinue funding for the essential work of the committee and Circle of Survivors. This defunding of NAC, coupled with reductions in funding to communities undertaking this sacred work, puts ongoing investigations in significant jeopardy. We strongly urge the federal government to reverse this decision and continue supporting the NAC, which offers Indigenous communities access to trusted experts in their efforts to identify, locate, commemorate, and bring home missing children, and commit ongoing, sustainable funding to Indigenous communities searching for their children.

The Canadian Archaeological Association (CAA) is a charitable organization and the national archaeological organization of Canada. We are members of the CAAWGUG, formed in June of 2021 in response to the findings of unmarked graves at Kamloops Indian Residential School. The WGUG (winners of a [2024 Governor General's Innovation Award for this work](#)) represents archaeologists from all over the country with expertise in mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), ground searches (Ground Penetrating Radar), and community-based investigations, among other specialties. To support communities in the search for missing children at Indian Residential Schools (IRS), sanatoria, and hospitals, we have produced two written documents: [Searching for Missing Children: A Guide to Unmarked Graves Investigations](#) and [Searching for Missing Children: A Guide to Remote Sensing Techniques](#) and a series of [companion videos](#) that present the same information as the documents for individuals that prefer audio-visual presentations. The resources we have created have been made available to communities in part through the NAC website and knowledge sharing events.

As experts on the application of ground search technologies, we understand the significant resources needed to undertake the search process, but also acknowledge the technical portions of the work are a small part in the overall journey of bringing the children home. The NAC brought together a community of experts who can support the diverse and complex task ahead in community-centered, Survivor-led ways. We call on the Government of Canada to honour their commitments by ensuring that the NAC receives the financial resources necessary to continue its essential work supporting communities and helping respond to the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 71-76](#). Anything less would represent a failure to support Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and the right of families and communities to seek answers and closure on their own terms.

The CAA Working Group for Unmarked Graves calls for reinstatement of support for the NAC and Indigenous communities in this critical work. We will continue to provide technical advice and advocate for justice, accountability, and the respectful care of the missing children who must never be forgotten.