

Tuesday, June 29, 2021

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

The news last Thursday of the confirmation of at least 751 unmarked graves at the former Marieval Indian Residential School was crushing. Talking about how sad the event is, sending thoughts and prayers or referring to residential schools as a mistake is no longer sufficient.

Though the architects of the residential school system have long since passed, the trauma created by various incarnations of the Indian Act and the residual effects on Indigenous Peoples continues today. It is impossible to turn a blind eye to the atrocities that have been known by Indigenous Peoples for hundreds of years. As more school sites are searched, more unmarked graves will be identified.

Near North District School Board (NNDSB) acknowledges the grief of Indigenous Peoples and continues to be committed to educating students and staff about the First Peoples of Turtle Island and the price they have paid in its colonization. We want Indigenous staff, students and their families to know that the following supports are available to them:

NNDSB resources:

- Mental health staff who have been trained in cultural competency
- An Indigenous outreach worker
- Indigenous Grad Coaches (info has been circulated already)
- Lynn D. Fortin, Indigenous social work staff, part of a four-member staff that will be working this summer. To access this service email socialwork@nearnorthschools.ca

Community partners/resources:

[North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre](#)

[Parry Sound Friendship Centre](#)

[Right Path](#) (counselling services, Nipissing First Nation)

Indian Residential School 24-hour crisis line 1-866-925-4419

Flags at NNDSB schools, and all other provincial buildings, will fly at half-mast until further notice. We hope this respectful gesture provides an opportunity for reflection. We encourage families to discuss at an age-appropriate level Volume 4 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, [Missing Children and Unmarked Burials](#) and to participate in the [Heart Garden](#) project.

Sincerely,

Near North District School Board