

News release

For immediate release

Canada formally apologizes to five Anishinaabeg First Nations

October 26, 2024 — (Manitoulin Island, ON) — Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation, M’Chigeeng First Nation, Sheguiandah First Nation, Sheshegwaning First Nation and Zhiibaahaasing First Nation

Today, the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown–Indigenous Relations, on behalf of the Government of Canada, formally apologized to Aundeck Omni Kaning, M’Chigeeng, Sheguiandah, Sheshegwaning and Zhiibaahaasing First Nations for past wrongs relating to the Crown’s mismanagement of their monies in the late 1800s and the negative impacts experienced by the five communities as a result.

This long-overdue apology was delivered at a ceremony held today with First Nations leadership, Elders, youth and community members at Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation. Approximately 100 people were in attendance.

At the ceremony, the Government of Canada and the First Nations also commemorated a claim settlement that provides a total of \$447.9 million in compensation to be shared among the five First Nations. This financial settlement resolves three historical claims which date back to the late 1800s and are the focus of the apology delivered today.

The apology relates to the Crown’s mismanagement of the First Nations’ monies from past land sales in the late 1800s following an agreement made with the First Nations in 1862. Instead of enabling these Anishinaabeg communities to thrive and economically benefit from the land sales, the Crown used the profits - the monies intended for the First Nations - to build roads and open up Manitoulin Island for settlement. In doing so, the Crown failed to act honourably and uphold its relationship with the First Nations, going against the spirit and intent of the Treaties, breaking its promises and creating injustices which continue to be felt by the communities today.

This formal statement of apology and co-developed settlement are key steps toward healing and reconciliation with Aundeck Omni Kaning, M’Chigeeng, Sheguiandah, Sheshegwaning and Zhiibaahaasing First Nations. This is also an opportunity for all people in Canada to learn about our shared history and the harmful legacies of colonialism so we can move toward greater understanding and respect.

Confronting our history and addressing past wrongs is critical to advancing reconciliation in Canada and rebuilding trust with First Nations communities.

Quotes

“Acknowledging and apologizing for past wrongs is the right thing to do. This settlement with Aundeck Omni Kaning, M’Chigeeng, Sheguiandah, Sheshegwaning and Zhiibaahaasing pays a longstanding debt that is rightfully owed to the First Nations. Nothing can undo the past or the pain it has caused, but it is crucial that we listen to Indigenous communities on how to best move forward. It is our hope that today’s apology will be a turning point in our Nation-to-Nation relationships with these five First Nations as we continue to co-develop shared solutions and build a better future based on mutual respect and true partnership.”

The Honourable Gary Anandasangaree
Minister of Crown–Indigenous Relations

“This has been a long time coming. It is good to finally see some compensation coming to the First Nations.”

Chief Patsy Corbiere,
Aundeck Omni Kaning

“This is a long overdue moment. We look forward to a positive result for our First Nation.”

Chief Morgan Hare,
M’Chigeeng First Nation

“Community partnerships have proven that working together on the Manitoulin Project is the best way to strengthen our communities, which creates a positive future for generations to come.”

Chief Jason Aguonie,
Sheguiandah First Nation

“Sheshegwaning is glad that Canada has taken this important step to resolve such long-standing breaches of fiduciary duty.”

Chief Alana Endanawas,
Sheshegwaning First Nation

“Our community suffered the loss of these funds for too many years. We look forward to finally building for our families and in line with our vision.”

Chief Irene Kells,
Zhiibaahaasing First Nation

Quick facts

- The five First Nations have long sought justice and fair compensation for the three historical claims (which are often called “the Manitoulin Project”).
- The First Nations and Canada began talks in 2016 to find the common ground for resolving these claims outside of the courts.
- Negotiators for the parties completed their work on the settlement in December 2023.
- First Nations members approved the settlement in community votes held in March 2024, with 98 percent of those who voted voting in favour.
- The settlement was signed by the First Nations and Canada in August 2024.
- The United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising represented the five Anishinaabeg First Nations in the negotiations: Aundeck Omni Kaning, M’Chigeeng, Sheguiandah, Sheshegwaning and Zhiibaahaasing.

Related links

[Statement of apology to United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising](#)

[The Manitoulin Project](#)

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