

The Government of Canada and Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) sign a framework agreement to build a mercury care home

From: [Indigenous Services Canada](#)

News release

April 3, 2020 — Ottawa, Traditional Algonquin Territory, Ontario — Indigenous Services Canada

Yesterday, in the spirit of collaboration, trust and mutual respect, the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services and Chief Rudy Turtle of the Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) signed a framework agreement to provide federal support to the community to support the mercury care home.

This facility will provide access to health services to meet the needs of community residents who are living with methylmercury poisoning.

Through this framework agreement, Indigenous Services Canada will provide \$19.5 million to Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek towards the construction of the mercury care home, supporting a design the community envisioned. Furthermore, Indigenous Services Canada is working towards obtaining additional funding to support the operation of the mercury care home. The Government of Canada is committed to working with Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek to ensure this vital project is completed.

Quotes

“The health of the residents of Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek is at the forefront of everyone's minds and hearts. This historic framework agreement is the beginning of an important turning point. Reflecting on what should have happened a long time ago, I take great pride and promise in what can be done so that specialized care can be accessed, and close to home. I also recognize the work and trust of Chief Turtle putting what he believes in his heart to be just at the center of his advocacy.”

The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Indigenous Services

Quick facts

- High level of mercury contamination in the English-Wabigoon River system, discovered in 1970, caused very high levels of mercury exposure among people residing in Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek and Wabaseemoong. Levels of exposure in the late 1960s and 1970s were sufficient to cause mercury poisoning among several highly exposed community members. The Government of Canada completed extensive annual monitoring for mercury in Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek and Wabaseemoong First Nations, as well as other nearby communities, between 1971 and 2000.
- Federal and provincial governments, together with two pulp and paper mill companies (Reed Limited and Great Lakes Forest Products Ltd), paid a total of \$16.67 million in a one-time compensation payment to Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek and Wabaseemoong First Nations, based on a 1985 Memorandum of Agreement.
- The governments established the Mercury Disability Board in 1986 to oversee the administration of a trust fund for benefits that are paid to claimants showing symptoms of past mercury poisoning.
- Indigenous Services Canada has been working with Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek leadership on two distinct projects that will meet the short and long-term health needs of the community: the construction of a new mercury care home and the expansion and renovation of the community's current health facility.

Contacts

For more information, media may contact:

Vanessa Adams
Senior Communications Advisor and Press Secretary
Office of the Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Indigenous Services
343-543-7645

Media Relations
Indigenous Services Canada
819-953-1160
SAC.media.ISC@canada.ca