

Indigenous leaders to press federal government on services in northern community



In this file photo, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Alvin Fidler speaks in Ottawa on January 4, 2013. (THE CANADIAN PRESS / Sean Kilpatrick)

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OTTAWA -- Indigenous leaders are set to press the federal government on Thursday over services available in Wapekeka First Nation -- a tiny community in northern Ontario mourning the suicides of two 12-year-old girls.

Community leaders say the reserve school remains closed while crisis teams work on the ground following the deaths of Jolynn Winter and Chantel Fox earlier this month.

A spokesperson for the reserve says it identified several children secretly planning suicide several months ago, but the community was not provided with funding from the federal government.

Health Canada has not immediately responded to the community's comments.

Wapekeka is an Oji-Cree fly-in community with a population of about 430 people located 600 kilometres due north of Thunder Bay.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, whose organization represents 49 First Nations communities in Ontario, says the deaths of the 12-year-olds are further evidence of the need for a national suicide strategy to help protect indigenous children across Canada.