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Sault Tribe receives CARES Act funding

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians today received \$37.2 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Indian tribes were reserved \$8 billion in the CARES Act that allocated money to the relief fund. Tribes across the country are receiving payments totaling \$4.8 billion according to government-to-government consultations between the tribes and the federal government, and formulas developed by the US Treasury.

According to the CARES Act language, tribes may use the money for "necessary" expenses caused by the public health emergency from March 1 to Dec. 30, 2020. The tribe may use the funds for COVID-19 related needs such as COVID-19 testing, emergency medical response, telemedicine, communications, acquisition and distribution of medical and protective supplies for personnel working with the public as well as quarantine costs. Also allowed are expenses for COVID-19 related public health measures like food delivery, distance learning for school closures, telework, COVID-19 sick leave and health precautions, sanitizing, social distancing and caring for homeless populations, for some examples.

The \$37.2 million COVID-19 funding will substantially help the tribe, which is presently expecting to pay over \$17 million in wages and lose at least \$27 million in revenue. The Sault Tribe Board of Directors dedicated the balance of its \$5.5 million in Contract Health Support Cost settlement to tribal wages, but payroll costs will overtake that funding before the closure is over.

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