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Nov. 1998

Canadian Jewish Congress

To the person who wrote this article, on the residential schools of Canada, Also to all other interested parties of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

I hope what I have written to Bernice Logan, on my experiences at Shingwauk I.R.S. Along with my rebuttals to her books called "The Teaching Wigwams". Will be of interest to your findings on the Indian Residential Schools of Canada. As my healing continues I do wish to let the [world] know, also the Canadian people as a whole.

That the Indian people of Canada, and my self have kept quiet, and suffered too long. We need and want the people of Canada to know, what we as children went through. I have also heard "Ignorance is no excuse of the law". This should apply to the Canadian Government. [Especially] the four main churches of Canada. They should be made more accountable for their handling of Indian Residential Schools. Not just what I've read "Help them out".

On my self after leaving school, I never had trouble thinking or talking to people, except when I was asked to talk in front of people at any gathering, I couldn't breathe or talk anymore. I never told anyone my problem; I would make one excuse after another not to talk. It was the same for writing, I had all the classic excuses to get out of writing anything, I could talk myself out of joining any committees, just the thought of writing any report terrified me, I couldn't think or write anymore.

Then I met Bernice Logan at our 1991 Shingwauk reunion. Since then my life has changed, especially after reading her books on residential schools, called "The Teaching Wigwams". After reading her books, the hate and anger came out of me again. I told my wife someone has to write to this woman, [Bernice Logan]. She told me why don't you write, I can't I don't know how to write, She kept on encouraging me to try. I tried and tried, nothing would come out. After months of trying and failing, my writing started coming and coming. I guess it was there all the time, except it was buried for 52 years under Shingwauk and some of Bernice Logans misfit missionaries. Damn the Indian Schools of Canada. Bernice in her unsubtle way has given me a great new freedom, I love and want to just keep on writing and writing.

Since I wrote my rebuttal to Bernice Logan, I now want everyone to know what I went through.

I just want to bring up another fact, something I had forgotten. Had I remembered I would have put in my letter to Bernice Logan. In June 1998 I stopped and visited a schoolmate in Waterbury Connecticut. He had read my letter to Bernice, he told me you for got something. Don't you remember when we use to work for the Chinese man, Who had a farm near the school. One of the chores was to feed his pigs; we would all run over

there and start eating the food meant for the pigs. He use to yell at us to stop that, he never stopped us, he would just look and shake his head. When you're hungry you eat.

All though I was never sexually abused, I was physically beaten, verbally and emotionally abused. By some of Bernice's so called missionaries, "missionaries Hell". I don't care what those missionaries are saying, There were bad ones in all the residential schools.

I would never admit to the fact, that my family suffered from my abuse at home. I attended many healing work shops, trying to get that hatred and anger out of my body, nothing seem to work. It was my letter to Bernice Logan, that help the most. It did get rid of a lot of hate and anger from my body.

I haven't changed my mind about going to church, I still don't go. In spite of my bad feelings agains't the churches. I don't try to stop anyone from attending any church of their choice, that goes for my family too. To this day I still haven't forgiven the Anglican church or the Canadian government for what I went through, also for my brothers and sisters who went through the same thing.

I gave each one of my children a copy of my letter to Bernice Logan. I told them this is not an excuse for the way I was. But maybe it will help you understand why I was the way I was, when you kids were growing up.

My youngest son who is now 36 years of age, in 1997 told me in private, I have something, I have been wanting to tell you for sometime. When I was little I couldn't wait to grow up so I could kick the shit out of you, I knew he meant it, I hugged him and told him, thanks for not doing it. "You changed so I didn't have to" he said.

To the Canadian Jewish Congress.

I truly hope this will be of interest to you, in your quest for truth and justice to the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools of Canada. I really thought Canada was serious, with their offer of 350 million, to help the survivors of the residential schools. I ran away from Shingwauk, I ran away from Canada, I guess I ran too far. It seems Los Angeles California is on another planet.

At the 350 million healing fund meeting I attended in July 1998 in Vancouver B.C. I was told I have to come to Canada for my healing, I go to Canada about every two years. At that rate I'll be dead before I ever get healed. I just don't see where the government of Canada is acknowledging anything in it's social and legal obligation to me or anyone else, who ran too far.

I didn't see any political issues when I left Canada. I was told at the meeting in Vancouver, there is to be no political issues involved when applying for healing fund aid.

As I see it, Canada is the one who has made this a political issue, on my part or for anyone else who has left Canada. I don't see where anyone coming to visit me in Los Angeles, for 4,5 or 6 visits or more if necessary for any healing purposes, is going to use up 350 million dollars of healing fund money.

I guess this is what they mean when they say. It is a Symbolic recognition of the responsibility of the federal government of Canada, on what happened on the residential school policies. For those of us who are on another planet. We will be known as the symbolics of Canada. This is not a symbolic gesture on my part. As much as I thought and felt I had been helped by Bernice Logan's letter.

I have been denying myself in thinking that I don't need more help, I do and need more help.

The Rage is gone, it has turned into less severe anger, which my family has accepted. I see a lot of my self in my youngest son. His anger comes and goes, I need someone to talk to him besides my self. He doesn't live in California anymore, he lives and works in Laredo Texas. We only see him when he's passing through. My heart is heavy for him.

I wish I could touch him and turn off his anger when it starts. I will now share his anger with those supposedly christian missionaries at Shingwauk I.R.S., and the Canadian Government. For their restrictions on the very healing fund, that is suppose to help people like me.

I guess in my case I am suppose to use the old adage, "heal thy self, heal thy self, heal thy self". How many times must I say it before it helps.

Damn the Bureaucratic Government of Canada, you are ones, along with the four main churches who created this calamitous situation for the first nations people of Canada.

Just because I live in another country does not, or should not excuse you from your legal obligation to me or my family.

I am "not" trying to be melodramtic in writing this letter. It has been to long in coming on my part, I am now crying out. I am now seventy years old Jan. 3 rd. 1998. I still can not help myself, when I think and write certain things from my past. It still makes me cry, I try to hide my tears from my family, the grand children do not understand. "Grand-pa" is crying, when this happens I have to put my pen down,

I thought I was through crying, I just can't seem to control my emotions on past events. As long as I don't think of the past, I do feel and seem as normal as the people around me. [if that's normal].

Some of my writings have been registered, this is not to stop you from using my letters if you wish. If you do please use them for the right reasons.

I will also send this letter to Jane Stewart, minister of Indian affairs. I do hope I will hear from some one from the Canadian Jewish Congress. On what I have written .

Again I just want the people of Canada, and anyone else who has a vested interest in what happened to the first natives of Canada. We were only children in the residential schools, when this happened to us.

I know you have your own peoples problems. I appreciate and thank the Canadian Jewish Congress, for their concern on the terrible misfortune perpetrated on the first nations people, by the residential schools of Canada.

If I had one wish it would be, to see what I have written be published in Canada for everyone to read.

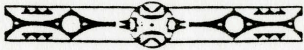
My e-mail---Dsands@packbell.net

May the great spirit guide and help us and for ever watch over us.

Meegwetch [thank you]

For ever yours

Donald H Sands



MESSAGES AROUND THE HEALING FUND ANNOUNCEMENT

From the Chiefs Committee on Health

The healing fund will be a first step on a journey of one thousand steps. It is a door opening onto a previously-closed subject: the way that the federal government devalued First Nations children, families and Nations.

It is appropriate that government is beginning to acknowledge its social and legal obligations for the policies of assimilation of Aboriginal people through the residential school system.

The people affected believe that no amount of money will compensate for the loss of culture, spirituality, language and family ties. This healing fund is not compensation.

It is a symbolic recognition of the responsibility the federal government bears for the damage inflicted by the residential school policy. First Nations believe that policy was genocidal in intent. We grieve for those whose physical integrity was harmed, who were abused in horrifying ways that cannot be excused by the cultural context of the times. We ache for those who lost their native tongue and their faith in the Creator, who received inadequate education. We also

mourn the families which were split by the loss of their children, communities which were depopulated of children from the ages of 5-18 and placed in the care of the government's employees. We remember those parents who questioned church and government, who resisted, and the students who hid, ran away, or died in the care of the schools.

This healing gesture does not absolve the federal government of continuing responsibility for repairing the damage that their policies caused.

There are concerns that all matters relating to residential schools will now be referred to this healing fund – we must insist that the government has continuing responsibility.

We need to remember that the effects of residential schools are said to reverberate for seven generations – the healing will take an equally long time. It is not possible for communities, families and Nations to heal within four or five years – however, this money will allow for healing processes to begin and to grow.

The amount does not meet all the needs for recovery, especially in the context of funding caps to the health care envelope. Funding for residential school healing must be long term. First Nations must calculate the costs of social reconstitution, including education and counseling, to prove the enormous need. Political pressure to increase the funds and make them sustained will be necessary.

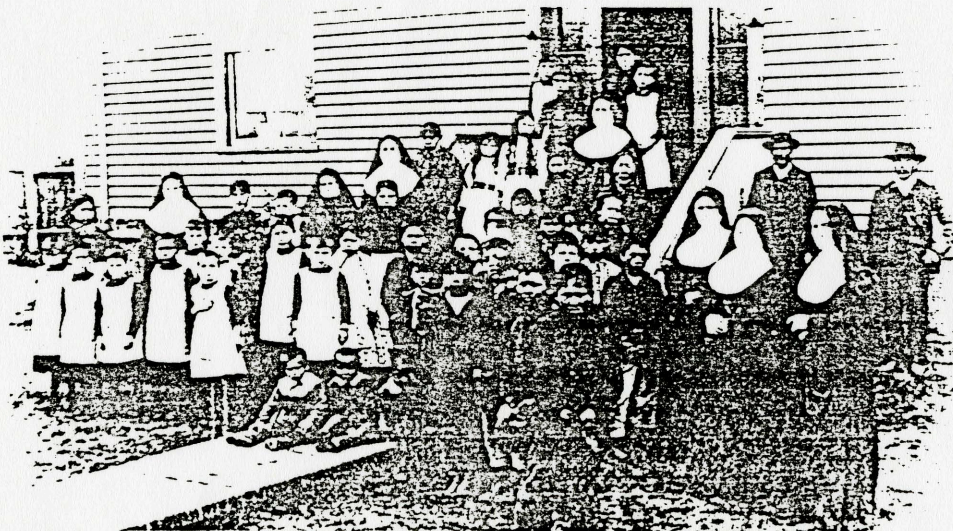
There will come a time when every person who wishes to learn their ancestral tongue, every community member who was ashamed of their heritage and now wishes to reclaim it, will ask for assistance – compensation – from the federal government to recover what was lost.

Individual and class action suits will likely continue.

The Assembly of First Nations and the Chiefs Committee on Health will work diligently to support the efforts of those seeking redress.

Truth-telling must be pursued. The history of the impact of residential schools on First Nations people must be documented, whether through a public inquiry, independent hearings or informal circles involving elders and youth.

We believe the entire history of the residential school system has yet to be told. As healing continues, those who wish and need to tell the truth of the residential schools must be supported. The Canadian Jewish Congress said, "The residential schools, based on the terrible premise of forced assimilation and run in an atmosphere of neglect and often horrific abuse, represent a national shame in Canadian history." Canadians must face the reality of residential school policy and take responsibility for what was done in their name if the new partnership is truly to succeed. Indian Affairs and the Churches can assist by sharing their archival information; communities can help by supporting survivors in disclosing their experiences, and Canadians can assist by funding a national residential school research institution so that future generations will know why the residential school system was wrong.



Group of nuns with native children, 1890, courtesy National Archives.