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Alumni Association
Sault Ste. Marie Ontario
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727 N. Kenmore Ave.
Los Angeles California 90029
Feb. 1999

Shoah Visual History Foundation
Po. Box 3168
Los Angeles Ca. 90078-3168

Att: Dear Steven Spielberg.

I read with interest the remarks on the making of the movie "The Last days". Also on Your Priorities as always being of "Historical Integrity".

This is what I admire about you. I have always been interested in what happened to the "Holocaust Survivors or Victims". Because of my own experiences.

I have taken my children and grand-children to the "Museum of Tolerance". My reason for writing to you is I am a Chippewa Indian from Walpole Island Ontario Canada, who was sent to "Shingwauk Indian residential School" Sault Ste. Marie Ontario Canada.

There were about one hundred Indian Residential Schools through out Canada, 50% were run by the Catholic Church's, 30% run by the Episcopal Church's, the remaining 20% was split evenly by the Presbyterian, and the Methodist Church's, these were government Indian Residential Schools run by the Church's, for the Canadian Government. Our story goes well back before the turn of the century.

We were not killed out right, as the Jewish people were in the "Holocaust Concentration Camps". I don't believe the number will ever be known, on how many died after leaving the Residential Schools and going back to there Reservations.

They forced us to forget our language, they tried there best to make us forget we were Indians, I was one of the lucky ones I never went back to my reservation after leaving School. Not so for so many others who couldn't speak their language, they couldn't Understand their own people, nor could they be understood. They became out casts in Their own homes. They were so ashamed and humiliated of what happened to them at the Indian Residential Schools.

They couldn't cope with life anymore. The ones that couldn't cope any longer took to drinking and drugs, or what ever they could find to take. This is why I say they weren't killed out right, none the less they died from their traumatic experiences in the Indian Residential Schools of Canada. This is what's so Tragic in their Deaths my Brothers and Sisters didn't, or shouldn't have had to die this terrible way, to forget the "Past". This is why I agree with Congressman Tom Lantos on closure, we need to keep the people aware of past events, this is why I don't want closure on the Indian Residential Schools of Canada, The last Residential School closed in the 1980,s we need someone to tell our story, to keep closure from happening.

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation made a TV. Movie called "Where The Spirit Lives", we do need more exposure than one TV movie.

The most comprehensive book written on the Indian Residential Schools of Canada. Is written by Professor Jim Miller of the University of Saskatchewan called "Shingwauk's Vision". A good book by a former survivor, Isabelle Knockwood called "Out of the Depth's. There are other good books by former Residential School survivors. There is one more book out, by my former "Nemesis" Bernice Logan called "The Teaching Wigwam". She is the reason I started writing, Her books tell a story of the yellow brick road "Fantasy" it has nothing to do on what was done to us. This is why we kept quiet for so long, we were too ashamed and so humiliated we couldn't take it any longer we finally started talking, they call it "Breaking The Silence". My silence lasted more than fifty years.

Mr. Steven Spielberg I consider you the greatest story teller on historical facts in the movie industry, if anyone can make a movie on historical facts it is you, bar none. I would consider it a great "Honor", if you would tell our story, be it by "Documentary, Screen, or Tele-vision, on the Indian Residential Schools of Canada. To Honor the survivors, especially the non-survivors. Again I quote congressman Tom Lantos words, we don't need and want "Closure".

Our story should and needs to be told, so that the people as a whole can know and learn on what happened to us as "Children". As you are a great contributing factor on the "Holocaust" story through the "Shoah Foundation" being perpetuated for future generations to know and learn about. As I hope our story can be told in the same professional manner as the "Holocaust" story is told.

I will send you everything I have written for you to read and review, some of my writings have been registered. I am not nor do I consider my self a professional writer, I am writing from my heart on my experiences. Mr. Steven Spielberg I know and understand you are a very Important and busy person, I truly hope you will listen and read from your heart to my anguish, I have shed many tears writing about my past events.

I sent this letter to my good friend Professor Donald Jackson, I will include his reply in my letter to you. It has pertinent information on the very essence of how people still think to-day, it conveys the very message I'm trying to get people to understand. Not what the lady said, "forget it" as she wants people to do, she wants closure, same as some people today who are saying the "Holocaust " of world war two "Didn't Happen", I don't want this to happen on the "Holocaust" issue, nor do I want this to happen on Indian Residential School issue. We don't need closure on either issue. In the letter from Don Jackson "Mike" is a lawyer and I will except his version of what was said.

I hope and trust you will have the same understanding as the Canadian Jewish Congress had, "We believe the entire history of the residential school system has yet to be told", with that I will close my letter to you Mr. Steven Spielberg.

May the great "Spirit" guide you and your conscience on our traumatic issue.

Meegwetch [thank-you]

Donald H Sands



DREAMWORKS
SKG

April 14, 1999

Donald H. Sands
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Los Angeles, CA 90029

Dear Mr. Sands,

Thank you for your letter to Steven Spielberg submitting your memoirs for consideration.

We want you to know that the subject of America's original residents and land caretakers is important to us. Our feature development department is looking for stories of American Indians and the Indian peoples of Canada which might work in this arena. As a studio we'd be honored to produce such a film.

Unfortunately, however, a strict submission policy keeps us from being able to accept or consider the individual material you have submitted. We are not allowed to accept any idea for a film unless it is submitted to us through an agent recognized by the Writers Guild of America. We deeply regret this in cases such as yours where we respect and appreciate the intent and spirit of the correspondence, but sadly in this area our hands have been tied. Therefore, mindful of the cost of duplication we are returning your enclosures to you so that they may be shared with others.

On behalf of our company, we thank you for thinking to entrust Mr. Spielberg with your thoughts and wish you all the very best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kris Kelley".

Kris Kelley
DreamWorks Public Relations

KK/tr

Don,

Thanks for the e-mail with your letter to Steven Spielberg. I think what you have done and are doing is very good and very important. Just to emphasize the importance of what you are saying, last night the Minister of Justice for Canada was in the Sault, and Celia, Mike (her husband), myself and others went to hear her speak. Mike told me about a well-connected white woman he met in Toronto who when he told her about AUC and Shingwauk Indian Residential School, she said: The buildings should be torn down and all that stuff forgotten about! Mike was very shocked and tried to correct the woman but she wouldn't listen. So there you go. We need to educate people about the reality and make sure that it is never forgotten. Don Jackson.

Hi Don Jackson.

I just recieved a response from DreamWorks Public Relations Department, thanking me on my letter to Steven Spielberg.

They are telling me that their hands are tied due to a strict submission policy, they are unable to accept material from any individual because of law suits, they don't want to be accused of stealing material. It has to be submitted by and agent or a writer recognized by the Writers Guild of America.

They say they are looking for stories to do on American Indians from the U.S.A. or Canada, they also say they would be honored to do such a film. They appreciate my intent and the spirit of my letter.

On behalf of our company, we thank you for thinking to entrust Mr. Spielberg with your thoughts and wish you all the very best.

I'm going to resubmitt my letter to Steven Spielberg through a friend of mind who's a writer recognized by the Writers Guild of America, I didn't know there rules so hopefully this time I will get better results.

I do appreciate the fact that they did answered my letter, my friend says thats a good sign, I certainly hope so. say Hi to all and Elayne as ever Don.