

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



**Résolution des questions des pensionnats indiens Canada
Actualité**

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<i>Media Outlet:</i>	CBC-R (North)	<i>Date:</i>	Nov 29/2005
<i>Program:</i>	North Beat	<i>Time:</i>	18:42
<i>Anchor / Reporter:</i>	Carol Morin / Doris Bill	<i>Length:</i>	04:30
<i>Topic:</i>	Residential school abuse victims were celebrated		

Host: They were known as the trailblazers 10 years ago. About a dozen men from the Yukon and Northern B.C. were one of the first groups of people to come forward with some stories of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools.

As Doris Bill reports, the group was celebrated at a conference for former residential school students in Whitehorse this past weekend.

Unidentified Female Speaker: You could see the potential in them and you could see the wisdom and the courage that it took to come forward. And I just admire...

Doris Bill: These men attended the Lower Coast Indian Residential School in Northern B.C. that was operated by the church from 1950 to 1975.

Charlie Cullack was six years old when he arrived at this school where he and other students were abused by former employees. He says it took a long time to come to terms with what happened to him. Ironically, he turned back to the church for help.

(Singing)

Charlie Cullack (Former Residential School Student): It took me a tough time to believe because of all the things we went through; but nonetheless, I give the credit to my Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ, for what I've accomplished in my life. And saying this, it's just also a hard thing to say because of what happened to us.

Doris Bill: For years these men suffered in silence and isolation and when they did come forward to tell their stories, there was very little support.

Stan Peters (Former Residential School Student): We saw prejudice on both sides and people were very afraid of what would come out of the closet and I know that myself, personally, being I suppose, being in that situation where I was abused, it was very hard for me because I didn't want anyone to know that this horrible thing happened to me.

Doris Bill: The abuse they suffered tore these men apart.

Roy Dick (Former Residential School Student): The hardest thing in my life was finally having enough nerve without no alcohol, picking up that phone and phoning in to the RCMP. I thought since 1953 and onward, I thought I was the only one.

Alfred Chief (Former Residential School Student): I could have took my own life and what really saved my life is I had obligations to hold, especially to the youth because they're there behind us and they're there to help us on our everyday journey and that's why we're here, all of us, is to protect and nurture them so they don't have to go through things like this.

Unidentified Male Speaker: I cannot get back my innocence. I cannot get back a lot of things, but I can get back family, I can get back my nation. Takes a lot of work, but we can do it.

Doris Bill: Elder Alfred Chief says he spent years trying to prove he was a man by placing himself in dangerous situations. He even signed up for an elite army unit and went to Vietnam. He says he tried everything he could to block out the shame and guilt he felt because of the abuse. Today, he's urging former students to come forward and file a claim.

Alfred Chief: My revenge towards the system are the people that are in the court system right now. What really makes me mad that people that aren't, you're not making my revenge very good.

Doris Bill: Chief says receiving large sums of money can be scary, but he says it allowed him to do things for himself and for his grandchildren.

Alfred Chief: Get into that court system. And for those of you who settled, spend wisely; but remember one thing – it's your money. You look after number one when you get settled. Treat that person good.

Doris Bill: Since this group filed their claim, about 12,000 aboriginal people across the country have done the same. Both Cullack and Chief say money won't fix everything; but, they say, it can provide something they believe native people need – a sense of freedom.

In Whitehorse, I'm Doris Bill.

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Residential school deal made

A deal has been reached to give victims of residential schools \$1.9 billion to settle claims of physical and sexual abuse.

The deal was made between the Assembly of First Nations and federal government representative, Frank Iacobucci, a former Supreme Court justice, and lawyers representing former residential school students and churches.

The deal is subject to court approval. The federal government estimates that there are 80,000 people alive today who were students of Indian residential schools. While the agreement doesn't meet all the needs of native people, one chief said it's something that people can live with and allow them to move on.

"It's been a long time coming but for some of our people it's too late," said Roy Christopher, Chief of the Canim Lake band and chair of the Cariboo Tribal Council. "A lot of our survivors are in general agreement with the settlement."
The settlement is only a start for some people.

"We're happy that there are more monies available," said Terry Boucher, North Cariboo Metis Association family support worker. "But for some who have suffered severe abuse, the beatings and sexual abuse, no amount of money would cover that pain."

A common experience payment is being made to every eligible former residential school student alive on May 30, 2005. Each former student must apply and will receive \$10,000 plus \$3,000 per year of attendance after the first year.

Former students 65 or older will soon be able to apply for an advance payment of \$8,000. Accepting the common experience payment will release the Canadian government and churches of all liability, except in cases of sexual and serious physical abuse.

It's up to each band member as to whether they will accept the deal or not, Christopher said. He's happy that the offer has improved over previous offers.

"I think the majority will accept the deal," said Christopher. "There's still an option for those that want to pursue litigation."

"We're just glad to finally see something that's put on the table and supported by the national organization and generally supported across the country."
An alternative dispute resolution process called the Independent Assessment Process will be set up to deal with sexual and serious physical abuse claims.

This process will be the only one that former students will be able to use to deal with these claims if the common experience payment is accepted and will be decided by an independent adjudicator.

"These people were the ones that were supposed to be looking after us in place of our parents and that didn't happen," said Boucher, who also attended a residential school. The federal government is allocating \$60 million to create a truth and reconciliation process intended to promote public education and awareness on the issue as well as to provide former students and family members an opportunity to share their experiences. The government will also invest \$10 million in commemoration initiatives.

"We also support, in general, the truth and reconciliation commission," said Christopher. "We're just hoping this will allow individuals to move forward in a positive manner." Part of the truth and reconciliation process involves apologies, said Christopher. "There still needs to be some sort of movement from the Roman Catholic Church," Christopher said. "They've basically denied responsibility up to now.

"It's something that would be helpful to the reconciliation process. It's something that's needed from the church. It doesn't look very promising right now. We can't understand why the Roman Catholic Church has been the only one holding out on that."

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation will also receive an extra \$125 million.

"I heard one woman say it's going to take seven generations to heal," Boucher said. "But the healing is beginning and for that I'm thankful. We need to bring in some programs."

There were approximately 130 government and church run Indian residential schools across the country. Most were closed by the mid-1970s, but the last federally-run school in Canada was closed in 1996.

Boucher said many people in this area ended up at St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake. St. Joseph's closed in 1981.

"There was no difference than being in a concentration camp and a residential school. It was so similar," said Boucher.