

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



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

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Source: Inuvik Drum

Date: 2005.12.15

Byline: Jason Unrau

Residential school deal settles 'unfinished' business; Package explained to Inuvialuit

Inuvialuit residential school survivors gathered at Centennial Library Monday evening to hear details of the tentative financial compensation package for **aboriginal** people forced to attend **residential schools**.

The \$1.9 billion agreement was reached last month between the federal government and church organizations reached with the **Assembly of First Nations** and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, of which the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is a member. IRC legal counsel Hugo Prud'homme provided details of the agreement's five components.

First, there is a basic financial package or "common experience payment" that guarantees \$10,000 to anybody who attended a residential plus \$3,000 for each additional year spent at such an institution. Contrary to reports of a \$30,000 ceiling on the amount, Prud'homme says there is no limit.

Second, students who suffered serious physical abuse or sexual abuse can apply to receive an additional settlement up to \$525,000 for their pain and suffering.

The third part of the deal includes a truth and reconciliation process that will document people's personal experiences for the historical record and for educational purposes.

"This is a piece of unfinished business between Canada and residential school survivors," said Rosemarie Kuptana, IRC **residential schools** unit manager. She said participation in the truth and reconciliation process is optional.

The fourth and fifth components are money to build memorials and a \$20 million trust fund for healing programs.

Kuptana says that the **Assembly of First Nations** and the federal government had been making a deal behind closed doors and it wasn't until May that the IRC got wind of the negotiations and ended up suing the government in June to get a seat at the table.

"We were not included and never invited (so) the only way we could get involved was by filing a lawsuit," said Prud'homme. "(And once at the table) it was not an easy process."

Prud'homme advised the Inuvialuit former residential school students that the agreement comes with conditions.

"After accepting the payment, former students will not be allowed to take the government or the churches to court," said Prud'homme.

As well, if more than 5,000 of an estimated 80,000 people eligible for redress choose not to accept the deal, the federal government reserves the right to cancel the agreement. Prud'homme also cautioned the group that the agreement was contingent on cabinet approval and if the Liberals don't win the coming election, the next government may not honour the deal.

However, Kuptana was confident that the next government, Liberal or otherwise would ratify the agreement.

"If they don't they'll look pretty bad," she said.

"What's really upsetting is who is going to acknowledge the people who suffered and have passed away or committed suicide," said Mary Cockney, who spent four years at Grollier Hall and hasn't decided whether or not she'll accept the deal. "Where's the truth and reconciliation or financial compensation for them?"

During the meeting, this point was brought up by other survivors and Prud'homme said it was an issue at the bargaining table.

"We tried to include former students who have died and the government said it could do it but that would mean less for those who are still alive," he explained. "Our position at the IRC was to get as good a deal as possible.

"The government has everything to gain by doing nothing and without this agreement the only winner is the government."

For Kuptana, who spent 10 years in residential school, her feelings, like Cockney's, were mixed.

"It brings up a lot of painful and hurtful memories but I'm glad this is happening because we have to deal with it at some point."

Other aspects of the agreement in principle:

- Survivors who were 65 years of age or older before May 30, 2005 are eligible for an \$8,000 advance on their total payout early next year.

Prud'homme noted that while the neither the advance nor amount was negotiable, the May 30 cutoff date could be extended to the end of 2005.

- In the unfortunate event survivors 65 or older who pass away before receiving their money, a clause allows the settlement to be willed to relatives.

- Those seeking compensation for serious physical and/or sexual abuse can do so through a dispute resolution mechanism and legal costs will be covered by the federal government.

Source: Parry Sound North Star

Date: 2005.12.14

Byline: James S. Kewaquado

Debate continues on travesty

To the editor:

Re: A word in defence of....North Star, November 30, 2005.

Moccasin telegraph has informed me that a gentleman from your town has stepped into the foray of the residential schools debate and litigation.

Unfortunately, while the courts are in debate on this travesty, the litigants are muzzled and the defendants free to give their rendition of the goodness of such institutions.

Even more amazing is the claim, "While I've never been in a residential school, I want to offer the positiveness of the Pelican Lake residential school and present the accomplishments of John Yesno and the CBC."

Assimilation comes in many shapes and disguises and one of those shapes are residential schools and their residents. Whether they were voluntary attendees or committed by 'Juvee' courts, they were on the grid.

While I will say "hockey wasn't the only entertainment," there were more clandestine sports going on in the dressing rooms.

Residential schools taught English and behaviour was part of that dogma.

On the other hand, if one was caught speaking their mother tongue you were punished severely.

What would happen if it was decreed that there be no bagpipes played at the town square? There would be surely an uproar!

While on the other hand, Indian Superintendent Duncan Scott decreed "there will be no Pow-wows on Indian Land" because this activity tends to make Indians slothful and lazy.

The predatory nature of inappropriate behaviour happens anywhere, whether it's in residential schools, private schools or in our own school board region as Parry Sounders have learned.

Source: Parry Sound North Star

Date: 2005.12.14

Byline: Mary Shaw

Sick over residential schools

To the editor:

I don't think victims, police investigators, or judges who have been involved in the criminal cases of child abuse at residential schools across Canada, which have netted convictions of priests, ministers, and school staff, would agree with Mr. Macfie's defence of residential schools.

Personally, Mr. Macfie managed to trigger my rage of abuse really well!

The residential schools system in Canada was initiated and funded by the Government of Canada to promote the government's policy of assimilation of "Indians" into white society. The intent was to eradicate Native language, culture and religion through education as enforced cultural genocide.

There was no good faith involved as Mr. Macfie's article suggested.

However, Mr. Macfie's opinion is indicative of why it took the system over 30 years to investigate the atrocities against children and how genocide was enforced at the church-run residential schools. It took Pierre Trudeau and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to language, culture and religion as a human right before major investigations into these schools were initiated, which is ongoing to present day! The schools caused permanent damage to victims in the aftermath of abuse and it is nothing that will be healed by a travelling museum!

Source: National Post

Date: 2005.12.15

Byline: Brian Hutchinson

1885 tax becomes an issue in 2006

RICHMOND, B.C. - Raymond Chan is an emotional fellow. Canada's minister of state for multiculturalism has been known to cry in front of constituents in his suburban Vancouver riding. Sometimes he cries out of gratitude, and sometimes in anger. His eyes teared up when our discussion this week touched on human rights.

He likens himself to a crusader, a defender of democracy; he is quick to mention he was once jailed in China, for leading a protest against that country's authoritarian regime.

It might seem odd, then, that Mr. Chan is so firmly opposed to a measure of reconciliation here at home, especially one that appeals to many residents of his Richmond riding. Half of the riding's eligible voters are, like him, of Chinese origin.

The issue is the long-discarded **head tax**, a racist duty imposed on Chinese immigrants to Canada between 1885 and 1923. It's estimated Ottawa collected \$23-million from Chinese newcomers in those years; those who are still alive, and many of their descendants, want the money back.

They would also like a formal apology.

Mr. Chan once heartily supported their requests for compensation and redress.

But no longer. And he's not alone; indeed, half a dozen large Chinese-Canadian organizations that represent hundreds more Chinese groups have sided with Mr. Chan and his new, cautious approach to the **head tax** question.

The issue has suddenly become an election hot button for Chinese-Canadians across the country.

It could cost Mr. Chan his job, and the Liberals some important seats in Parliament.

The Chinese Canadian National Council says there are only four **head tax** survivors in Canada. But there are an estimated 80,000 descendants and thousands more Chinese-Canadians who feel compensation and an apology are due.

Mr. Chan took up their cause and ran with the issue in Richmond during the 1993 federal election campaign, his first. He was elected and made a junior minister in Jean Chretien's Cabinet. A year later, he recommended to Cabinet some form of redress and an apology to survivors of the **head tax**. "I was shot down," he recalled.

He says an apology and compensation are never going to happen, at least as long as the Liberals are in power.

The NDP and the Bloc Québécois have already called for a formal apology, and last week Conservative leader Stephen Harper unexpectedly jumped on the bandwagon.

The Tories, Mr. Harper noted in a statement, have "long recognized the terrible historical wrong of the Chinese **head tax**. It is time for Parliament and the Government of Canada to recognize this grave injustice and to apologize for it."

The statement-- and the timing of its release, in an election campaign -- smacked of political opportunism. But it pleased those Conservative candidates locked in close battles with Liberals in B.C.'s crucial Lower Mainland.

Darrel Reid is facing off against Raymond Chan in Richmond. "The **head tax** issue is huge," said Mr. Reid, sitting in his Conservative war room, a few blocks from Mr. Chan's own election headquarters. "It was the only tax ever collected from a specific ethnic group in Canada. It was wrong, and that has to be recognized."

Mr. Chan counters that making an official apology to **head tax** survivors and their families will "open the floodgates" to "countless lawsuits and financial responsibilities for other historical wrongs."

Besides, he says, the federal government has already figured a way to address the issue without assuming unrestricted financial liabilities. In February, Ottawa announced the \$25-million Acknowledgement, Commemoration and Education Program, aimed at recognizing "the historical experiences of [all] ethnocultural communities impacted by wartime measures and immigration experiences."

The money is to be shared among various Chinese-Canadian groups, along with organizations representing other ethnic and cultural minorities.

"The ACE program is for the Italians, the Ukrainians, the Germans, the Jews, the Sikhs," Mr. Chan explained. "Now the Croatians have asked to participate. The blacks have come to participate. Everybody wants to be part of it now."

The National Congress of Chinese Canadians is among the largest groups in support of the ACE program. "The Chinese community stands united in the cause of educating all Canadians about this tragic period in our history," noted Ping Tan, the NCCC's executive co-chair.

But the program's one-size-fits-all approach doesn't sit well with thousands of Chinese-Canadians affected by the **head tax**.

"Mr. Chan used to support us, and now he has turned his back on us," said Sid Tan, a Vancouver resident and spokesman for the Chinese Canadian National Council, which says it represents half of all **head tax** survivors and their relatives. "It really sickens me. The money is just going to go to Liberal friends. It's like a Chinese-Canadian sponsorship scandal."

He says Chinese groups that supported the ACE program have already submitted proposals for things such as commemorative rock gardens and museums. His members, meanwhile, have asked for grant information but have been ignored.

"There is a lot of anger over this," he said. "The Liberals bungled the whole issue of redress and they have basically divided the Chinese community."

It's an opening opposition parties are keen to exploit, and it has Liberals in B.C. on the defensive.

"I don't buy their little apology [demands] at all," Hedy Fry, the Liberal MP for Vancouver Centre, told a local newspaper this week.

As for Mr. Chan, he'd rather discuss other issues, such as same-sex marriage. His opponent, Darrel Reid, opposes it. A Mennonite, Mr. Chan used to oppose gay marriage, too. Not anymore.

THE HEAD TAX

REDRESS

Before election was called, government and 11 Chinese-Canadian groups agreed to \$2.5-million deal to set up educational and commemorative projects related to the tax.

HISTORY

Ottawa imposed a \$50 tax on all Chinese immigrants in 1885, after completion of the Canadian Pacific railway. Tax was raised to \$100, then \$500 in 1903 -- the equivalent of two years' pay. In 1923 a new law effectively banned Chinese immigration. It was repealed in 1947.

OBJECTIONS

Chinese community says agreement bypassed some community groups and does not include an apology or compensation.

Source: Toronto Star

Date: 2005.12.15

Byline: Rita Daly

Head tax stance may cost Liberals; Issue pivotal in Trinity-Spadina Ianno vulnerable to NDP challenger

Old loyalties to political parties die hard. But the controversial Chinese head tax issue is stirring up a cauldron of emotions in Toronto's Chinatown that could cost Liberal incumbent Tony Ianno some crucial votes.

"This time the Liberals are being taken down because they have done wrong," says George Lau, trudging along the snow-covered sidewalk on Spadina Ave., south of College St.

His father, now deceased, paid the discriminatory \$500 head tax to come into this country and now Lau, 74, is angry enough at the Liberals' position to be out campaigning for the NDP's Olivia Chow.

Ianno, has held the Trinity-Spadina riding for 12 years, but for the third time he is up against a formidable foe. Chow, who resigned her Toronto City Council seat to run, hopes to join husband and NDP Leader Jack Layton in Ottawa after the Jan. 23 election. Running for the Conservatives is lawyer Sam Goldstein.

While Ianno and Chow remain equally popular among many residents, the head tax issue has turned some die-hard Liberal voters against their traditional party of choice.

Up until last year's election Lau always voted Liberal, a common practice for many foreign-born Canadians grateful to the Trudeau government for easing immigration rules. He won't any more.

"It's not just me," he says, clutching one of Chow's election leaflets. "A lot of people are putting their vote into the NDP."

Late last month the federal government hammered out a \$2.5 million agreement with a group called the National Congress of Chinese Canadians, angering other Chinese organizations left out of the deal who wanted an official apology and individual compensation to head - tax payers and their families. The money is being earmarked instead for educational activities.

"We're not compensating an individual for something that took place at the time the laws were what they were," says Ianno, campaigning a few blocks north on College St.

"What we're dealing with is the future, and today, in a way that educates Canadians at large so we can never allow this to happen again."

The community, he adds, "supports it overwhelmingly."

Ronnie Chiu, a real estate agent in the area, considers Chow a friend. But he sides with the Liberals on this issue and is campaigning for Ianno. Individual compensation would "open up a whole can of worms," he says.

His father, too, paid the head tax, he explains. But like so many Chinese immigrants back then, he bought another man's immigration papers to enter the country. "I, on the other hand, arrived on my father's papers. The guy who sold my father his papers has sons as well. So who is legally entitled to receive compensation? It would be one big mess."

Some 81,000 Chinese paid a total of \$23 million between 1885 and 1923 under the head - tax scheme. Only a few hundred are still alive. Chow says it wouldn't hurt the government, at the very least, to pay those survivors back their money and apologize to the head - tax families.

"You can't move forward until you settle the past," she says. For years Chow has listened to families' stories of hardship, of years of labour it took for fathers to pay off the head tax, of families separated by the government's discriminatory laws against the Chinese.

The Chinese community, comprising nearly 20 per cent of the riding population, has been divided in the past when it comes to politics. Chinatown sits in the middle of Chow's former city ward, but long-time resident and NDP supporter Doug Hum - also the descendant of a head - tax payer - says not everyone in the Chinese business community likes her.

"Some don't feel she is business-oriented enough. You know, when public health gets after the restaurants, I guess they feel she doesn't crack down on public health and tell them to lay off."

Some businessmen with ties to the booming economy of mainland China have also criticized Chow for being too vocal in denouncing the Tiananmen Square massacre and raising human rights issues.