

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



**Résolution des questions des pensionnats indiens
Canada
Manchettes**

Monday, May 1, 2006 ♦ lundi, 1er mai 2006

Table of Contents/ Table des matières

IRS ARTICLES-ARTICLES D'IRS

<u>MP AIRS CONCERNS ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL DEAL</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS LEFT DEEP SCARRING</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>CRACKS POSSIBLE IN COMPENSATION – MÉTIS MAY HAVE BEEN MISSED IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL DEAL</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>FINALLY, A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SETTLEMENT</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>NATIVE SCHOOLS – VIEWPOINT: THE WINNIPEG FREE PRESS</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>CLOSURE, AT LEAST, ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>AN EDITORIAL FROM THE WINNIPEG FREE PRESS, PUBLISHED APRIL 28</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>NATIVE LEADERS FACE A \$5.1-BILLION QUESTION</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>BATTLE WITH THE BANDS – MINISTER WANTS TO LOOK AT FIRST NATIONS BOOKS</u>	<u>16</u>

Chinese Head-Tax Redress

<u>CHINESE COMMUNITY DISCUSSES HEAD TAX CONSULTATION FOCUSES ON MEANS OF REDRESS</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>DO THE RIGHT THING ON “HEAD TAX”</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>HEAD TAX SOLUTION IS SIMPLE, MPS ARE TOLD PAY IT BACK</u>	<u>21</u>

Veterans Compensation for Chemical Testing

<u>VETERANS STILL HAVEN'T BEEN PAID</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>FEW APPLY FOR CHEMICAL TEST PAYMENTS</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN FOR VETS' PAYBACK</u>	<u>26</u>

MP Airs Concerns about Residential School Deal

Thursday, April 27, 2006 at 14:16

Mississippi Broadcasting Corporation

Northern Saskatchewan's Member of Parliament says he's pleased the Conservative government appears ready to proceed with a residential school compensation agreement, but he does have a few concerns.

Gary Merasty says when Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice announced a final agreement had been reached the other day; he neglected to mention whether the Tories will fast-track payments to elderly residential school survivors.

He also says the Conservatives have backed out of an election promise to compensate the survivors of the Métis boarding school in Ile-a-la-Crosse by not including them in the deal.

Merasty says until these concerns are met and the agreement is fully implemented, justice will not be realized for the former students.

THE LEADER-POST (REGINA)
PAGE: B1 / FRONT (CITY & PROVINCE)
May 1, 2006

Residential schools left deep scarring

Doug Cuthand, The Leader-Post

The failed residential school experiment is one of the worst programs ever initiated by a Canadian government. We lost generations of our people to a machine that tried to destroy our culture and turn our people into docile copies of white people. The stated role of the schools was to turn the boys into farmhands and the girls into domestics without any vestiges of their Cree, Dene, Saulteaux or other First Nations heritage.

It was a monumental failure and left our communities with deep scars that can be felt to the present day. It was a destructive practice that few Canadians were aware of. Boarding schools were sold as a way of educating Indian children while the parents were on the trap line or unable to care for them. It was a lie. The children were for the most part taken from healthy homes and isolated and indoctrinated in a foreign culture.

Later the children would be taken from homes that had lost their way. Our families were not healthy and the need for boarding schools became a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a cruel twist of fate the boarding schools themselves were the cause of social breakdown.

The boarding schools were a travesty on two levels. First it was fundamentally wrong to break up a family unit and take the children away for 10 months at a time. Removing the students from the parents left a huge gap in the community. Reserves became the home for adults and little children and they fell into dysfunction.

Second, the boarding schools attracted the failures of society. People who could not fit in, losers and sexual deviants found work at boarding schools. I never went to boarding school but I saw what went on and my friends reported beatings, lock-ups and other forms of abuse.

The students ate one meal and the staff ate in a separate dining room with a much better bill of fare. They were grim institutions of violence and sexual abuse.

They called it a concentration camp. Some of my friends who spent time in jail told me that it wasn't so bad since they had experienced worse treatment in the boarding school.

Over two decades ago the survivors began to speak out and court cases and investigations began the long road to resolution. Some of the worst examples such as William Star, who ran the Gordon's residential school, were investigated, charged and sentenced. The path was clear for a settlement.

But not all the cases were so clear cut. Government lawyers fought at every turn and it became apparent that if the government wanted a war of attrition it would get one. About 13,000 claims were

filed against the churches and government and the legal bills mounted. The churches began to feel the heat and the pressure was on to find some kind of practical solution.

We had a resolution earlier before the demise of the Liberal government. There was considerable fear that the Conservatives would walk away from the deal but it has now been ratified and the settlement appears to be a reality.

A settlement could involve a lot of people. There are about 78,000 boarding school survivors in Canada. In Saskatchewan alone, there are over 17,000 survivors who will receive an average payment of \$25,000. The total amount of compensation to be paid out will be about \$1.9 billion.

The money will flow in over the next year. Persons 65 and older can apply for \$8,000 in compensation immediately. It is important that support services are in place to help the survivors.

Many had repressed their feelings over the years and the talk of a settlement and all the attention being paid to the residential school experience has only served to bring back the painful experience.

This year, the tribal councils and First Nations will have to step up their counselling services to assist the survivors cope with the cash "windfall" and the trauma that will likely come flooding back.

Make no mistake though. This "windfall" represents a lifetime of pain, failed dreams, addictions and a life unfulfilled. A cash settlement is only part of the healing journey. We have to reach out to our friends and relatives in this time of stress and do what we can to help them through it.

Doug Cuthand is a Saskatoon freelance journalist.

May 1, 2006

THE EDMONTON SUN (also appeared in the Calgary Sun)

PAGE: 6 (NEWS)

Cracks possible in compensation – Métis may have been missed in Residential School deal

CARY CASTAGNA, EDMONTON SUN

The head of the Residential School Survivors' Society of Alberta is applauding the federal government for reaching a deal last week to compensate ex-students of native residential schools.

But Terry Lusty worries Métis and non-status Indians across Canada may still fall through the cracks.

"What troubles me is Métis political organizations haven't done anything about this," he told the Sun yesterday. "Why should those people be left out? That's not fair ball."

Lusty estimates up to 9% of survivors are Métis, while somewhere between 5% and 15% are non-status natives who aren't aware of the deal.

Last week's agreement, initially promised by the former Liberal government, will offer nearly \$2 billion in compensation and healing programs for former students of native residential schools.

Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice couldn't be reached yesterday for comment. But he said last Tuesday in the Commons that the government has yet to determine the timing of the payments.

The deal must still be cleared by cabinet, then be approved by courts in several provinces.

If upheld and accepted by enough survivors, the agreement would allow about 78,000 people to apply for compensation. Many are over age 65 and living in poverty.

Lusty said his organization has about 100 members who stand to be awarded a "common experience payment" of \$10,000 for their first year in a residential school and \$3,000 for each additional year.

"Most of those I've talked to are very pleased with it," he added.

Survivors who are 65 and older could get an \$8,000 advance by the end of the year, he added.

Lusty, 64, said he's an eight-year survivor of a Winnipeg residential school in the 1940s and '50s. That makes him potentially eligible for \$31,000 in compensation.

"I'm uncertain yet as to whether I'm even going to apply," he said. "Money's never been a big deal for me. A lot of my stuff, I've dealt with already."

Payments are not expected before early next year even if the legal process goes smoothly. Sources say the new final agreement also proposes funding for healing and education programs and for a truth and reconciliation forum to allow survivors to tell their stories.

Residential school survivors were taken from their families by government decree and sent to boarding schools where they were forced to denounce their mother tongue and religion. And, in many cases, they were abused.

May 1, 2006

NATIONAL POST

PAGE: A16 (EDITORIALS)

Finally, a residential school settlement

Although it still needs Cabinet ratification, the compensation deal agreement reached by all sides last week for victims of Canada's shameful residential-school program marks a milestone that should be applauded.

The \$1.9-billion agreement is a near carbon copy of the deal announced by Paul Martin's Liberal government in its waning hours of office. This fact comes as a relief to aboriginal leaders, who were worried that the Conservative government under Stephen Harper might decide to go its own way on the issue.

More than 80,000 aboriginal Canadians, who were taken from their families and forced to attend the church-run schools meant to assimilate them into the white culture between the mid-1800s to the 1970s, are eligible for compensation, with a "common experience" payment of up to \$10,000 per person and another \$3,000 for each year an individual spent at such a school.

The compensation program makes special allowance for those who experienced physical and sexual abuse. About 13,000 persons, about 3,000 of them from Saskatchewan, have filed claims alleging abuse, and loss of language and culture.

As well, the government apparently has backed down from an earlier stance and agreed to fast-track initial payments of \$8,000 for those over age 65 and living in poverty, even before the courts finalize the agreement.

The average payment is expected to be in the \$25,000 range. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, which estimates as many as 19,000 Saskatchewan people attended residential schools, is pleased that the agreement includes setting up a museum to document the residential-school legacy.

But that legacy goes far beyond what can be contained within the four walls of any museum. It's evident in every corner of this province, from the poorest reserve to large cities such as Saskatoon, where unfulfilled lives and the impact of lost family connections and culture are etched in the desperation of many First Nations citizens on the margins of our society.

The compensation package, however belated, undoubtedly will help the physical circumstances of many of those who receive the money and those who are connected to them. However, no one should think for a moment that decades-old problems will disappear the day those cheques are cashed, with a good chunk of the money, in too many cases, disappearing into the bank accounts of lawyers.

Many who've lived in poverty might need counseling or help from their community to make effective use of their compensation payments, instead of being preyed upon by opportunists. And others might

need emotional support to cope with bad memories that are bound to be resurrected from revisiting a painful part of their lives.

But as Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine put it, "Justice has prevailed," and Harper's government has done well to follow through quickly with the good intentions of its predecessor.

May 1, 2006

THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

PAGE: A14 (OPINION)

Native schools – Viewpoint: the Winnipeg Free Press

The federal government has announced it will launch a "truth and reconciliation" commission to record the legacy of Indian residential schools, originally a means by which Ottawa sought to assimilate First Nations children.

But the mandate of the commission reflects a view that every child who attended a residential school was harmed by the experience.

Such a premise would undermine any attempt to seek the truth about the schools' legacy. The task of the truth and reconciliation commission, part of the historic compensation package for up to 80,000 former students, will be to collect the stories of students and their families, inform Canadians of residential schools history, and to store its findings in a permanent archive. About 100 federally mandated schools across Canada, run by four major religious organizations, are under scrutiny. The earliest schools opened in the 1800s.

They began closing in the 1960s and the last one, in Saskatchewan, was shut down in 1996. The commission will have a budget of \$60 million. Truth is necessary for reconciliation, but truth can only be discerned by weighing evidence from all those involved in the Indian residential schools.

In 1995, South Africa launched its Truth and Reconciliation Commission to begin healing the deep racial rifts carved by the long-running war against the apartheid government.

Immunity was extended to all those black and white who committed human rights abuses against and among each other, in order that people would be free to reveal their roles.

There is no need for immunity in Canada; indeed, anyone who committed sexual or physical abuses in the schools rightly remains vulnerable to criminal or civil prosecution under the government's compensation package for students. Any attempt to write the legacy of residential schools requires the stories of all involved.

Students, their families, teachers, staff, school administrators as well as government and religious officials need to be invited to reveal what they know about the lives children, as young as six, led at the schools, away from their parents.

The principles set out for the commission state that "as complete a historical record as possible will be compiled of the (Indian Residential School) system and legacy" and that it will give "survivors and their families" a safe forum to tell their experiences. There is no expressed intent to have teachers or school staff tell their stories, but Canadians will expect a comprehensive account to know the legacy of residential schools.

May 1, 2006
MONTREAL GAZETTE
PAGE: A16 (EDITORIAL / OP-ED)

Closure, at least, on residential schools

The best thing about the whole sad saga of native residential schools is that it is now finished as a political issue. Jim Prentice, the federal Indian affairs minister, told the House of Commons last week that a settlement agreement has been reached.

Subject to the formality of cabinet endorsement and the not-quite-so-automatic approval of courts in several provinces, as many as 78,000 natives could receive settlements of more than \$10,000 each. Add in lawyers' fees and the total cost of this agreement to taxpayers will likely surpass \$2 billion.

This was a tragic tale, and an old one. The first residential school for young natives opened at Sussex Vale, N.B., in 1787. It was closed in 1820, and generally deemed to have been a failure, records J.R. Miller in his 1996 history of native residential schools, *Shingwauk's Vision*.

But the ideal of fitting natives into white society endured. It should be remembered that the goal, which seems to many grotesque today, was by the standards of the times legitimately an ideal. Cultural sensitivities that frame native issues in Canada today simply did not exist 200 years ago.

Further, it needs to be remembered that the motives of most of those involved in the schools, including many humble members of religious orders and groups, were of the highest nature. Rev. John West, working to open a native school in the Red River country around 1820, told a wary native chief that his goal was to teach Indian children "how to live well and to die happy."

As we know, it did not work out that way. A 1922 pamphlet by a federal medical inspector, reporting on severe health problems, came closer to the reality when it referred to the system as "a national crime."

Ottawa delegated its responsibility for native education to the Catholic, Anglican, and other Christian churches, which operated schools across western and northern Canada. At their peak there were about 80 such institutions, which enrolled only a fraction of all status Indians and Inuit of school age. Over the years report after report deemed the system a failure, though most were circumspect, if not silent, about the sexual abuse which was all too frequent.

By the late 1960s, when growing native political organization began turning up the volume on denunciation of the schools, Ottawa abandoned the system.

The residuum was a series of class-action suits demanding untold billions, not only for sexual abuse but also for loss of native culture, a subtler violation of personal integrity and certainly not often a criminal one.

It is now clear that sexual abuse was common: Phil Fontaine, now national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, revealed in 1990 that he, among many others, had been victimized by such abuse.

Criminal charges against molesters should be pursued wherever possible, obviously. Cultural imperialism is not so egregious, since education was generally offered in good faith, by the light of standards which were well-intentioned in their day.

But without a sweeping settlement like this one the legal and political wrangles could have reverberated for years.

Faced with such a marathon legal/financial/political nightmare, all parties saw the advantage of an across-the-board settlement, and so the seeds of the current deal were sown. For some time Ottawa appeared content to let the lawsuits bankrupt or impoverish church organizations, but finally stepped in to shoulder much of the financial load. This is only right, since the government had legal authority over the schools.

The harm that was done cannot be expiated by money. Ironically, native schooling, though now largely in native hands, is still a shambles in many parts of Canada. Reforms to native self-governance are urgently needed.

But before turning to the future, Canada can now come to terms with this sad aspect of our past. The emotional damage of sex abuse is persistent, and money doesn't help much. But it's the only tool we have, and now it is being used, in a reasonable way.

April 28, 2006
Canadian Press Newswire

An editorial from the Winnipeg Free Press, published April 28

The federal government has announced it will launch a "truth and reconciliation" commission to record the legacy of Indian residential schools, originally a means by which Ottawa sought to assimilate First Nations children. But the mandate of the commission reflects a view that every child who attended a residential school was harmed by the experience. Such a premise would undermine any attempt to seek the truth about the schools' legacy. The task of the truth and reconciliation commission, part of the historic compensation package for up to 80,000 former students, will be to collect the stories of students and their families, inform Canadians of residential schools history, and to store its findings in a permanent archive. About 100 federally mandated schools across Canada, run by four major religious organizations, are under scrutiny. The earliest schools opened in the 1800s. They began closing in the 1960s and the last one, in Saskatchewan, was shut down in 1996. The commission will have a budget of \$60 million. Truth is necessary for reconciliation, but truth can only be discerned by weighing evidence from all those involved in the Indian residential schools. In 1995, South Africa launched its Truth and Reconciliation Commission to begin healing the deep racial rifts carved by the long-running war against the apartheid government. Immunity was extended to all those black and white who committed human rights abuses against and among each other, in order that people would be free to reveal their roles. There is no need for immunity in Canada; indeed, anyone who committed sexual or physical abuses in the schools rightly remains vulnerable to criminal or civil prosecution under the government's compensation package for students. Any attempt to write the legacy of residential schools requires the stories of all involved. Students, their families, teachers, staff, school administrators as well as government and religious officials need to be invited to reveal what they know about the lives children, as young as six, led while living at the schools, away from their parents. The principles set out for the commission state that "as complete a historical record as possible will be compiled of the (Indian Residential School) system and legacy" and that it will give "survivors and their families" a safe forum to tell their experiences. There is no expressed intent to have teachers or school staff tell their stories. Churches will have input in the selection of commissioners, but the commission's advisory committee will be composed of survivors. A preamble notes the process to collect people's stories will be victim-centered, confidential (if the survivor requires), inclusive, comprehensive, holistic, just and fair, among other things. These conditions, like the compensation package that regards all students as victims, seems to ignore the possibility that some may have benefited from their experience. Many students suffered horrific physical and sexual abuses and were scarred by being forcibly removed from their parents, communities and cultures. That, and the broad impact on native people, must be documented. The government is making a mistake, though, if it assumes all students were hurt. The stories of teachers and staff hired to educate and care for the children need to be recorded, too. Canadians need a comprehensive account to know the legacy of residential schools.

May 1, 2006
GLOBE AND MAIL
PAGE: A1 (NATIONAL NEWS)

Native leaders face a \$5.1-billion question

BILL CURRY

It's Tuesday's \$5.1-billion question.

Canada's native leaders, who signed a multibillion-dollar deal in the dying days of the Liberal government, have been waiting for months to hear whether a Conservative government will follow through with it. The five-year deal signed in November at a first ministers meeting in Kelowna, B.C., pledged to fund a host of new projects aimed at improving the lives of aboriginal people.

The \$5.1-billion was not included in the Conservative Party's spending platform, leading some critics to wonder whether the deal will be scrapped to pay for initiatives in other areas.

Phil Fontaine, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said tomorrow's budget will be the Tories' first opportunity to deliver a strong signal to aboriginal people. Mr. Fontaine said his conversations with Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice have been encouraging.

But Mr. Fontaine added he has received no promises that the money will be in the budget.

"We know that we can't afford to wait. We can't delay action on these issues and we note with some interest all of the discussions on fiscal imbalance. Well, we know what that means," he said, maintaining that native governments deal with a much tighter cash crunch than provinces.

Mr. Prentice's parliamentary secretary, Rod Bruinooge, said last week in the House of Commons that the budget will unveil the new government's approach to aboriginal policy and that it will be based on "accountability and taking responsibility."

The main spending items in the Kelowna agreement dealt with housing and education. Mr. Bruinooge told The Globe and Mail that his government intends to move on those two issues.

"Our government is interested in assisting aboriginal people in relation to education, housing and, of course, families," he said.

"Aboriginal people are looking forward to see what's in our budget . . . and we're hopeful that the plans in the future are going to aide all aboriginal people across Canada to become part of our country in the economic way that many hope to be."

The Conservatives have managed not to be pinned down as to whether they will honour the \$5.1-billion deal.

When the party platform did not set aside money for it, Mr. Prentice said during the federal election campaign that it was because of the assumption that the Liberals were moving around old money rather than pledging new spending.

He said at the time that if, in fact, it turned out to be new money, his government would find the cash. But he was quickly contradicted by Monte Solberg, another Conservative MP who is now Immigration Minister and who insisted the deal is dead.

"We are not going to honour that," Mr. Solberg said in January.

Former Liberal finance minister Ralph Goodale insists that most of the \$5.1-billion was new money that was accounted for in the government's spending projections.

The agreement, which then-prime-minister Paul Martin and the premiers signed with aboriginal leaders, promises to improve the aboriginal housing stock by encouraging private ownership and providing aboriginals with carpentry training to build new houses. It also would integrate aboriginal schools with provincial school boards and spend money to recruit and train new aboriginal teachers.

Though all five national aboriginal organizations happily signed the accord, not all are urging the Tories to implement every line.

Patrick Brazeau, the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, which focuses on the concerns of off-reserve and non-status aboriginals, is urging the government to rework the agreement.

"To be quite honest, the congress is looking for the government to fulfill some of the Kelowna commitments," he said. "However, we are also urging the Conservative government to revisit the Kelowna agreement."

Mr. Brazeau said the government's ratio of funding between on- and off-reserve aboriginals is out of sync with reality, and the Kelowna agreement did not pledge to address that imbalance.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper promised a "realignment of federal aboriginal expenditures" during the election campaign, and Mr. Brazeau wants Ottawa to follow through on that pledge.

April 29, 2006
THE OTTAWA SUN
PAGE: 9 (NEWS)

Battle with the Bands – Minister wants to look at First Nations Books

JORGE BARRERA, OTTAWA SUN

Treasury Board President John Baird has run afoul of the Assembly of First Nations over remarks he made to the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce on an issue that could trigger Native protests across Canada.

On Monday, Baird singled out the AFN over its opposition to plans to give the Auditor General power to audit the books of Native bands.

AFN national chief Phil Fontaine said the Ottawa West-Nepean MP "misrepresented" the AFN. Fontaine said the AFN has been working with the feds to develop its own auditor and ombudsman. It wants to meet with Baird and is sending a letter to the chamber.

"We are surprised and disappointed (by the remarks)," said Fontaine. "It causes people to look at us... as organizations that do not want to be accountable."

On Thursday, Baird reiterated that Native bands should not expect special treatment.

"We spend \$200 billion a year. We don't have one standard for \$190 billion and another for the other \$10 billion," he said.

The Tories' proposed Accountability Act calls for the feds to be able to audit groups who get over \$1 million in federal funds over five straight years. Native bands with self-government agreements are exempted.

Fontaine warned Baird in a March 23 letter that the plan may trigger nationwide protests.

"This may put at risk the successful passage of the bill itself and any positive outcomes," wrote Fontaine.

Chinese Head-Tax Redress

May 1, 2006
WINNIPEG FREE PRESS
PAGE: B4 (CITY)
Daniel Lett

Chinese community discusses head tax Consultation focuses on means of redress

More than 120 Chinese-Canadians gathered downtown yesterday to discuss how best to compensate Chinese immigrants for the infamous head tax of the last century. The Winnipeg meeting was the last in a six-city tour of Canada by federal officials to consult with Chinese-Canadians on the best form of redress.

"The meeting was very upbeat," Dr. Joseph Du, president of the Winnipeg Chinese Cultural Centre, said in an interview. "People are very happy to see the government consult with us. We realize there are still a lot of different opinions in the Chinese community about what to do."

Between 1885 and 1923, 81,000 Chinese immigrants are believed to have paid \$23 million in head tax, a sum that is now believed to be worth more than \$1 billion. Chinese-Canadians are also reportedly seeking an apology for the Chinese Exclusion Act that barred Chinese immigrants from entering Canada between 1923 and 1947.

Heritage Minister Bev Oda and parliamentary secretary Jason Kenney have spent most of the last two weeks meeting with Chinese-Canadians on an official government apology and compensation for the head tax and other discriminatory government policies. Kenney was in town yesterday.

The Harper government has been careful not to call these meetings "negotiation" sessions. However, Kenney cautioned those attending the Winnipeg meeting that while the Tory government will move quickly -- a final recommendation could come as early as late May -- they should not expect everyone to be happy with the outcome.

"We can't do everything all at once to satisfy everyone in the community," Kenney said at the outset of the meeting, which was closed to the media.

During the last federal election campaign, Prime Minister Stephen Harper promised to make a formal apology for the money collected from Chinese immigrants coming to Canada to make a new home for themselves.

In the April 4th speech from the throne, Harper reiterated that pledge and said the government would pay compensation.

Du noted that many descendants of the head-tax payers are divided about how best to proceed with compensation.

Some would like to see compensation offered just to the surviving payers and their spouses, Wu said. Others would like compensation paid to the children and grandchildren, he added.

Wu said he believes many of Winnipeg's 20,000 Chinese-Canadians would be satisfied if compensation was paid only to surviving tax payers. Ottawa should implement a mediation system to negotiate a compensation deal, and put the issue to rest once and for all, he said.

dan.lett@freepress.mb.ca

April 30, 2006
THE TORONTO SUN
PAGE: C6 (COMMENT)
JOHN GLEESON

Do the right thing on "Head Tax"

The ground is shifting underfoot on the Harper government as it tries to deliver closure on the thorny issue of the Chinese head tax. And the political stakes couldn't be higher.

For a generation, Chinese-Canadians have been lobbying the feds for an apology and some form of restitution for the blatantly racist head tax of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The Harper government signalled in its throne speech that a formal apology from Ottawa was on the table. A compensation deal is in the works -- but that's where it gets a little dicey.

With only an estimated 200 head tax payers or their spouses surviving today, the restitution element of redress was seen as largely symbolic. Now, however, some Chinese-Canadians want compensation also paid to the estates of head tax payers whose adult children are still alive.

That would bring the number to "4,500 tops," says Susan Eng, co-chair of the Toronto-based Ontario Coalition of Chinese Head Tax Payers and Families.

Eng said the change comes after recent public consultations between federal officials and affected Chinese-Canadians. The meetings attracted descendants of the head tax payers "by the hundreds," said Eng. "Some of these people have waited 20 years without any government ever listening to them before this. And they left very heartened."

While skeptical at first, Eng's reading of the Conservatives is now that there is finally a government in Ottawa that "gets it."

"Both Jason Kenney (parliamentary secretary to Harper) and (Heritage Minister) Bev Oda described the head tax and Exclusion Act as racist legislation," she said. "That was a real step forward from what we heard from politicians in the past."

What the people told the politicians was that the children of head tax payers also paid a high price because of the racist policy -- not only did their parents paying the \$500 tax affect them directly, many were themselves subject to the Chinese Exclusion Act, which kept them separated from a parent in Canada who had paid the head tax to get here.

"The years of separation and the tragic stories have been quite moving," Eng said.

No specific amount of restitution has been universally endorsed by Chinese-Canadians. Some have asked for \$20,000 per person -- but that was when they were only looking at compensating 200

survivors, not 4,500. Eng said no one expects to get the full value of the money back (at the turn of the last century, \$500 would buy two building lots in Vancouver).

Eng was gracious enough to ask how I thought the public would respond to such an "upping of the ante." I told her frankly it would be a hard sell among some Canadians who have given up trying to keep track of who's being compensated how much for what historic sin this time.

GO FOR IT

But I also told her that including the descendants is the honorable thing to do and they should go for it.

And my unsolicited advice to Stephen Harper is to go for it, too. Not only will it be fair and just, but it will potentially shift key ridings in Toronto and Vancouver from the Liberals and NDP to the Conservatives in the next election. A million strong, Chinese-Canadians can potentially help hand the Conservatives a majority government.

That's a nice fringe benefit from merely doing the right thing.

April 30, 2006
MONTREAL GAZETTE
PAGE: A2 (NEWS)

Head tax solution is simple, MPs are told pay it back

JEFF HEINRICH, The Gazette

On Sept. 23, 1916, 17-year-old Li Heung stepped off a boat in the port of Vancouver and paid \$500 of borrowed money to enter Canada - a head tax, it was called, and only for Chinese immigrants.

Yesterday, his daughter, Lee Ming Fung, stepped up to a microphone at a public meeting in Montreal, held up her father's official head-tax certificate, and, in tears, respectfully demanded the money back.

Then she unfurled another sad keepsake: the long cloth laundry bag her father used to collect dirty clothes from the wealthy homes of Outremont to wash at his uncle's Charlie Lee laundry on St. Denis St., near Sherbrooke St.

It took him years, but the job was the only way he could pay back the \$500 in loans that got him into Canada - a huge sum for a labourer in those days.

The mementos are a shameful legacy, but Li's daughter put on a brave public face. Addressing a consultation led by federal Heritage Minister Bev Oda, she denounced Ottawa's hasty pre-election payout last November of \$2.5 million in head-tax compensation to the National Congress of Chinese Canadians.

"I hope and I suggest that the government (now) come out with a reasonable settlement ... and give compensation to each and every one of us, the victims," said Lee, 68, a retired factory worker who lives in LaSalle.

She was one of about 300 Chinese Canadians from Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto who packed the Chinese Community and Cultural Centre to meet Oda, who along with fellow Conservative MP Jason Kenney is soliciting views nationwide on the head-tax issue. Begun last weekend, their five-city tour winds up today in Winnipeg.

The Chinese Canadians are seeking an apology and reimbursement of the \$23 million - now worth about \$1 billion - that Canada collected from 81,000 immigrants between 1885 and 1923. They also want an apology for the Chinese Exclusion Act that barred new Chinese immigrants entirely from 1923 to 1947.

In his April 4 Throne Speech, Prime Minister Stephen Harper promised a full apology for both, along with some compensation, with an announcement expected as early as July 1. Yesterday, some Chinese Canadians applauded Harper for moving quickly on the issue.

Her voice shaking with emotion, Karen Cho, a young Montreal documentary filmmaker whose grandparents paid the head tax, said an official apology and compensation would help her community begin to heal. "For the first time, we too (could) feel that we are welcome here as true Canadians," she said.

The heritage minister, who is of Japanese descent, reminded the crowd Canada compensated 18,000 of her own people in 1988 for their internment during the Second World War. This time, it will be the Chinese Canadians, she promised.

"This government does not intend to play games," Oda concluded.

jheinrich@thegazette.canwest.com

Veterans Compensation for Chemical Testing

May 1, 2006

THE LEADER-POST (REGINA)

PAGE: A4 (NEWS)

Veterans still haven't been paid

Canadian Press

CALGARY (CP) -- Fewer than a third of veterans used as human guinea pigs in chemical warfare tests dating back to the Second World War have received the federal government's compensation payments.

That's disappointing to the man who spearheaded efforts to acknowledge the decades of pain caused by exposure to chemical agents such as mustard and chlorine gas.

"I thought in my heart it would be more," said Bill Tanner, 79, of Kelowna, B.C.

As of Friday, 1,046 veterans or their heirs had been approved for the \$24,000 tax-free payment from the Department of National Affairs. That's far fewer than the 3,700 soldiers who volunteered for the tests in Suffield, Alta., and in Ottawa.

Tanner has suffered respiratory ailments as well as throat and bladder cancer since being exposed to poisonous gas trials on the Alberta Prairie in 1945.

Although the experiments continued until the 1970s, most test subjects were teenagers during the war, recruited for \$1 a day and extra leave. Sworn to secrecy at the time, some honoured that pledge until their death.

"A lot of them have passed away and never told their families what happened," said Tanner, noting that others may be hospitalized in nursing homes and be unaware of the \$50-million program.

That's despite notification in 120 community newspapers and attention through the Royal Canadian Legion.

"This happened so long ago," he said. "A lot of these individuals are a lot older than me, in their mid to late 80s."

For almost 60 years, veterans who did seek pensions or help for the ailments that were byproducts of the experiments were disregarded and, in some cases, ridiculed.

It was only in 1989 that Ottawa acknowledged that soldiers were subjected to the blistering agent. Individual medical records have only been made available in recent years.

Former military ombudsman Andre Marin took up the veterans' cause and called the tests "a blot on (Canadian) history." Media attention on a proposed class action suit kept the issue in the public eye until the compensation program was announced in February 2004.

Despite the numbers, Tanner feels the program has been a success. He praised officials in Veterans Affairs and National Defence for cutting through red tape.

May 1, 2006
THE LONDON FREE PRESS
PAGE: A7 (NEWS)

FEW APPLY FOR CHEMICAL TEST PAYMENTS

JUDY MONCHUK, CP

Fewer than a third of veterans used as human guinea pigs in chemical warfare tests dating back to the Second World War have received the federal government's compensation payments.

That's disappointing to the man who spearheaded efforts to acknowledge the decades of pain caused by exposure to chemical agents such as mustard and chlorine gas.

"I thought in my heart it would be more," said Bill Tanner, 79, of Kelowna, B.C.

As of Friday, 1,046 veterans or their heirs had been approved for the \$24,000 tax-free payment from the Department of National Affairs, far fewer than the 3,700 soldiers who volunteered for the tests in Suffield, Alta., and in Ottawa.

Tanner has suffered respiratory ailments as well as throat and bladder cancer since being exposed to poisonous gas trials on the Alberta prairie in 1945.

Most test subjects were teenagers during the war, recruited for \$1 a day and extra leave. Sworn to secrecy at the time, some honoured that pledge until their death.

"A lot of them have passed away and never told their families what happened," said Tanner, noting others may be in nursing homes and unaware of the \$50-million program.

May 1, 2006
THE CALGARY SUN
PAGE: 4 (NEWS)

OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN FOR VETS' PAYBACK

SHAWN LOGAN, CALGARY SUN

Many soldiers exposed to chemical warfare testing at CFB Suffield may never be compensated, a veteran who helped shed light on the secret program says.

Second World War vet Harvey Friesen was one of 3,700 soldiers who volunteered to undergo battlefield testing of chemical weapons at the military base about 150 km southeast of Calgary between 1941 and the mid-1970s.

But with less than one-third of those eligible for compensation coming forward for the \$24,000 payment, Friesen said he believes some have likely died and others may have been ignored because of the secrecy.

"Many of them have died and the next-of- kin aren't digging into it," said the Winkler, Man. resident.

"I think more than 1,000 just fell through the cracks because of the secrecy and no one talking about it."

Friesen, 79, who was exposed under battlefield conditions to mustard gas, luckily has suffered no noticeable lingering effects.

The deadline for applications for the compensation was March 31, but the government will still accept submissions.