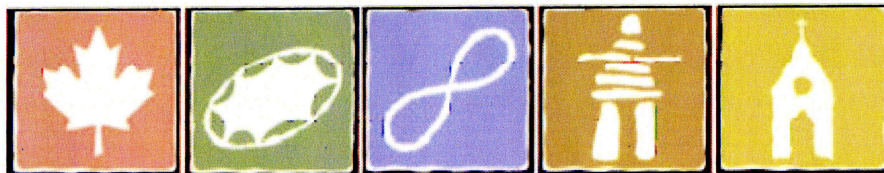


**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



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

Thursday, June 22, 2006 ♦ jeudi, 22 juin 2006

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June 21, 2006
Penticton Western News
Online

Band celebrates agreement

By Brian Jonson
News Staff Reporter

The signing of an aboriginal education enhancement agreement as part of National Aboriginal Day celebrations today is the latest sign of improved relationships between First Nations and non-aboriginals in the area, said the chief of the Penticton Indian Band.

"If you were to reflect on the last 16 years, we've come from a period of barricades and blockades and intense animosity to a place now in our history where we have once again reached out to each other and committed to move forward into the future in a collaborative fashion," said Chief Stewart Phillip. "There's no question in my mind that we've entered the era of respect, recognition and reconciliation."

Though local relationships were "forged in the furnace of conflict," events planned for three locations today will celebrate both the maturing of those relationships and hopes for a bright future, he said.

At West Bench elementary school, the Ministry of Education, Penticton Indian Band and School District No. 67 will take the next step toward strengthening relationships between First Nations and the non-aboriginal community by signing a five-year education enhancement agreement.

The agreements, which every district in the province must complete, set out measurable goals to improve aboriginal academic achievement. That marks a significant improvement from when aboriginals were "press-ganged" into residential schools and overlooked in public schools, said Phillip.

"There's been a dramatic shift over the last decade and a half to the point now where aboriginal enhancement agreements are the norm and the curriculum that is reflected in the public school system is very respectful and very mindful of the culture of the indigenous First Nations of that area," he said.

The Penticton Indian Band will commemorate aboriginal day by celebrating the grand opening of the new youth and senior centre, located near the ball park near the En'owkin Centre on the reserve.

Today the Ooknakane Friendship Centre will host events at Gyro Park that will include aboriginal dancers, drummers, storytellers and a salmon barbecue.

These events serve to remind aboriginal people of their rich heritage and help the non-aboriginals better understand aboriginal culture.

“More importantly it gives us all time to reflect on the future and how we’re going to work together in a collaborative fashion to build a better world for all of our children,” he said.

Jaedis Many Heads, 9, performs a grass dance behind En’owkin Centre Saturday morning. Aboriginal dancers will perform as part of National Aboriginal Day celebrations today.

June 22, 2006
The Vancouver Sun
Page: B1 / Front (Westcoast News)

Man dies during quest to find sister: Brother didn't miss a day of Robert Pickton's trial

Lori Culber

NEW WESTMINSTER - In the long row of seats reserved for relatives of the missing women, only one chair was filled every day since the pre-trial hearings for Robert (Willy) Pickton began in B.C. Supreme Court in January.

Pickton is accused of killing 26 women, and another 41 women are still missing from the Downtown Eastside. But Lance Henry, brother of Janet Henry, one of the missing women, was the only relative to show up daily at the precedent-setting trial.

But from now on, his second-row seat -- where the friendly, soft-spoken man sat directly behind Pickton -- will be empty.

Henry died last week in his East Vancouver apartment. An emotional memorial service was held Tuesday at a native friendship centre on East Hastings, attended by more than 150 people.

Henry's sister, Sandra Gagnon, said an autopsy indicated her fit-looking, 46-year-old brother died June 14 of an enlarged heart, and that further tests are being conducted to determine why.

Although Janet Henry is not among the women Pickton is accused of killing, Lance Henry said he felt the need to go to court to support her and the other women who disappeared.

Pickton's pre-trial hearing --which will determine the evidence that will be heard when the actual trial begins later this year or early next year -- is protected by a publication ban.

The legal arguments have often been dry and technical, but that didn't deter Henry from taking the SkyTrain to court in New Westminister each day. He carried his baseball cap and little else because of the two security screening stations that court visitors have to go through.

Henry had a sly smile and a quick wit, but he was also private, and declined media requests to speak at length about why he came to court each day.

In a brief interview shortly after the pre-trial hearings began Jan. 30, he told a reporter: "Over the years I had been following it in the media but I wanted to come for myself. I was curious and really didn't know what to expect."

Gagnon, who has attended some of Pickton's court dates over the years, said her brother had nightmares about the evidence he heard.

"He was really stressed about going to [see] Pickton, and I said, 'Lance you can't go every day,' " Gagnon recalled. "He just said to me, 'Sands, I have to.' "

Henry leaves a 15-year-old son, Cody, who lives with his mother, but saw his father all the time. The grieving teen paid a special tribute to his father at Tuesday's memorial.

Henry's large native family, from Alert Bay, was torn apart and placed in residential schools or foster homes, and has gone through unimaginable grief. Five siblings have died, and Janet Henry has been missing since June 25, 1997.

"My whole family has been going through so much," Gagnon said.

Speaker after speaker at his memorial service spoke of a smiling man who loved to joke, dance, eat, and visit with family and friends.

One woman said Henry's favourite movie was Finding Nemo, about a father fish looking for his lost son. The speaker said Henry was always looking for his lost sister, and liked Nemo because it had a happy ending.

June 22, 2006
The Province
Page: A24 (News)

Haisla totem pole welcomed home from Sweden

Peter Severinson

A nine-metre totem pole was royally welcomed home yesterday outside the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The pole has been in Sweden for 75 years and its return has deep meaning to members of the Haisla First Nation.

Louisa Smith is a descendant of the Haisla chief who commissioned the pole and has worked with her family for 15 years to get it back.

Its history mirrors her own life, Smith said. The pole was taken from its traditional home and placed in a museum just as she was taken from her family and placed in a residential school. Now that the pole has been returned, she feels that she has come home as well, she said.

"They told me that I was worthless and that I was unworthy," Smith said. "I no longer am the person they said I was . . . I am a human being created by the creator. This pole helps tell that story."

The pole was carved in 1872 in a village in the Kitlope Valley, west of Tweedsmuir Park and south of Kitimat. It was sold by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1929 to a Swedish consul in B.C.

It was presented as a gift to the Swedish government and stayed in storage at a Stockholm museum for more than 40 years before it was displayed in 1980. A decade later, Haisla descendants learned where it was and asked the Swedish government to return it.

They reached a deal and Haisla carvers travelled to Sweden in 2000, staying for a month to carve a replica for the museum.

A ceremony with speeches, dances and songs celebrated the pole's return yesterday on National Aboriginal Day.

The pole will be back in Haisla territory in early July, when it arrives in Kitamaat Village, near Kitimat.

June 21, 2006

Question Period – Minister Prentice

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The hon. Bill Graham: -- The government must listen to all Parties in the House. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Parliament clearly and forcefully expressed the will of the Canadian people. They want the government to honour Canada's commitment to our aboriginal peoples as agreed to in the Kelowna Accord. On this National Aboriginal Day, Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister's idea of respect for the will of this House and for our aboriginal peoples to turn his back on the most significant opportunity for progress in our lifetime?

The Honourable the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The Hon. Jim Prentice: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear that this government is proceeding with aboriginal people to address their priorities, and let's compare 13 weeks of Conservative government action compared to 13 years of Liberal empty promises. Drinking water standards, they dodged it and we did it. The Indian Residential Schools compensation, Mr. Speaker, they delayed it, we did it. The claims offered to the Deh Cho, they ducked it, we did it, Mr. Speaker. The process of matrimonial property, they wouldn't proceed. They ducked it, we did it, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we're going to see from this Conservative government.

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. Bill Graham: Well, Mr. Speaker, that response is totally in keeping with this government's lack of respect for anybody other than themselves. It's not the hallmark of (inaudible). Mr. Speaker, the Kelowna agreement was a solemn pledge on behalf of the people of Canada on behalf of our Aboriginal peoples. It was not a political accord. It wasn't a partisan (inaudible). It was a response to an enormously important problem in our country, Mr. Speaker, to break this pledge is to dishonor Canada and to add to our First Nations people's sense of betrayal in this country. So in the absence of the Prime Minister, will the Minister please in the name of all that is just, honor all of Canada's obligations enunciated in our fully funded Aboriginal accords, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The Hon. Jim Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's carry on with the comparisons. \$300 million for northern housing. They didn't, we did. \$300 million for off-reserve housing, they wouldn't, we did. \$500 million for the Mackenzie Valley socio-economic valley. They wouldn't, we did. I could go on, Mr. Speaker. I could go on, but they have

described themselves, their record, their 13-year record as one that is appalling, shameful, and devastating, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Honourable leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. Bill Graham: (Voice of translator): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Kelowna accord represented a consensus. Governments from all political parties represented here signed it, even Conservative governments in some of the provinces signed it, and it was the fruit of consultations with Aboriginal Canadians to work on a solution. So to recite a list is not worthy of this House or of a government which is proud enough to see that Aboriginal people need our support and our respect. Where is the \$5 billion that was promised to the First Nations in this country?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The hon. Jim Prentice: (Voice of translator): Mr. Speaker, we have no lessons in reality to learn from the Liberals. We will act against Aboriginal poverty, and we will do our best to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Pierrefonds.

Bernard Patry (L): This government has given the First Nations very few reasons to celebrate. Long forgotten diseases have re-appeared among some Aboriginal communities. For example, tuberculosis in Garden Hill in Manitoba, and the government's negative action has had consequences that are far worse than if they'd done nothing at all. Why has the government failed to recognize the signature of the previous government on the Kelowna accord that provided for \$1.3 billion to prevent situations such as tuberculosis in Garden Hill.

(Voice of translator): The honourable minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

The hon. Jim Prentice: (Voice of translator): The Conservative party budget, this government's budget demonstrates that \$300 million will be set aside for housing on reserves and in the North, 150 million, so \$1,075,000,000 has been set aside for these purposes.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Pierrefonds-Dollard.

Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, between 5 million for Aboriginal people and what was set aside for the GST., I choose Aboriginal health. Mr. Speaker, infant mortality among Aboriginal communities is 20% higher than for the rest of the Canadian population, and type 2 diabetes is three times more prevalent among Aboriginal people, and the suicide rate is ten times higher than among the rest of the Canadian population. The Kelowna Accord offered a beginning of a solution by providing for 870 million over five

years for the First Nations health directorate and another 445 million to increase the capacity of this system. Account current government tell us what type of solution it has found?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Health.

The Hon. Tony Clement: (Voice of translator): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable member knows that there are very difficult problems among Aboriginal communities, and we have to face this challenge and find human solutions to these problems, and money has been set aside for this. Expenditures have been provided for, and we will find other solutions with Aboriginal people because what was brought forward by the Liberals was a catastrophe for Aboriginal health.

The speaker: The Honourable Member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Hon. Anita Neville (L): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on National Aboriginal Day, this government has once again abandoned Aboriginal Canadians. Canada took the lead in developing the U.N. Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Now, when it's time for the government to support it, Mr. Speaker, they reject it. Adopting this resolution would be a sign that the government values the rights and the contributions of Aboriginal Canadians. Why does this government continue to abandon Canada's First Citizens, Mr. Speaker? Why does this government not think that Canada's indigenous people should have the same rights, the same privileges all Canadians?

The speaker: The Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Jim Prentice (C): Mr. Speaker, this is a continuation of Liberal hypocrisy, empty promises and rhetoric. The member knows full well that no previous government of this country has ever supported that draft declaration. She knows full well that is inconsistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights. It is inconsistent with our Constitution. It is inconsistent with the national defence act. It is inconsistent with our treaties and it's inconsistent with all of the policies under which we've negotiated land claims for 100 years. This is liberal hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker.

The speaker: The Honourable Member for Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River.

Gary Merasty (L): Mr. Speaker, we all know the Conservative government was a huge disappointment to Aboriginal Canadians. In fact, they completely left out the Métis. Worse yet, there was no mention of the Métis in the Throne Speech. No mention of the Métis by the Indian Affairs Minister at the Aboriginal Affairs Committee and, on top of that, they killed the Kelowna Accord, which had tremendous opportunities for Métis People. Perhaps certain advisors to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Indian Affairs tell them the Métis don't exist. Let me tell you, they exist and they're proud to be Métis... (applause) When will this government start treating Métis as a priority?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Jim Prentice (C): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that the budget contains \$300 million for off-reserve housing for Native Canadians, and I'm not going to stand in this House and take any electric frurs the Liberals on Aboriginal policy, Mr. Speaker. This is the party of empty promises. This is the party that stood by while Aboriginal Canadians drank water contaminated with e-coli. This is the party that stood by while Native Aboriginal women couldn't sleep in their own beds because they have no matrimonial property rights. 13 years of shame. They've been slammed by the auditor general, Amnesty International. I won't take it, mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for Labrador.

Todd Norman Russell (L): This is the most attention a Métis is getting from this government, Mr. Speaker. This National Aboriginal Day, a day to celebrate. Yet Aboriginal people are crying shame on the Conservatives. Shame for killing Kelowna. Shame for opposing the U.N. Indigenous rights declaration. Shame that they don't consult with Aboriginal people. Premier Williams says that the Prime Minister agreed to finance the lower Churchill hydro project, and the Conservatives have not consulted with the Aboriginal people in Labrador. Before signing a deal -- before signing a deal, will this government end their shameful ways, consult with the Inuit and Métis, resolve outstanding legal issues and assure all residents of Labrador benefit from this resource? Thank you.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Jim Prentice (C): Mr. Speaker, I think today we're actually talking about Liberal shame.

The speaker: Order!

Hon. Jim Prentice (C): The former Leader of the Liberal party describes their record as shameful. In fact, one of the current leaders describes it as devastating, Mr. Speaker. There's -- well, there's lots of noise and sputtering from the other side of the House. What this is, Mr. Speaker, is Liberals choking on their own record of shame, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: (Voice of translator): The Honourable Member for Churchill.

Tina Keeper (L): Mr. Speaker, on June 15th, the Minister of Indian Affairs claimed that the procurement strategy for Aboriginal business continues to be government policy. Perhaps he should speak to his colleague the Minister of Health, whose communications director said that the health department would not respect this federal policy in place since 1996. Could the Minister of Health please clarify for us whether his department will respect the mandatory set-aside program for Aboriginal business?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Tony Clement (C): Mr. Speaker, I think all members of this House realize that I can't get into any details on procurement, but, indeed, as the Honourable Member no doubt knows, we want to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians, wherever they live, best the best health care from the best sources available with the best health outcomes. That is the strategy of this government when it comes to Aboriginal health, Mr. Speaker.

the speaker: (voice of translator): the Honourable Member for Abitibi-Temiscamingue.

Marc Lemay (BQ):(voice of translator): Mr. speaker, Canada has just stated that it would withdraw support to the U.N. Aboriginal peoples' convention. The international community has been working on this for over 20 years. The vote will be held on June 29th in Geneva. How can the government explain that about-face that Canada's done whereas the Secretary General of Amnesty International said it's difficult to imagine such a substantial -- such an important program, particularly given all the years of work that has been done.

The Speaker: (Voice of translator): The Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Jim Prentice (C): (Voice of translator): I appreciate the question put by the Honourable member, but I do not agree with the member. The text proposed is not compatible with our Constitution and our Charter of Rights and freedoms. The Supreme Court decisions, the national defense act and policies concerning self-rule. Therefore, we will have to work with other countries and the Aboriginal communities to improve the draft text.

The Speaker: (Voice of translator): The Honourable member for Abitibi-Temiscamingue.

Marc Lemay (BQ): (Voice of translator): I would invite the minister, Mr. Speaker, to re-read 45 of the Aboriginal declaration. No provisions of this statement will be interpreted as giving a state or a group or an individual the right to engage in activities that is contrary to the U.N. Charter. How, then, can the Minister explain the about-face? Is he not simply wanting to do what the United States is doing and not listening to the dialogue of the Aboriginal people?

The Speaker: (Voice of translator): The Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Jim Prentice (C): -- Let's ensure that the public record is clear on this matter. The draft declaration has never been supported by any previous government of this country. There is no change of policy in that regard. It is not supported by the Australians. It is not supported by New Zealand. It is contrary or inconsistent with the Canadian Charter, with our Constitution Act, the distribution of powers. It is inconsistent with previous decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, and very inconsistent with the national defense act and the treaties and policies under which we negotiate treaties. This is a draft which requires further work. That work is underway. We support a final text as long as it is improved, Mr. Speaker.

June 22, 2006
The Globe and Mail
Page: A1 (National News)

PM offers \$20,000 and apology to survivors of Chinese head tax

Brian Laghi

Prime Minister Stephen Harper will close a controversial chapter in Canadian history today by offering up to \$20,000 to each of the people forced to pay the Chinese head tax who are still living. The move will come as Mr. Harper offers a formal apology to the 81,000 Chinese immigrants who shelled out a total of \$23-million to enter Canada. A compensation package is also expected to be offered to widowed spouses of those who paid the tax, while a source added there will be a so-called national recognition program established for educational and cultural activities. Estimates of the cost of the overall program varied, although one source said it would top \$30-million.

Sources said the government has identified only 29 surviving victims of the tax. There are approximately another 250 or so widows.

The government expects that a few more may come forward at a later date.

"There's no way to determine the total payout," said the source. "There may be 20 people that nobody's ever heard of who eventually come forward."

One source said the government's package is based on one paid to Japanese Canadians who had been interned during the Second World War. That package saw payments of \$21,000 to each of those affected still living. Another \$12-million was set aside for the educational, social and cultural well-being of the community.

The source said government officials had originally agreed to a compensation package of \$18,000 a person, but raised that figure recently to \$20,000.

"Not everybody is going to be happy with it," the source said.

One Conservative Party source said the government was paying as much as it could afford without incurring the anger of its conservative base of supporters, many of whom don't believe redress should be paid beyond those who were directly affected.

Chinese immigrants began coming to Canada in the late 1850s during the rush for gold in British Columbia, but the real influx came between 1881 and 1885 to work on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Soon after, the Canadian government imposed a head tax of \$50 per person to limit immigration. The tax was later increased to \$500, a massive amount at the time. The tax had the effect of splitting families and preventing wives and children from joining their husbands and fathers in Canada, many of whom had to take out loans to pay the tax.

The tax was paid until 1923, when Canada banned Chinese immigration. That act was repealed in 1947.

Mr. Harper will make his speech in front of a group of Chinese Canadians who have taken the train from as far away as British Columbia to be in attendance. The vast majority are descendants of those who paid the tax, although there will be a few surviving individuals as well.

Heritage Minister Bev Oda and Jason Kenney, the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary, crossed the country to meet with individuals of the Chinese community to discuss the redress package.

Ms. Oda hinted yesterday that compensation would be paid out.

"An apology will be made in the House and we will also be addressing appropriate acknowledgment," she said in the House of Commons.

The government also plans to put aside \$2.5-million in redress funds for members of other cultural communities.

Those communities include Canadians of Italian and of Ukrainian origin, although the money is not expected to be spent on individual compensation, rather the cash will go toward community programs and education. Sources said Mr. Harper is also expected to acknowledge other events, including the turning back of a ship carrying hundreds of Sikhs, the Komagata Maru, in Vancouver in 1914.

The money is part of a \$25-million fund put aside by previous Liberal governments to deal with redress in a number of cultural communities.

Jun 22, 2006

The Hamilton Spectator

(See Also: Times & Transcript (Moncton); The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo); Canadian Press Newswire; The London Free Press; The Guardian (Charlottetown); The Chronicle-Herald; The Hamilton Spectator)

Chinese head tax compensation coming

By John Ward

The Canadian Press

The federal government appears set to offer money as well as a formal apology over a racist head tax once applied to Chinese immigrants.

Heritage Minister Bev Oda strongly hinted at compensation in the House of Commons yesterday.

"An apology will be made in the House and we will also be addressing appropriate acknowledgment," she responded when asked if a compensation package would be announced.

Chinese-Canadian groups say they expect Prime Minister Stephen Harper will offer compensation, as well as regret, when he speaks to the Commons today. They suggest the package will include payments of \$10,000 to \$21,000 for surviving immigrants who paid the tax, surviving widows and first-generation children.

Some of the survivors of the head-tax era are to be in the Commons when Harper speaks.

Joseph Wong, founding president of the Chinese Canadian National Council, said he can't believe the government would invite the elderly people to Ottawa then turn them away empty-handed.

"I am quite sure there will be a compensation package," he said.

Susan Eng, co-chair of the Ontario Coalition of Chinese Head Tax Payers, also said she thinks the government will offer compensation.

"Apologies will be hollow words without substance behind it. It's important that there be some kind of token gesture while they are still alive to see it."

As well as money for individuals, Eng said the compensation package would include money for education and commemoration of the troubling era.

The head tax, ranging from \$50 to \$500, was assessed on Chinese immigrants from 1885 until 1923 when immigration from China was banned entirely.

It was 1947 before Canada opened its door again to Chinese.

Chinese Canadian organizations are bitter that the head tax was only applied after the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed -- with the help of thousands of Chinese labourers.

"Once they had done the work to build the link across the country, they were told they weren't wanted," Wong said.

About 81,000 people are believed to have paid the tax, although only a handful are still alive.

Wong said there are only about 35 survivors, plus about 360 of their widows and fewer than 4,000 of their children.

June 22, 2006
The People's Daily
(online)

Canadian government ready to redress Chinese head tax

The Canadian government is ready to redress the racist head tax applied to Chinese immigrants over 120 years ago.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper is expected to speak to the House of Parliament on Thursday, offering a formal apology as well as compensation to head tax payers, their widows and children.

"An apology will be made in the House and we will also be addressing appropriate acknowledgement," Heritage Minister Bev Oda told the parliament Wednesday.

Chinese-Canadian groups say they expect the package will include payments of 21,000 Canadian dollars (19,000 U.S. dollars) for head tax payer survivors and widows, 10,000 Canadian dollars (9,000 U.S. dollars) to first-generation children, as well as some money for education and commemoration of the dark historic period for the Chinese immigrants.

Meanwhile, a group of about 100 head tax survivors and their relatives from across the country arrived in Ottawa Wednesday by a train dubbed "Redress Express," to witness the event.

The journey, which started off last Friday from Vancouver, the starting point of Canada's Pacific Railway, symbolizes the painful connections between early Chinese immigrants and the railway.

The head tax, ranging from 50 Canadian dollars to 500, was assessed on Chinese immigrants from 1885 until 1923 when immigration from China was banned entirely. Canada opened its doors again to Chinese immigrants in 1947.

Chinese immigration to Canada began in 1858, and about 6,500 labored on the Pacific Railway project from 1881 to 1885. The head tax was applied immediately after the railway was completed.

About 81,000 people are believed to have paid the tax, which amounted in some cases to about two year's wages.

Joseph Wong, founding president of the Chinese Canadian National Council, said there are about 35 survivors, 360 of their widows and fewer than 4,000 of their children.

"The purpose of tying this in with a railway ride is to remind ourselves that the railroad is part of the mythology of Canada and helped build Canada," said Susan Eng, co-chair of

the Coalition of Chinese Head Tax Payers, on Wednesday. "And we have to remember the Chinese workers who gave their lives to build this country."

Eng stressed that the government's apology was vital. "An apology means that there is a public and official acknowledgment that this was legislation that was unreservedly racist ... and this is something that the government of the day has chosen, properly, to apologize for."

June 22, 2006
Broadcast News

OTTAWA -- Prime Minister Harper will offer an apology in the Commons today for the much-criticized Chinese head tax.

OTTAWA -- Prime Minister Harper will offer an apology in the Commons today for the much-criticized Chinese head tax.

Chinese-Canadian groups say they expect the government will offer a multi-(m)-million-dollar compensation package to survivors who paid it, widows and their children.

Of those who paid, about 20 are thought to be alive.

A tax of between 50 and 500 dollars was paid by each of the 80-thousand Chinese who came to Canada between 1885 and 1923.

In some cases, the tax amounted to two years wages.

More than 100 Chinese-Canadians arrived by train in Ottawa to witness first-hand the government's apology for the head tax.

Their Via Rail train was dubbed the "Redress Express."

Their mode of travel is symbolic because many of those who paid the tax laid tracks for Canada's railroads in the 1800's.

Many died on the job.

Susan Eng -- co-chair of the Ontario Coalition of Chinese Head Tax Payers -- says the Chinese workers "who gave their lives to build this country" must be remembered.

June 22, 2006
The Toronto Star
Page: A9 (News)

'Finally, closure to our suffering'

Emotions run high for head-tax payers waiting to hear apology Handful still alive represent 81,000 Chinese Canadians who aren't

Nicholas Keung

ABOARD VIA RAIL TRAIN 42 Five frail Chinese head-tax payers from across Canada made a four-hour, 446-kilometre train ride from Toronto to Ottawa for today's long-awaited apology from the Canadian government for 62 years of legislated discrimination.

The elderly men, between the ages of 77 and 106, represent in spirit an estimated 81,000 Chinese Canadians who died before seeing redress for a levy imposed solely on immigrants of Chinese origin between 1885 and 1923.

It's believed only 20 head-tax payers are still alive today.

Yesterday they, along with about 100 family members, rode at least part of a rail journey that began in Vancouver last Friday so they could witness an official apology to be delivered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the racism Chinese immigrants endured until 1947, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed.

The five men will also present the Last Spike - a commemorative item given to dignitaries who witnessed the opening of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 - to be mounted in the Railway Room of the House of Commons.

The thrill of the trip was visible on the faces of the elderly men, who were meeting each other for the first time but shared similar heart-wrenching stories of financial hardship, family separation and shame.

Ralph Lung Kee Lee, 106, who lives in a Pickering nursing home, decided to join the VIA Rail-sponsored "Redress Express" only a day before it left - following a family meeting to discuss his fitness to travel.

"He's lived to this day and outlived all the other head-tax payers who couldn't live to see this day of apology.

"He deserves the trip, the last trip of his life," said his teary granddaughter, Landy Anderson, while helping him with his wheelchair.

"He was separated from his family for more than 20 years because he couldn't afford to bring them over to Canada. The impact is still felt today. I can't even put it into words."

Susan Eng, co-chair of the Ontario Coalition of Chinese Head Tax Payers and Families, said "Our forefathers, the Chinese railway workers, were excluded from the Last Spike ceremony 121 years ago.

"On Thursday, we will honour their contributions and the essential role they had in the building of Canada.

"This train journey closes a historical loop for Chinese Canadians. This is all about restoring dignity and respect for our community's elders who paid a heavy price for the privilege of entering Canada," said Eng, a former Toronto police board chair who was on the train with her mother, Chuey Ting Eng, 78. Eng's relentless activism helped lead to today's historic announcement. Her father, Tong Eng, paid \$500 to come to Canada in 1919. He died in 1970.

Toronto's Frank Lim, 90, couldn't believe he beat the odds and lived long enough to be part of this day. His father paid \$500 to get him to Canada in 1921 when he was 6 years old.

"This is like a dream come true. People had been fighting for redress but didn't get anywhere. The trip is very significant because there will finally be closure to our suffering," explained the retired postal worker, who was joined by his wife, two children and two grandchildren.

"I didn't really tell any of my kids about the head tax because Canada has been pretty good to me. It's a good country, so why should I bother to say anything to anyone?"

Yit Dung Woo Chong, 99, said she insisted on taking the trip on behalf of her deceased husband, Jung Sing Kan, who paid the hefty levy in 1920.

"I went to my doctor yesterday to make sure I would be fit enough for the trip. I just wanted to witness history and be part of it," noted the elated Toronto woman.

Under a hot sun at the Ottawa train terminal, the group was greeted by Calgary Southeast MP Jason Kenney, Parliamentary Secretary to Harper (Multiculturalism), and Senator Nancy Ruth. Kenney agreed the apology is long overdue, but would not comment on the details of the redress package.

"We can't go back and undo the hurt," he told reporters. "The redress will be symbolic. It'll be a sign of good faith."

Other head-tax payers on the trip include Newfoundland's Wing Hong Au, 77; Toronto's James Pon, 88; and Edmonton's James Yuet Marr, 94. They will be joined at

the official ceremony today by Mary Mah, 85, of Calgary, and 200 community supporters.

June 22, 2006
The Leader-Post (Regina)
Page: B2 (City & Province)

Gee Travels To Ottawa To Hear Government's Apology

Erin Warner

Because his father is no longer around to hear the Canadian government apologize for the head tax charged to Chinese immigrants in the early 1900s, 80-year-old Sam Gee travelled to Ottawa to hear the words himself.

A small contingent of Regina's Chinese community made the trek Wednesday to receive Prime Minister Stephen Harper's official apology today in Parliament.

The group included spouses and children of Chinese immigrants to Canada -- most of whom paid a \$500 tax to enter Canada in 1913.

Both Gee's father and grandfather paid the \$500, then equivalent to two years' wages.

"It was so much money at the time, and he had to borrow money from relatives, friends," Gee said of his father, who passed away in 1974.

There are now few direct survivors who paid the head tax, which singled out only the Chinese to pay the government between \$50 and \$500 in tax between 1885 and 1923. Until today, neither the more than 81,000 Chinese people who paid the fee nor their family members have received any form of compensation or apology for the wrongdoing.

In addition to the apology, Gee said he is hoping Harper will offer some form of financial redress. As the president of Saskatchewan's Chinese Head Tax Redress Committee, Gee has registered more than 100 spouses or descendants of immigrants forced to pay the fee.

These people deserve some form of compensation, he said, whether personal or foundation money for education initiatives.

"I'm six generations in Canada now, but I try to look after all the Chinese people," Gee said.

Ken Yee is helping his mother, Toy, make the trip to Ottawa. Toy's husband borrowed money from family members to come to Canada in 1913 and wasn't able to return to China for 17 years.

It was a hardship for him to borrow what was a huge sum of money in that time, said Yee. He is looking for Harper to talk compensation while the group is in Ottawa.

"They have to apologize and pay something back to those people," Yee said.

"That's what I hope for."

The former Liberal government was criticized for not apologizing for the head tax. Prior to the January election this year, Harper stated that it was time for the government to apologize for the historical injustice.

In its April throne speech, the Conservative government promised a formal parliamentary apology to Chinese Canadians for the head tax. On June 13, Harper announced the formal apology would take place today.

June 22, 2006
Calgary Herald
Page: A5 (News)
(See Also: Vancouver Sun)

Redress train rolls into Ottawa

Ian Mulgrew, CanWest News Service

Alex Louie, dressed in his veteran's uniform, disembarked from the Redress Express proclaiming the prime minister's promised apology for the discrimination of Chinese immigrants the best present ever.

Celebrating his 81st birthday Wednesday, Louie said he was overjoyed Ottawa will finally make amends for imposing a restrictive head tax from 1885 until 1923 and a prohibition on Chinese immigration until 1947.

"All I ever wanted was an apology and for the government to set the record straight," said the spry, still-energetic Louie, who was decorated for his valour in the Second World War.

Louie was one of roughly 100 Chinese immigrants or their descendants who rolled into Ottawa on the special train to attend today's ceremony on Parliament Hill in which Prime Minister Stephen Harper will apologize for the discriminatory laws.

The Conservative leader will also unveil a restitution package worth perhaps as much as \$20 million to compensate those who paid the tax, as well as their descendants.

The redress train, which started its journey in Vancouver, left Toronto in morning rush hour Wednesday amid a four-generation cacophony of excitement and various dialects - Taishan, Mandarin, Hoisun and Cantonese.

In Ottawa, the train was met by about 40 supporters and the government point man on the file, Calgary-Southeast Conservative MP Jason Kenney.

Ralph Lung Kee Lee, 106, clutched one of the souvenir last spikes distributed to dignitaries at the 1885 ceremony to mark the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Late historian Pierre Berton donated the artifact to the redress campaign.

June 22, 2006
Times & Transcript
Page: A3 (News)

Minister honours native veterans

Veterans Affairs Minister Greg Thompson attended his first ceremony for aboriginal vets here yesterday along with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor and Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice.

"The large contribution that our aboriginals have made to the Canadian Forces over the year (have contributed) to the very democracies that we enjoy today," Thompson said in an interview.

"It is a very large contribution and it is only right that we would recognize it."

The ceremony marking National Aboriginal Day was at the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument here. The monument, in which two armed figures are surrounded by an eagle, which represents the creator, and a wolf, grizzly bear, buffalo and caribou, which represents spirit guides, was unveiled in 2001.

More than 7,000 Indians participated in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War, and an estimated 5,000 Inuit, Métis and non-status Indians also participated. More than 500 of them died during these wars.

Tommy Price, an Ojibway from Manitoba, was among the most highly decorated soldiers. He earned seven medals in the Second World War and three in Korea.

During the First World War Joseph Roussin, a Mohawk from Quebec, was awarded a medal for bravery for launching a solo attack on eight enemy soldiers.

June 21, 2006
Canadian Press Newswire
(See Also: The London Free Press)

Tories pay respects to native vets but fail to 'immediately' compensate

Sue Bailey

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper laid a wreath Wednesday for aboriginal war veterans, those pushing for compensation vented growing frustration.

Veterans' spokesman Cliff Chadderton says the Tory promise to make up for 60 years of neglect has been put off until at least the fall.

This, despite a campaign platform vowing the Conservatives would "take action immediately to give real compensation to these veterans in a way that truly respects their service and sacrifice."

Chadderton, still fighting but frail at 87, says he hasn't even made it in front of the Commons all-party committee dealing with the issue. He was all set to go June 7 for a 3 p.m. appearance that was called off at 1 p.m., he said.

The chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations in Canada had been bumped by a scheduling logjam.

Chadderton won't get another chance to plead the case for thousands of native veterans and their survivors until after Parliament resumes in September.

He joined the line of politicians and veterans Wednesday who laid memorial wreaths on National Aboriginal Day.

"We're beginning to wonder whether the Conservative party really understood what's going on," Chadderton said in an interview. "And whether they were willing to give it the priority required."

More than 3,000 aboriginal troops served in the Second World War, and several hundred more in Korea.

Many were denied the same compensation, retraining and housing services provided to others who returned from duty. They were denied because they lacked education, lived off-reserve or were outright targets of racism.

Veterans Affairs Minister Greg Thompson says his government is in regular touch with native groups on the issue.

"I think in the first four months in office we've shown a desire for that dialogue and working together," he said.

"Hopefully at the end of the day these issues will be resolved."

Thompson offered no time frame for a deal but acknowledged that time is ticking for many survivors.

"That's always a concern with all the veterans, whether native or non-native, because we're losing 25,000 ... a year simply because of old age."

Chadderton's group says aboriginal veterans who were declined support decades ago should get \$24,000 each _ compensation on par with that paid to other shunned groups, such as the merchant mariners.