

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
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Actualité**

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July 28, 2006

The Whitehorse Star

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AFN vice-chief overwhelms challenger

In an overwhelming show of support, Yukon first nations have opted to stick with their national representative.

Winning over Ed Schultz by a margin of 50 to 14, Rick O'Brien, the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN's) Yukon vice-chief, was re-elected in a landslide. He will continue to sit next to AFN Grand Chief Phil Fontaine to advocate on behalf of Canada's indigenous peoples.

"I expected it to be a lot closer," O'Brien told reporters following the announcement of the winner. The election was held during the Council of Yukon First Nations' (CYFN's) annual general assembly.

O'Brien said he ran on his record. That includes advocating that first nation veterans receive benefits, and lobbying the federal government on issues of importance to Yukon first nations.

"I don't say what I want to say; I say what (first nations) want to say," O'Brien said of his role.

Schultz, he added, was an honourable candidate who ran a good campaign.

Schultz told reporters he is happy for O'Brien but conceded it may be time to take a break from politics.

"The delegates must have felt confident that Rick had done a good job," he said.

"I'm washed up; I'm not any good in this role anymore," Schultz said of the state of his long, varied political career.

"Maybe I just need to walk away for a while."

Schultz said he is confident that O'Brien will bring attention to issues important to him, including: getting drugs off the streets and out of the communities; ending violence against women and promoting family values.

"I know Rick holds those values as well."

Asked what will be his first order of business, O'Brien said he needs to take some personal time to mourn the recent death of his mother.

During a pre-vote forum Thursday morning, O'Brien and Shultz were asked a number of questions on residential schools; first nation citizenship status; Yukon government administration of first nation funds; and programs for youth and the elderly.

Shultz said he would have a number of priorities if elected. He said he would push for more programs for residential school survivors, a halt to the practice of the Yukon government administering first nation dollars, and keep trying to protect the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd.

"I have and will continue to advocate for the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd," Shultz said. He is aware of how important the herd is to the Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation's way of life, he added.

"I've always made it an important priority," he said.

On the issue of residential schools, Shultz said he doesn't advocate giving survivors financial compensation without the services to heal from the experience.

"It's not a secret that private allocation of compensation dollars is not something I thought was an appropriate way to go," Shultz said.

"The debilitating effects of residential schools need to be addressed," he said.

O'Brien said while he also advocates for services to heal, he feels individuals such as himself who were victims of the residential school system deserve to be compensated for their loss.

"I am a conqueror of residential schools and so is my mother," O'Brien told the delegates.

"These people are entitled to this money, and you can't force them to take counselling."

He has fought hard with the AFN to ensure all residential school survivors, including the Whitehorse Baptist Mission School, which was taken off the table for discussion, get what's coming to them.

O'Brien also said he would support the Vuntut Gwich'in in their continued efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and advocated for youth and elder participation in first nation affairs.

Schultz became the first City of Whitehorse aboriginal councillor in the early 1990s, serving one term.

He unsuccessfully sought the federal Liberal nomination in the Yukon for an election in the 1990s, and is a former grand chief of the CYFN.

Schultz also sought the leadership of the territorial Liberal party, losing the June 2005 convention to Arthur Mitchell.

Schultz said he will not run in this year's territorial election.

July 31, 2006
The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
Page: A3

Drum festival dream a reality

Groups gather on riverbank to celebrate city centennial

Janet French

Two years ago, Kellie Welk stuck a piece of paper to her fridge bearing the words, "drum festival."

On Sunday, that idea became more than a hopeful scrawl as Welk, a drum-maker and teacher, stood with the Earth Beat Drummers in a circle in the grass at Friendship Park, pounding a hoop drum and singing as Dieter Braun played a North American flute.

"I was so, so thrilled that it's now here," Welk said. "The group that gathered to perform today are amazing singers and drummers, and I'm just really grateful."

Sunday marked Saskatoon's first Drum Festival on the banks of the South Saskatchewan, and another pearl in a year-long string of events celebrating Saskatoon's centennial year.

At least 13 cultural and community groups pounded out their rhythms in 15-minute segments Sunday afternoon.

The original plan was to have the beats echo across the river by holding some performances in Rotary Park, but all performances were moved to Friendship Park after traffic noise interfered with the drumming on the east side of the river.

The evening began with A Symphony for Percussion Orchestra, composed by Daniel Laban and conducted by David Kaplan. It's a four-part work composed for the centennial including 15 professional musicians playing solely on percussion instruments, like drums, xylophones, chimes and timpani.

Kaplan, the festival organizer, said the piece is meant to depict the beginning of life on Earth, the first Canadians and Saskatoon's birth, the evolution of world music in the early 20th century and a finale of hope for the future and the city. It was narrated by playwright and director Walter Mills.

Arranging a piece for drums, cymbals and other whackable instruments was a challenge, Kaplan said.

"When you're writing for percussion, of course, you must make sure the dramatic implication is there, because even if you have an narrator, you don't have a melody," he said.

At 7 p.m., the public was invited to join in a giant drumming circle, conducted by Kaplan.

"The ancients really knew it all," he said. "They knew that drumming not only was tremendous for ceremony, and for recreation and education, but it was also really good for therapy."

Joseph Naytowhow couldn't agree more. He led the Young Elk Drummers in a ceremonial First Nations drumming and singing Sunday afternoon.

"It practically saved my life," he said of singing and drumming. "I went through residential school before that for years, and when I went into singing it actually helped to release a lot of blocked up emotion, and things in my body. It was a release, a tremendous release, to master the sound, to master the drumbeat, and feel OK."

Naytowhow said he was excited to hear the different rhythms and styles played at Sunday's festival. It showcased cultures from the Afro-Caribbean ACCAS Steel Band to the Celtic Comhaltas Ceili Band.

"It's so beautiful," Naytowhow said. "We could learn from those rhythms. . . . That's where I get inspired."

Saskatoon citizens' centennial committee chair Darlene Bessey said she was pleased to put Kaplan's drum festival idea into the centennial calendar.

"We know it's something that exists in many communities, and larger cities in Canada," she said. "I really felt it was an idea whose time had come for Saskatoon."

While hundreds filed into Friendship Park to bob their heads to the beat, there were six new sculptures there to peruse.

A couple of sunglasses-clad spectators sat atop part of Edward Gibney's work, Two Solitudes.

Gibney said he likes it when people sit on his sculptures. The work is a series of square wooden beams that intersect in a rock.

"I sort of borrowed that from Pierre Trudeau, but my two solitudes aren't English and French, but humanity and nature," Gibney said. It shows the damage man has done to nature, he said, but also that man and nature can work together.

Steps away is a silver maple tree turned textured marvel. "Nearing extinction" shows a First Nations elder holding a baby, a bison, an eagle and a fish, sculptor Doug Lingelbach said.

"The First Nations people actually nurtured the land, the sky and the water and took care of everything in order for it to survive," the artist said. "Now, if white man doesn't wake up and smell the coffee, so to speak, we will have extinction of the bison, the eagle and the sturgeon fish."

It took Lingelbach 100 hours to finish the work, which he carved with chainsaws, rotary tools and sanders. The bottom is charred where Lingelbach lit it on fire to release spirits from the carving.

Bessey said the next centennial event will be a bridge party, where pedestrians will have free rein of the Broadway Bridge for a day.

July 29, 2006
The Toronto Star
Page: F2 (National Post)

Keeping a native language alive

*Computer software seen as key to increasing the number of Mohawk speakers
Immersion programs featured at Kahnawake Reserve, writes Robert J. Galbraith*

Robert J. Galbraith, Special to the Star

The Kahnawake Reserve near here is home to 8,000 Mohawks, but only about 1,000 of them can speak their native language.

To correct that, the community recently launched a computer software program it hopes will help revive the Mohawk language and encourage residents to get more in touch with their ancient culture and its teachings.

This is the first program to be initiated under the Rosetta Stone Endangered Languages Program, with similar software now being developed for the Seminole of the southern United States and the Inuit of the far north. Rosetta Stone software is currently being used to teach millions of users 30 major languages in more than 150 countries.

"Language defines nationhood. It shapes and forms your whole world of who you are. It's part of everything we are as a people," says Donna Goodleaf, a PhD in education and the executive director of Kahnawake's Cultural Centre.

"Part of our agenda as a cultural centre is to develop and implement language programs for the people of the community," she says.

The computer program will supplement a variety of other language training elements that are already in place in Kahnawake, including adult language enrichment classes, language immersion "nests" for preschool-age children and a cable access program for family members of all ages. They are all aimed at expanding the number of fluent Mohawk speakers.

The software immerses the user into the language he or she is trying to learn, through its dynamic immersion method. Words and phrases spoken by people from the community are matched with pictures of familiar places and faces. There are several options to choose from, and through the process of elimination, the user will pick the appropriate picture to match the words. Where other language software packages teach by translation, immersion ensures that language meaning is not lost, as it never equates indigenous words with English words.

Word of the program has sparked great interest in native communities across North America.

"We have received calls from the Six Nations, the Sak and Fox Nations of Oklahoma, the Navaho of Arizona, the Squamish of British Columbia, the Seminoles of Florida, the Inuit and the Ojibwa in Ontario," Goodleaf says. "They all want to know how it is working out."

The Kahnawake band council, under the leadership of Grand Chief Michael Delisle, wholly endorses the learning program. Not only is the program being used in schools and private homes, but by Sept. 1, the council will require Kahnawake's 900 public

servants to enrol in Mohawk language lessons. This includes social workers, teachers, medical workers, firefighters, peacekeepers and infrastructure employees.

"There's a fine line on our public employees in learning Mohawk. We're not going to throw people out," Delisle says. "We're not trying to force businesses to conform immediately. We're not saying your job is being threatened if you don't learn our language, but people with language skills will definitely be an asset when it comes to hiring. There is no real timeline (for language enforcement) but this is transitional. If we don't see the necessary results, we will have to be stricter."

"I don't foresee any problems," Delisle says. "For doctors and nurses it may be tough because of their workload, but we will eventually have to serve our community in their own language. We are hoping the civil servants bring the initiative home."

According to the grand chief, "in 1998 the elders told us that language is where our culture is based, and when we die off, our language will die with us. So, that year they put forward a declaration calling for its preservation," Delisle says. "With this in mind, in 1999 the band council passed a law making Mohawk the reserve's official language.

"We didn't want to do what Bill 101 (the Quebec language law) did and scare people off. We said, 'let's look at a transition program and develop a plan.'"

Delisle's goal is to have 30 per cent of Kahnawake's public employees fluent in Mohawk in five years, 60 per cent in 10 years and 80 per cent in 15 years.

"Our younger people are getting Mohawk cultural and language education at the two immersion schools and at the Survival School, located in the village. All subjects are taught in Mohawk there, but it is the middle generation, those of the 30 to 60 years group we are most hopeful of attracting. A lot of these people went through the residential school experience. They were not allowed to speak their native Mohawk tongue while incarcerated in these institutions and many lost that ability. They will get the most impact from it."

Delisle says Mohawk language and culture began its modern decline in the 1950s, largely due to the overwhelming English media and pop culture, then by the French language and political changes.

"Theirs (the English culture) is a dominant language and culture in Canada, especially with MTV, radio and television. To some of our youth, it's not sexy to know Mohawk; it's sexy to know hip-hop," he says.

The idea for the language revitalization drive came three years ago, when then-Kahnawake grand chief Joe Norton sent letters to 40 businesses in the online gaming industry, asking for cash contributions to be aimed at ways to regenerate interest in learning the language.

There was only one response. That came from John Moshal, a Jew who lives in Durban, South Africa. Moshal is the president of Microgaming Inc., the world's largest online gaming software developer.

Moshal saw similarities between the situation with the Mohawk language and Hebrew's revival, so he contributed \$250,000 over a five-year period to find a way to preserve the language.

The Mohawk used the money to hire Fairfield Technologies of Virginia to develop the Rosetta Stone software program for the Mohawk dialect. Two months ago, the first 1,000 CD-ROMs were delivered to the reserve. They feature four local Mohawk

speakers, and numerous Kahnawake landmarks and familiar faces, making it a truly home version for the people of Kahnawake.

The struggle to preserve a language is not solely a Mohawk problem. Of the world's 6,000 spoken languages, 50 per cent are endangered, and an average of one language disappears every two weeks, according to a UNESCO study of the present state of the world's languages.

"The struggle with preserving language is not inherent to Kahnawake or other nations exclusively," Delisle says. "My hope is that there will be in the near coming years, a national affiliation of Mohawk speakers across the nation. There is a lot at stake, but we are not going to disappear."

Hep-C Compensation

July 31, 2006

Ottawa Sun

Page: 15 (Editorial)

(See also: Calgary Sun, Toronto Sun)

HEP C VICTIMS NO LONGER FORGOTTEN

LINDA WILLIAMSON

What a relief it was to hear some truly good news last week.

Even better, it was good news delivered by a forthright and sincere Prime Minister Stephen Harper -- a guy many in this country had written off barely a year ago, but who has lately been making strong leadership look remarkably easy.

There he was, in between clear, principled statements on the Mideast, announcing his government would finally correct a prolonged injustice via \$1 billion in compensation for the "forgotten" victims of Canada's tainted blood scandal.

HAPPY SCENE

The scene was so happy, so right, it's hard to recall just how wrong things were. But remember we must, lest any government ever think it can get away with such a travesty.

Those smiling, grateful people who surrounded Harper last Tuesday were among some 20,000 Canadians who contracted hepatitis C and other ailments through contaminated blood in the 1980s and early '90s.

It was, simply put, the worst medical disaster in Canada's history, and surely the worst political scandal -- people were literally poisoned at the hands of their own public officials.

What's the only thing that could make such a scandal worse? Why, for those officials not to take responsibility for their mistakes, of course. And that's just what Jean Chretien's Liberals did. While they agreed, along with the provinces, to compensate about half of the victims, they excluded those infected before 1986 or after 1990, arguing (wrongly, it turned out) that there was no way to test for hep C then.

The original package was for more than \$1 billion, and the feds apparently feared the cost of compensating all the victims. So they ignored even Justice Horace Krever, head of the judicial inquiry into the scandal, who recommended compensating all victims as the only decent thing to do.

Instead, we had this unforgettable political spectacle in the spring of 1998: Chretien, fresh from a historic trip to Cuba where he preached the virtues of democracy, returned to the House of Commons where he forced his Liberals to vote against equal compensation for all, despite the objections of several MPs. Even after Chretien, Paul Martin's Liberals made noise about extending compensation, but never delivered.

Imagine if things had been different, says Mike McCarthy, who contracted hep C in 1984 and whose frontline battle for the "forgotten" victims propelled him to an honoured spot on the podium next to Harper last week.

"They wasted so much money on fighting victims," he says of the Chretien regime. And he believes politics made things worse -- when Ontario premier Mike Harris and Quebec's Lucien Bouchard stepped up to compensate all victims, "Chretien dug his feet in the mud and wouldn't budge."

Some 500 people have died waiting for compensation. And there are countless questions left unanswered about the genesis of the bad blood (McCarthy, for instance, received blood products traced to an Arkansas prison). A movie is in the works and lawsuits and criminal investigations grind on.

But McCarthy would prefer to focus on last week's sweet victory. "The little guy is alive and well in Canada," he says.

"We've shown you can right a wrong if you persevere. We didn't have powerful lobbyists -- we're just a bunch of sick people. But we did it."

REMARKABLY UN-CYNICAL

He remains remarkably un-cynical for someone who has seen the inner workings of government, health care and the legal system up close. Although the settlements will have to go through a court process (Harper said they can expect lump-sum payouts next year), McCarthy has no doubt they will flow.

Things are different now. The government recognizes it must do the right thing, and more importantly, so does the public.

"The public recognized this could have been anybody who got this blood. They realized they'd want the government to be there for them, just like they'd want them to be there if they were stranded in a war zone." Indeed.

July 31, 2006
The Chronicle-Herald
Page: A7 (Canada)

Agent Orange group seeks national attention

FREDERICTON - The Agent Orange Association of Canada will meet in Nova Scotia next month to come up with a strategy to bring national attention to the use of Agent Orange at a New Brunswick military base.

Art Connolly, the association's vice-president, said his group is tired of waiting for the government to do something about veterans' exposure to toxic chemicals sprayed at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown between 1956 and 1984.

"What we're planning on doing is sitting down and implementing some plans and strategies that we can use to get the attention of the politicians in order for them to speed up the process a little bit, and to actually recognize what has happened," Connolly said.

Since it became public that the harmful dioxins were sprayed at the base, more than 1,000 veterans have come forward claiming that exposure to the chemicals has led to medical problems.

The federal government has launched a fact-finding mission to examine the extent of the problem and recommend how people should be compensated.

The report will not be presented to the government until next year. Connolly said the association is looking to circulate petitions, start a postcard campaign and hold demonstrations in Ottawa to get the government to speed up the process.

"There are people out there who are in dire straits, people that are sick, and I've heard of people who are having to decide whether to pay the utilities or pay for their medication," he said. "No one in this country should have to do that."

He said the federal Conservatives were vocal about the Agent Orange issue before they came into power in the last election, but have since kept alarmingly quiet.

Connolly thinks compensation for those exposed to the toxins at CFB Gagetown will be used as a political ploy in the next election.

"What I think is going to happen is they will put together a package in the fall or early next fall, whenever the election timing is, because that's what they do," he said. "They always want to make it look good."

The association will meet Aug. 26 in Dartmouth.

Relevant Articles

July 30, 2006

570 News

Online

(See also: Edmonton Journal, CPN)

New Inuit leader takes helm as international spotlight shines on Arctic

Sue Bailey

OTTAWA (CP) - The closest hospital to the tiny Arctic village where Mary Simon grew up was a long flight south to Montreal.

Now freshly elected as the top political voice for Canada's Inuit, Simon gazed down at her left foot as she described what passed for health care when she was young.

A nasty scar runs the width of polished toes just above the black leather bow of her sandal. That's where a kid playing with an axe landed on her like a chopping block. She was 10 years old.

"I was accident-prone," Simon recalled with an understatement that conjures scraped knees, not a foot cut nearly in half.

Simon's skin was stapled together by the only nurse serving her hometown of Kuujjuaq, meaning "Great River" in Inuktitut, on the Koksoak River deep in northern Quebec.

Simon, now 58 and the new president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami - "Inuit are united in Canada" - never got surgery for damaged tendons. She still can't fully move her toes.

"I remember not being able to walk for a very long time," says the second eldest of eight kids born to a white fur trader for the Hudson's Bay Company and an Inuit mother.

That brand of casual toughness has served Simon well through a long career in aboriginal politics.

Her priorities will include young people, education, health and development during her three-year stint leading the group that speaks nationally for more than 56,000 Inuit scattered over the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, northern Quebec and Labrador.

International eyes are on that vast swath of varied terrain as never before. The Arctic is seen as a kind of last economic frontier of coveted natural gas, minerals and oil reserves. Warming temperatures and melting ice raise future shipping prospects and potential sovereignty battles.

There are also chronic social issues: violent crime, addiction, and high suicide rates ravage many communities while most Inuit kids drop out of high school.

Against this dramatic backdrop, the desire for prosperity must be weighed against values of conservation, respect for the land and the interconnection of all living things - beliefs that have sustained the Inuit for centuries.

Still, the Arctic has come a long way.

Simon's hometown, for example, not only has a hospital but is now a bustling transportation hub known as a gateway to the True North.

There is still much to do, she said of her new job that is very much an extension of work that has consumed her for decades. She is a former ambassador for circumpolar affairs and a founder of the eight-country Arctic Council, for example.

She also held a host of positions with Inuit political groups after launching her career as a producer and announcer for CBC's northern service.

Decisions made in the next few years will profoundly affect future Inuit generations.

"The new government is of concern to us," she said, referring to Tory backpedalling on the Kyoto pact to cut greenhouse gas emissions blamed for climate change.

Then there's the 10-year Kelowna agreement reached last fall between aboriginal leaders, the previous Liberal government and every premier.

The Tories have since said they support the goal of raising native living standards - but they gutted \$5.1 billion in promised Kelowna cash.

"The prime minister, whether a Liberal or not, they were representing the Crown," Simon said. "There should be some honour and commitment tied to that."

That's not the sort of blunt assessment that Jim Prentice appreciates. The federal Indian Affairs minister wrote to a weekly newspaper in Nunavut last week expressing his surprise to see Simon "starting off her term with statements that do not reflect the spirit of partnership and co-operation that has resulted in tremendous success to date."

He was referring to a recent report Simon gave in Alaska on Inuit successes and disappointments in the last four years.

Prentice likes to say that \$300 million for affordable housing in the territories actually surpasses Kelowna promises.

Simon calls it a start, but not nearly enough to make a dent in the overcrowded, crumbling housing stock that is a direct source of social dysfunction.

Bleak living conditions only add to the misery endured by Inuit kids, she says.

"There's way too many young people that are under a lot of stress. We need to really look at how we can change that."