

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



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

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Table of Contents/ Table des matières

INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL COVERAGE 3

HELPING SURVIVORS FIND JUSTICE..... 3

NATIVE BLOCKADES AND THREATS AREN'T THE SOLUTION..... 5

SYLVESTRE CASE COVERAGE 7

VICTIMS WANT CHURCH TO PAY SOME INQUIRY COSTS..... 7

Indian Residential School Coverage

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Page: C7 & Online

Helping Survivors Find Justice

By Andrew Hanon

Terry Lusty doesn't remember crying or laughing at any time in the first 47 years of his life.

"I was hard. Hard as a stone," the 64-year-old says, tapping his clenched fist over his heart. "I grew up one of the coldest, hardest individuals on planet Earth."

Lusty speaks matter-of-factly about his childhood, but his words are chilling. He was **one of the estimated 90,000 native children herded into residential schools** during the Canadian government's **100-year campaign to eliminate aboriginal culture** and absorb First Nations into mainstream society.

The stories of people who spent their entire childhoods locked away in these re-education camps sound like **what you'd hear from refugees of Maoist China or survivors of Pol Pot's reign of terror in Cambodia**. But it happened right here, in good old multicultural, tolerant Canada.

Lusty's father was killed in the Second World War, fighting for the country that scorned him. His impoverished mother made the mistake of handing her three-year-old son over to child-welfare authorities, who immediately shipped him off to a residential school in Winnipeg.

He never saw his mother or any other relatives again.

Lusty spent the next 11 years in and out of the residential school. A few times he was sent off to area farms, where he was taken in as a foster child for up to a year at a time. **They used him for child labour so their own kids could go to school.**

The rest of the time, he lived in the boys' dormitory at the residential school.

"It was very, very harsh," he said. "If you were caught doodling in your notebook during class, you'd get **strapped**. Minor infractions of the rules would lead to strappings, or sometimes they'd **box your ears**. I've met many people over the years whose **hearing was damaged** while they were in residential school."

Defiance, such as failure to complete homework or assigned chores, would lead to psychological punishment. "Many times I was shoved into a dumbwaiter and left for hours in total darkness between floors."

Tales of horrific physical and sexual abuse in residential schools are rife. Some former students told of being **beaten for speaking their native language**, while others complained of being **forced to kneel for hours, praying to God to accept their heathen souls into heaven. There are claims that in some schools siblings were forbidden to speak to one another in an effort to break family ties.**

Nowadays, Lusty is working to help victims of the residential school system get some long-overdue justice. He works with the Residential School Survivors Society of Alberta, one of a handful of organizations helping former rez school students **gnaw through the red tape that enshrouds a \$2-billion federal compensation fund.**

The money was initially announced last year. Everyone who attended school is entitled to \$10,000, plus \$3,000 for every year they attended. Problem is, however, the **feds still haven't set up a system to distribute the money, so most of it is still sitting in bank account.**

And as time wears on, more and more former students are dying off.

Lusty is helping those over 65 apply for advances of the money they're entitled to, "so they can at least have some enjoyment in this life before they pass on to the next life."

So far, that's all the feds are handing out - \$8,000 advances to senior citizens. Everyone else still has to wait, including Lusty himself, who's one year too young.

"It's causing a lot of confusion," he says. "People can't understand why they're not eligible."

He's had the unenviable responsibility of telling people they don't qualify for the advance, and they're going to have to wait even longer for a little justice.

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Page: A15 (Focus)

Native blockades and threats aren't the solution

Jim Prentice

I am writing in response to an article published Aug. 17, 2006, (White men get a taste of own medicine) by Chief Terrance Nelson of Roseau River First Nation. Once again, the possibility of railway blockades was raised as a means of settling disputes. Let me state unequivocally that no one should resort to those kinds of threats to accomplish what Chief Nelson wishes to accomplish. I hope we can continue to work together in a manner that respects the laws of Canada and that does not harm third parties.

Before my election to Parliament, I had the honour of serving for 15 years on the Indian Claims Commission, and know first-hand the difficulties caused by the slow pace of the claims process. In fact, in a speech to the Annual General Meeting of the Association of First Nations in Vancouver, B.C. on July 13, I stated that the third pillar for strengthening the relationships between the government and the First Nations is to speed up the processes in place to settle claims.

I have met with Chief Nelson, as well as Grand Chief Ron Evans and five Dakota chiefs, among other notables, in my office in Calgary on July 4. We reached an understanding that I would address each chief's concerns in an appropriate manner.

Since then, concrete steps have been taken to address those concerns. Regrettably, everything cannot be done at once, but we are doing what is reasonably possible.

As you may have already learned, the Honourable W. H. (Bill) McKnight, former minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, has been appointed as the special representative to deal with certain First Nations issues in Manitoba. One of those issues concerns the claims of the five Manitoba Dakota First Nations regarding unextinguished aboriginal rights. Mr. McKnight will meet with the Manitoba Dakota to hear their perspective on aboriginal rights issues and to make recommendations to me. His vast experience in dealing with aboriginal issues will assist considerably in this effort.

Internal work on the advice provided to the Special Claims Directorate by the Department of Justice on the claims of the Saskatchewan Dakota and Lakota First Nations will continue during this period. No preliminary federal position on the claim will be taken until Mr. McKnight's work is completed.

Moreover, department officials are working with other chiefs to assess their claims. There are many areas in which the processes throughout Canada -- not just in Manitoba -- can be improved and the department has been instructed to address these issues with the aim of streamlining the process.

While threats of blockades generate headlines, they do nothing to assist in producing lasting, mutually beneficial solutions. The Harper government is committed to solving these problems, not by announcing grand, unachievable goals but by tackling them one step at a time. In the areas of education, housing and other quality-of-life issues, my department has:

- **Addressed the legacy of residential schools; as a result, we approved the final Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and immediately launched an advance payment program;**
- Within weeks of taking office, we took action to improve the quality of drinking water on reserves; public consultations have been held in Winnipeg already;
- **More recently, we took steps to address the fundamental human rights issues facing women and children on-reserve by undertaking consultations on matrimonial real property;**
- Moreover, we also took steps to enable First Nations in British Columbia to assume meaningful **control over on-reserve education**, a model that I believe can be replicated throughout Canada.

In closing, I have been involved with First Nations issues in general -- and claims in particular -- for the larger part of my adult life.

I intend to meet with chiefs and First Nations when needed to resolve difficult issues in a climate of respect and determination.

Some past administrations have raised unreasonable expectations, only to disappoint First Nations over and over again.

We intend to set objectives that can be accomplished and show tangible, measurable results as quickly as possible.

Jim Prentice is minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and federal interlocutor for Metis and non-status Indians

Sylvestre Case Coverage

August 18, 2006

The Leader-Post (Regina)

Page: E7 (News)

(See also: Edmonton Journal)

Victims want church to pay some inquiry costs

Trevor Wilhelm, CanWest News Service

WINDSOR, Ont. -- Victims of confessed pedophile priest Charles Sylvestre want the diocese of London, Ont., to partly pay for a public inquiry into why church officials ignored his abuse of young girls for decades.

The law firm Ledroit Beckett will call for an inquiry today on behalf of several victims. It will also demand three other convicted priests be defrocked.

"They need to be accountable, as far as I'm concerned," said Mary Beth Studnicka, 41, who became Sylvestre's victim at the age of 10. "They let us all down and justice won't be served until everyone takes responsibility for their actions. It's time."

Sylvestre, 83, a retired Roman Catholic priest living in Belle River, Ont., pleaded guilty Aug. 3 to sexually abusing 47 young girls over a 36-year span. Several victims launched civil suits seeking millions of dollars from Sylvestre, as well as the diocese for not stopping him.

Studnicka said Sylvestre began abusing her in 1975 after recruiting her to count the collection.

"Then he'd proceed to touch me sexually," she said. "He would also touch girls very boldly on the schoolground. That was when the confusion came in as a young girl. Why wasn't anyone telling him to stop?"

Lawyer Rob Talach said the diocese should cover some of the costs of an inquiry because many officials and others involved with the church knew what Sylvestre was doing.

Talach called it **"the silent shuffle"** because the diocese moved Sylvestre around to different parishes and kept a lid on his past.

"It is a huge problem and it is institutional," he said. "Something needs to be done, and the church needs to fund some of it. It's almost a willful blindness. **The public purse shouldn't pay for all of this.**"

He said the government should pay for some of the cost, however, to ensure the investigation remains impartial and the public interest is served.

But with a similar inquiry into an alleged pedophile ring in Cornwall, Ont., Talach admitted that might be a tough sell. He said a review, which is like a mini-inquiry, might be a compromise.

"I don't know if there is the political will," he said.

Brendan Crawley, spokesman for the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, said he couldn't comment because the case is still before the courts.

Diocese spokesman Ron Pickersgill said Thursday the diocese wouldn't comment until hearing what comes out of the today's news conference.

Victim impact statements and the reading of facts in the case continues Sept. 22. Sentencing is set for Oct. 6.