

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada  
Media Clips**



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

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## Table of Contents/ Table des matières

<b><u>RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS SPEAK OUT.....</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
<b><u>BLOCKADE THREAT NOT THE SOLUTION .....</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>TORIES BURNING TOO MANY BRIDGES .....</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>

October 2, 2006

## **Residential School Survivors Speak Out**

*Winnipeg Free Press*

By: Alexandra Paul

Hundreds of aboriginal people who were forced into Indian residential schools in the 1900s will have their say in court this week on a \$1.9-billion federal settlement. Hearings, to run over two days in Manitoba provincial court Oct. 5 and 6, are part of the residential schools deal approved by Ottawa.

The court hearings are the last chance for former students to object to the deal. If enough of them do, the courts have the authority to kill the agreement before payments go out in the mail, likely next spring.

"This is where survivors can go to the court and speak or have their lawyers speak for them," said Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs residential school co-ordinator Jennifer Wood.

Wood, a residential school survivor, said she'll be attending both days and she expects the court to be crowded with others like her.

"From what I hear, everybody wants to come. We could have so many people, they'll have to stand outside (the courtroom)," Wood said.

The payments, which average \$24,000 per student, are being called common-experience payments. This is because anyone who was forced into the residential federally funded, church-run industrial schools is entitled to compensation for the loss of their aboriginal language, culture and family ties.

Under the deal, every student is entitled to a \$10,000 basic payment plus \$3,000 for every year they were there.

The schools were the beachhead of an aggressive federal assimilation policy to teach aboriginal children the English language and have them adopt Christianity and Canadian customs.

Children were severely punished for speaking aboriginal languages or practising traditional aboriginal customs and aspects of their culture. Residential schools have been blamed for contributing to the legacy of suicides, addictions and family violence that plagues First Nation communities to this day.

Hundreds of students endured sexual, physical and psychological abuse in the schools. A separate fund of \$1.8 billion is set aside for abuse claims.

In the meantime, advance payments of \$8,000 are being paid now to those 65 and older, regardless of the courts' decision on the final payments.

Ottawa decided to make advance payments this spring on compassionate grounds after learning that five to seven survivors every day die in Canada of old age without seeing a penny of compensation.

Under the terms of the agreement, Canada's courts have the authority to kill the deal if judges find that 5,000 of the estimated 80,000 surviving students in Canada object to it.

Nobody in Manitoba expects the deal to die.

"The reason this is attractive is this is not an intimidating experience. There's no court hearing (where people will be cross-examined) and they don't have to be questioned by a judge," Wood said.

Manitoba's AMC is the only First Nations organization to hire a co-ordinator specifically to deal with the residential school issues. Wood's job is to help survivors of the schools fill out complicated applications for the payments.

In Manitoba, there are an estimated 5,500 adults, many in their 60s and 70s, who were forced into 14 schools scattered from Brandon to Winnipeg and north to The Pas.

By the 1930s, at the peak of the residential school system, there were 80,000 children who were forced to attend the schools that existed in every province except Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

September 30, 2006

## **Blockade Threat Not the Solution**

*The Chronicle-Herald*

By: Jim Prentice

I am writing in response to an article published in the Sept. 28 edition of The Chronicle Herald in which Chief Lawrence Paul of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs threatened "some kind of civil disobedience" including "blocking airports" to get my attention.

First, I would like to state unequivocally that threats and blockades are not the solution. While I have not yet had the opportunity to personally visit the East Coast since my appointment as minister, I have met with a number of Atlantic region First Nations representatives to discuss various issues. Indeed, on June 2, I met in Ottawa with representatives of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs, including Chief Paul.

From its first day in office, Canada's new government has been working hard to make a real difference in the lives of all aboriginal peoples.

We have taken quick and decisive action on a number of fronts, and will continue to do so. For example, within 45 days of taking office, we moved to bring First Nations' drinking water standards and systems up to par with the rest of the country.

We have already taken significant steps to enable First Nations to assume meaningful control over on-reserve elementary and secondary educational systems. And, as I have stated publicly on many occasions, I intend to undertake a retooling to speed up the processes in place to settle claims.

In our first budget in May, we set aside \$3.7 billion to support aboriginal people and communities - more money for aboriginal programming than in any previous federal budget.

In the Atlantic region, we continue to work in partnership with First Nations, and provincial and federal partners, on a number of key initiatives. These include First Nation community planning, education projects such as the replacement of school facilities, and aboriginal and treaty rights negotiations.

In Nova Scotia, for instance, First Nations are in the process of ratifying a framework agreement which will set the stage for substantive negotiations on aboriginal and treaty rights in the province. This "made in Nova Scotia process" was established so that the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and the federal and provincial governments could sit down

together and negotiate outstanding issues of aboriginal rights, including assertions of aboriginal title. We wanted to create a process that is flexible enough to take into account the unique circumstances, needs, interests and rights of all involved.

Our government is looking forward to signing this agreement in the near future.

While much work remains to be done, I believe that real progress can only be made if we work together in a constructive fashion rather than attempt to get a response through threats.

While threats of blockades generate headlines, they do nothing to assist in producing lasting, mutually beneficial solutions. Canada's new 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.
- ; Just this week, we took further steps to address the fundamental human rights issues facing women and children on reserves by launching 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 which I believe can be replicated throughout Canada.

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.

October 2, 2006

## **Tories Burning Too Many Bridges**

*The Leader-Post*

By: Doug Cuthand

The federal Conservative government has once again cut funding to aboriginal people. They can be forgiven if they see a trend developing. As they say, you'd be paranoid too if they were out to get you. So far we have not seen any positive moves by the Harper government towards First Nations and aboriginal people.

The cut in the funding to the First Nations and Inuit Tobacco Control Strategy is the latest negative step. The program cut will save the government \$10.8 million over two years but the long-term effects have not been determined.

"The program had proven ineffective at reducing tobacco consumption," Treasury Board president John Baird was quoted as saying in the Toronto Star. However, Health Canada's own statistics point out otherwise.

Smoking rates among aboriginal people dropped from 62 per cent in 1999 to 59 per cent in 2002. These are the most recent numbers available and it would appear that the trend continues. Smoking rates for First Nations and Inuit people are three times the national average, so prevention programs are absolutely necessary.

In his comments to the Star, Baird also stated that Health Canada will be announcing a replacement program soon. Now, I am all in favour of improving delivery and efficiency of programs but what is accomplished by destroying a program before you replace it? Staff moves on, boards are disbanded, office leases expire and the new program begins from a standing start.

It would have been far more practical to continue the old program to the end of the fiscal year and then start a new one. This way the disruption and bad feelings will only be an impediment to future programs.

Everyone agrees that we need a tobacco control strategy. We lead the nation in the growth of lung cancer and respiratory diseases. The Canadian Cancer Society reports that cancer is becoming the leading cause of death for aboriginal Canadians. From a purely monetary perspective it makes sense to try to reduce smoking rather than treat the consequences. To cut the program is penny wise in the short run but pound foolish in the long run.

Phil Fontaine, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, pointed out that no other smoking awareness programs, aimed at non-aboriginals, were cut . "This is discriminatory treatment," he told the Canadian Press. The government refers to it as "trimming the fat," but our people say something different.

The trend coming from Ottawa is disturbing. First of all during the election the Conservatives effectively wrote off the aboriginal vote by rejecting the Kelowna Accord. This agreement, which Conservative candidate Monte Solberg stated was written on the back of a napkin, was the result of more than a year of consultations between the federal government, First Nations and Metis organizations.

The actual negotiations for the Kelowna Accord took place over an 18-month period during 2004 and 2005. The process began with a Canada-Aboriginal Peoples roundtable in Ottawa in April 2004 and concluded in Kelowna in November 2005. The result was an ambitious, 10-year plan to work together and improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians.

Then we had the unseemly spectacle of Canada siding with Russia as the only two countries in the world to vote against the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Aboriginal Peoples. Here again it was a case of a document that had been developed over a period of years with aboriginal and government representation and input. Canada was a major participant in discussions in Geneva and New York. It could have been a milestone in international co-operation but it was deep-sixed at the last minute by the Harper government.

And as recently as last week, Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice stated that he was in favour of the privatization of Indian land in order to improve housing on reserves. This is a non-starter for First Nations because it puts First Nations land in jeopardy. It is a long tradition in Indian country that each generation protects the land and passes it on to the next generation. First Nations land is not real estate but rather our legacy.