

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada  
Media Clips**



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

**Wednesday, April 4, 2007 ♦ mercredi, 4 avril 2007**

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**April 4, 2007**

## **Residential schools**

[Thom Gillan, National Post](#) (page A19; Letters)

Re: **Aboriginals** deserve an apology, **Phil Fontaine**, April 3

Based on his arguments in yesterday's paper, one can only presume that Mr. Fontaine lacks the full complement of intellectual tools that would allow him to logically analyze historical data to arrive at a valid conclusion.

The government of Canada is a collection of individuals. It is a concept not a thing. Concepts cannot act.

If Mr. Fontaine were to claim that people within that collection, colluded with individuals within the organizations known as churches, to do harm to native children, he'd still be on shaky ground. The facts support the point of view that rogue elements within churches and perhaps governments acted immorally or even criminally toward some native children. That doesn't mean that it was the collective will of either of those organizations to damage native children.

If any of the individuals who acted improperly are alive and they feel sorry for their actions, then it would be appropriate that they apologize to those they have wronged. If they do not feel sorry for their actions, then any apology from them would be a lie.

It makes no sense whatsoever from someone who didn't wrong these children to apologize for the actions of someone who did.

Thom Gillan, Hamilton, Ont.

## Residential schools

[D. A. Stallard, National Post](#) (page A19; Letters)

**Jim Prentice**, the Minister of Northern Affairs, is correct in pointing out the object of the **residential schools**, which was basically the same as that of public schools and private schools: to provide an opportunity for an education.

The pupils were clothed, fed, had clean accommodations, bedding, showers, baths and indoor toilet facilities; they were given medical and dental care, books and school supplies, ground and air transportation, parties, picnics and treats, sports .all free.

Their language of instruction was nominally English, as in other schools. The children had rules to follow, as did their counterparts in other schools. Children whose native tongue was French, Flemish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Gaelic or Chinese were obliged to work in English, which made sense. So too in **residential schools**, where different tribes, and tribal hatreds, were involved. The native tongues could be used at home and elsewhere.

Any punishment was little different; native children were not accustomed to school discipline, and likely it bothered them more.

There was ample opportunity to do report the claimed abuses during parental visits or summer breaks. Has it taken money to loosen tongues, then?

And what about the people who volunteered to work in the schools; the people who sacrificed much from their own and their families' lives to heed the plea for help from their churches, and leave often secure jobs for the token wages at the schools, e.g., \$15 a month for supervisory staff in Anglican-operated schools?

The native children had every opportunity to further their ability to function in the world outside the reserve; an honest and sincere effort was made by the **residential schools** to provide it.

Neither apology nor financial compensation is warranted.

D. A. Stallard, New Glasgow, N.S.

## Residential schools

**Residential schools**, National Post (page A19; Letters)

I was raised in Northern Manitoba and grew up when native children were taken from their parents and placed in **residential schools**. Many of my friends were Metis with whom we played, ate with and went to school. My best friend was **Metis**, very, very smart and was being raised in a foster home. Unfortunately, because she was getting older, she was sent to another location to help a family with children. In other words, free labour. She never did finish high school which was very sad. During my high school years, I recall only about two **natives** actually being in the all white school.

It took a long time for us white folk to realize the damage that had been done to our **aboriginal** population by putting them in **residential schools** and basically taking away their life and language. **Jim Prentice**, the **Indian Affairs Minister**, does not seem to realize the damage done to **natives** because of the treatment they received while supposedly under the care of the **education** system and the so-called pillars of society, the church. Mr. Prentice, you are in denial about what really went on, and your comments are an insult to our **First Nations**. How would you like it if someone came into your home and took your children, believing they would be better off away from their mother and father? Now, 50 years later, our **aboriginals** are still fighting to be treated with dignity and decency and, Mr. Prentice, you do owe them an apology. After all, you are the minister in charge of **Indian affairs**.

Joan Nelson, Calgary.

## Harper's values are not Canada's values

### Prime minister doesn't recognize needs of **aboriginals** and others living in **poverty**

The Telegram (St. John's) (page A6; Editorial)  
[Samantha Emberley](#)

I've always thought that actions speak louder than words. What one claims to care about is usually reaffirmed or counteracted by the moves they choose to make.

With that said, in the wake of the recent federal budget, I passionately feel that Canada's Conservative party, led by Stephen Harper, holds values which are socially skewed. What particularly strikes me as unjust is their ignorance of those living in **poverty** - and the deceiving picture painted to secure the votes of the suburban middle class.

Judging by the recent actions of the federal Conservatives, it's obvious what they hold as valuable, and even more obvious what they don't. They certainly don't value the one in six children in Canada who currently is living below the **poverty** line. If they felt so strongly about the children of our country, there would be a call for universal **child care** instead of a measly child tax credit which, in the long run, offers next to nothing to families living deep in poverty - **poverty** which can be easily cut by putting money into providing access to equal opportunities for low income families.

Harper and his government also choose to forget history and ignore the **First Nations** peoples of Canada, who continue to be plagued by **poverty**. If they truly wish for a "stronger, safer and better Canada," why would they accept the unacceptable living conditions that exist on more than 600 reserves? While the plight of **aboriginals** ceases to be addressed in the budget, the lasting effects of assimilation and **residential schools** are still going strong in communities across the country.

And if it wasn't for the almighty roar of Danny Williams, maybe Harper could have forgotten about the promises he made and broke to one of the poorest provinces in Canada concerning equalization - a broken promise that stunts the growth of a province that has to continuously battle for what is rightfully ours.

It's indeed obvious that Stephen Harper has no time for those who can't offer him what he wants. After all, by reaching out to those in need, he gets nothing but the satisfaction of social justice. And who cares about justice when you're trying to score with the people most likely to vote? I mean, why not offer a budget aimed to please the middle class? After all, that's where most of the votes in the future election will come from.

Canadians live in a country of great wealth and opportunity, yet access to both continues to be kept away from the disadvantaged. There exists a population of people

within Canada who are doing the best they can to get through each day, who are trying to pay their bills, trying to give their children an **education**, and are trying to escape the **poverty** trap. There are people in Canada trying to thrive in an environment that can be enhanced by the wealth and opportunity that Harper's government refuses to offer them.

### Compass askew

Stephen Harper's moral compass was set askew long before his time as prime minister. His actions speak of injustice, inequity and lack of compassion. Just Google "Harper national council speech" and you'll find a particularly interesting speech from 1997 in which Harper clearly states the things he values.

Is this the person you want leading the government which ultimately takes actions that decide what we value as a country?

Samantha Emberley lives in St. John's and attends Memorial **University**. Her column returns on May 30.

## Welcome home Nora

### It was a long journey and yet it's only 37 feet

The Daily News (Truro) (page 3)

[Jason Malloy](#)

Nora Bernard has lived a stone's throw away from the community she was born in but for nearly 40 years wasn't allowed to be apart of it.

The Truro resident lost that right when she married a non-native man in 1955. But for the past 38 years she has been trying to become part of the band.

Recently, band members voted to grant her that right.

"Everywhere I go they're hollering 'welcome home Nora, welcome home,'" she said yesterday from her Truro home which borders the **First Nations** community. "Approximately 38 years it took me, to be allowed back home."

Bernard was 17 when she was married and was so young her mother had to sign the marriage certificate. At the time, she didn't know the implications marrying a non-native man would have.

She lost her status and was not allowed to be apart of the band. When the **Indian Act** was changed in 1985 she received her status back but not the entry into the band.

Bernard, now 71, had tried unsuccessfully many times to be voted back onto the reserve. "Each time I was three or four votes away and I was getting very discouraged," she said.

She even considered giving up the fight but said the principle of losing the right and the encouragement of elders and family members kept her going.

After so many disappointments, she finally was granted **band membership**.

"My feelings are numb. I don't know how to take it," she said from her living room looking out the side window to the reserve. "They have welcomed me back home but it was a long journey and yet it's only 37 feet."

The fight has made her stronger, she said, and gives her the push to keep fighting for what is right. She is the director of the Survivors of the Shubenacadie Indian **Residential School** and has been heavily involved in the fight for compensation for the survivors which is still ongoing.



The Millbrook Band has a plebiscite every five years where new members can be voted in. Bernard was one of four members to receive the required number of votes this year.

## Social programs in spotlight

[Matthew Barton, The Edmonton Journal](#)

Community activists worked hard to woo government officials Tuesday in a campaign to justify social spending programs.

Alain Clermont was enrolled in a boarding school program similar to the **residential schools** program when he was five years old.

"It was the worst year of my life. I remember it like it was yesterday," said Clermont.

He broke the cycle of abuse and poverty in his own life, finished school and moved on to work for SaskPower, and as a justice of the peace. Now he fights for students of the Adult Learning Centre (ALC), a Regina organization funded in part by the federal government.

He shared his life story with Monte Solberg, the minister of human resources and social development, to illustrate the benefits of social programs.

Solberg toured Regina, visiting three community centres to learn about the employment and anti-poverty programs his department funded.

The ALC, which was founded in 1990, receives funding from the government and private companies. Services Canada gave more than \$146,000 to the ALC last year but activists would like to see funding expanded.

The ALC provides education programs ranging from G.E.D. to pre-nursing. It boasts an 83-per-cent graduation rate, with 73 per cent of students going on to post-secondary education or employment.

"It's a hot labour market. It's time to tackle these problems and address those who are chronically unemployed," said Solberg.

The average cost to the ALC per student is \$20,000. Students who attend the program are eligible for a paycheque and are paid according to their attendance. The education salaries are an effort to address the catch-22 of being ineligible for government assistance while attending school.

One MP was impressed by the program.

"The program generates value for the taxpayer. It shows results. It's not enough to have lavish welfare programs. Taxpayers expect a return on their investment and that's important," said Andrew Scheer, MP for Regina-Qu'Appelle.

Solberg also visited the North Central Family Centre (NCFC), which received more than \$660,000 in funding from Services Canada last year, and the Rainbow Youth Centre (RYC), which received more than \$189,000 for its Road to Employment program.

"Sometimes it's easier to see a dollar figure than the benefit it provides. We hope to gain the recognition that the program makes a difference in the lives of youth," said RYC director Danielle Pass.

Members of the ALC said their programs have a ripple effect upon the friends, family and children of students. The benefits of being in the programs spread out into the community.

"There are angels in this world," said Clermont. "They are the people right here."