

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada  
Media Clips**



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

**Thursday, April 5, 2007 ♦ jeudi, 5 avril 2007**

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## April 5, 2007

### Cote shares painful stories

[Matthew Barton, Leader-Post](#) (page B3)

Students at Campbell Collegiate were asked Wednesday to imagine the horror of attending a **residential school** in the 1940s.

"It was hard to believe ... that's horrible ... it's so hard to describe," said student Sarah Tayyen.

Tony Cote, a 72-year-old member of the Saulteaux **First Nation**, spoke to the Grade 12 social studies class to illustrate the experience of children who went through **residential schools**.

He told the class about the physical abuse he received for speaking his native language or talking to girls on the playground.

Cote said he was only six years old when he was taken from his family but he can vividly describe the straps used to punish him.

"They were thick," he said as he made a gesture with his fingers, estimating about three centimetres. "(The straps) were two and a half, three feet long and (the nuns) would make you roll your sleeves up."

Some students squirmed in their desks as Cote explained strappable offences and other humiliations inflicted upon students: Head-shaving for runaways, or watching other kids forced to stand with urine-soaked bedsheets draped over their heads.

"It sounded like he was talking about a prison," said student Jordan Patzwald.

Cote compared the treatment of students in the **schools** to institutionalized patients, with a lack of autonomy, harsh treatment and dependency.

"Some of us were disturbed by the treatment we received. After the students left (the **schools**) they didn't know how to fit into any society," said Cote.

Some of the Campbell students nodded as he spoke. Most sat in silence, even when they were encouraged to ask questions. One student tied the lecture to his history class.

"It's ironic that Canada was fighting oppressive regimes overseas, and at the same time this was happening right here in our own country. It's pretty scathing," said Spencer Holliday.

Campbell teacher Doug Bolander said he invited Cote to speak because it was better than reading from a book.

"There are issues that affect us today and we need to go back and look at the history to truly understand those issues," said Bolander.

It was Cote's first time speaking to a class about his experiences. He said he would do it again if he was asked and added that he could see the effect his story had on the students by the looks on their faces.

"I want to be able to tell the world the truth," said Cote.

## Antagonism sours relations with **First Nations**

[Doug Cuthand, The StarPhoenix](#) (page A11; Forum)

The federal Conservative government has managed to ignore issues and disgust **First Nations**, and there is a growing gap between **aboriginal** leaders and the politicians in Ottawa.

This is sad and unfortunate, when we look at the living conditions on many **First Nations** communities. Somehow, this government has to get over itself and get down to business in tackling **aboriginal** issues. An incident this week is a case in point.

An issue blows up every so often and is resolved quickly after a few heated exchanges. This week we saw the Canadian Forces' training manual make headlines over a reference to some **First Nations** people, followed by a hasty retreat. But in the process, what we witnessed was a relationship between groups with little or no trust.

A new counterinsurgency manual being prepared for the Canadian Forces listed militant Native groups along with the Tamil Tigers, Hezbollah and other radical groups. This comes as no surprise, since the army was deployed during the Oka Crisis and even the Rebellion of 1885 -- the only times in Canada's history that the army was used against its own citizens. The army was brought out during the October Crisis in Quebec, but it was only in the event of an "insurrection" that never happened.

It is sad that Canada's **aboriginal** people are cast in such a light, but that's the reality.

The **Assembly of First Nations** immediately jumped in to state that the CF manual reference was outrageous and could affect the ability of **First Nations** people to travel internationally. Given the paranoid attitude south of the border, any excuse becomes fact when it comes to homeland security. But the offending item was dropped and will not appear in the final draft, according to Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor.

In fairness, the offending item was raised just once in the 135-page manual and only to point out that "the rise of radical Native American organizations, such as the Mohawk Warrior society, can be viewed as insurgencies with specific and limited aims." There was no other mention of **Natives** in the manual, but it was good for a political jab.

The matter turned out to be a tempest in a teapot. It was, however, one more item on a growing list of slights, cutbacks and insults that **First Nations** have received from the federal government.

The slights didn't end there. The Stephen Harper government has refused to issue an apology for the **First Nations** as a part of the compensation for the **residential school** settlement. The government claims that it is not based on legal reasons, so what is its justification?

An editorial in the Calgary Herald, located in the bedrock of Conservative country, questioned Harper's refusal of an apology. Even the United and Anglican churches disagreed. In a news release, the United Church called it "completely unacceptable" and the Anglican press release expressed its "strong disappointment."

All this friction has caused the **AFN** to declare June 29 as the "National Day of Action," with protests planned across the country. In a March 29 letter to the Winnipeg Free Press, **Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice** said he'd take a forensic audit of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs if its members participated in the protest. This threat apparently is across the board and will apply to any federally funded group.

This cuts across the freedom that Canadian citizens have to assemble and exercise their right to freed speech. Since all First Nations, tribal councils and provincial organizations receive funding from the federal government, it will be impossible for us to exercise our freedom of speech without placing some group in jeopardy of an audit or funding cut. Since all **First Nations** and their organizations already conduct audits, this special federal audit amounts to a witch-hunt.

Anyway, June 29 should be an exciting day. Mark it on your calendars and plan to participate.

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It's been a busy week for local politics. The band election at Cumberland house saw Chief Walter Sewap re-elected, Chief Austin Bear was re-elected at Muskoday and Thunderchild elected Dale Awasis as its new chief.

## Legal channels denied **Natives**

[H. FREDDY SWEETGRASS](#) The Ottawa Sun (appeared in 5 other sources) Editorial

In Tuesday's Sun, columnist Geoff Matthews wondered why **Natives** continue to use blockades to protest land claims. Simply, there is no other way. For over a century, indigenous people have tried to settle **land claims** through legal avenues and make the governments of Canada adhere to the promises they made in **treaties** with **First Nations**. Unfortunately, this tact has failed miserably.

Let us start in 1931. In response to numerous land disputes (or as Canadians call them, claims), Canada made it a criminal offence to solicit funds for the purpose of pursuing **treaty rights**. As such, indigenous people were not allowed to hire lawyers to represent them in court, a court no less that pandered to the state. This permitted these disputes to go on for decades, even centuries without resolve, as the courts and federal lawyers simply stalled (as is the case in **Caledonia** and **Deseronto**). Oh, and that legislation in 1931 came only three years after it was legal in Western Canada to sterilize **Indians**. Forgive indigenous people if they are weary of dealing with Canada through legal channels.

So what are indigenous people to do? Matthews suggests "reasonable men and women do not bargain from behind the barrel of a gun or from atop the structure of a barricade. They don't don masks and build fires to make their points. Those are the acts of hoodlums and terrorists." Unfortunately I cannot say that this statement is untrue. But as you might understand, indigenous people are not reasonable men and women. Not anymore.

### GLARING EXAMPLE

Look at their relationship with settler society. In a glaring example of Canada's poor record on "granting" indigenous people equality, it wasn't until 1960 they were permitted to vote in federal elections. More recently, Canada rejected the UN's Declaration affirming indigenous rights, and even worse, Minister **Jim Prentice** refused to apologize for **residential schools**, the vector for ethnocide, nay genocide. He refused to apologize for genocide.

At this point, if Canadians are concerned they "can't go about our business ... can't come and go from our homes, can't take the kids to school, can't visit with neighbours," then indigenous people don't want their support. If you can't recognize that the people creating minor inconveniences for you have suffered more than you will ever know, you deserve to be stuck in a line of cars at a blockade. While your wait is an inconvenience, their wait is an injustice.

The sad fact for indigenous people today is they live in a democracy where only the majority get to influence policymakers and thus decisions. With a population of around

three million, indigenous people simply do not have the votes to make anyone care. Look at the federal and provincial budgets.

#### NEED TO BE REMINDED

Unfortunately for Matthews and those that share his beliefs, there is no other way. Blockades and demonstrations are indeed meant to get Canadians mad, not at indigenous people, but at the government. Ultimately, the blame rests with them for their continued exploitation and oppression of indigenous peoples. Besides, Canadians need to be reminded that this problem exists, otherwise they would forget.

Any man or woman, when faced with murder and theft, is bound to fight back. Do not be surprised when that day arrives. And this time, that fight isn't simply for their land, they are fighting for their right to exist, for their very lives.

-- Sweetgrass is a writer based in Toronto. He is also an Ojibway from Beausoleil **First Nation** on Chimnissing



## Apologies and **residential schools**

[National Post](#) (page A19; Lettters)

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

On a short flight in the Western Arctic, I met an **Inuk** court reporter who told me how much he owed to his education at the **residential school** at Chesterfield Inlet, run, if I remember correctly, by the Roman Catholic Church. He gained not only a knowledge of English but the "tools of his trade"; he enjoyed his work. He volunteered this information; I did not ask him questions.

Jeannie L'Esperance, Ottawa.

## Apologies and **residential schools**

### [National Post](#)

I'm not sure what responsibilities are attached to the position of National Chief of the Assembly for First Nations. I would think anyone in such a role would be farther ahead attempting to address some of the tangible issues affecting Canada's native peoples than waxing on about abstract concepts such as an apology for historical slights. I'm still waiting for Canada's **First Nations** to formally apologize for the Frog Lake Massacre of 1885.

Ian Jones, Mississauga, Ont.