

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



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

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April 10, 2007

Apologies can get to be too much of a good thing

[Barbara Yaffe, Vancouver Sun](#) (page C4; Editorial) (April 7)

An apology can be a complex enterprise, sometimes highly sought after, occasionally spurned.

The latest group seeking one is Canada's **aboriginal** community. It wants a **government apology** to accompany a final redress package for the **residential-school** abuse debacle.

The main value of an apology is in formalizing recognition of a wrong. But too often, the big "sorry" can be gratuitously deployed to get a guilty party off the hook. I've never been big on them myself, believing actions speak louder than words.

Another problem with apologies is their potential to be meaningless, proffered by parties in no position to give them. How much value would there be, for example, in Berlin today offering the British an apology for those relentless bombing raids on London during the Second World War?

The late Pierre Elliott Trudeau refused to apologize for the internment of Japanese people during that same era because he asserted there would be no end of apologies that would then be expected by innumerable aggrieved groups for all manner of past transgressions.

Brian Mulroney's government later did apologize as part of a redress package for the interned Japanese-Canadians.

Possibly, the mother of all transgressions in Canada was the forcible removal, starting in 1874, of **aboriginal** children from home communities to attend remote, church-run **residential schools**, where physical and sexual abuse took place. Many of the churches involved have since apologized, some more than once.

Ottawa has also apologized. In 1998, then-Liberal **Indian affairs minister** Jane Stewart offered an unequivocal "statement of reconciliation."

The statement is posted on the federal justice department's website, which also notes: "The Government of Canada has acknowledged its particular responsibilities for the tragic physical and sexual abuse of **Aboriginal** children in many **residential schools**...The Government issued a Statement of Reconciliation that expressed profound regret to the **Aboriginal** community for its past mistakes and acknowledged the role the Government played in the development and administration of the **residential school** system.

"To those who suffered the tragedy of physical and sexual abuse while attending **residential schools**, the Government of Canada said it is deeply sorry."

News reports from 1998 noted that national chief of the **Assembly of First Nations** "**Phil Fontaine** formally accepted the apology and called it the beginning of a new era."

Yet, bizarrely, knickers are in a twist over a comment last week by **Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice** that the final **settlement agreement**, between the **Assembly of First Nations** and Ottawa, won't include another apology.

That agreement, resulting from negotiations since 2004, will feature nearly \$2 billion in compensation for more than 12,000 **aboriginals**.

Liberal **Indian Affairs** critic **Anita Neville** is apoplectic: "It is shameful that the government will not take this simple but important step to close the **residential schools** legacy."

Labrador Liberal MP Todd Russell huffed: "It is amazing that the Harper government doesn't have the decency or compassion to live up to the promise to issue an apology."

Exactly how many more apologies will be required of Ottawa? Will every government taking office be required to bow and scrape anew on the **residential school** file?

How meaningful anyway are apologies from current governments that would never, ever tolerate sexual or physical abuse in educational institutions?

It's not as though the Harper government is anti-apology. It has issued mea culpas to Chinese head tax payers and Maher Arar, a Canadian wrongly jailed and tortured in Syria.

Many would argue that **aboriginals** as a community are too focused on past wrongs, fostering a mindset of persecution that prevents them from making headway in the future. It is time to turn the page. The past can offer lessons that add to experience and enhance wisdom. But dwelling excessively on historical events ultimately becomes a draining experience.

Today's challenge surely is to ensure that young **aboriginal** people fulfil their potential by maximizing educational opportunities and securing employment, and there's loads to achieve on that front.

Too many are dropping out early. **Schools** on reserves habitually lack resources. Attending **university** often requires a move to a faraway community.

The fixation on apologies is yesterday's endeavour.

Regret, repent and reconciliation

Canadians are far ahead of the government in wanting to heal the wounds of our **residential-school** history, says LORNA DUECK

Globe and Mail (page A13; Comment) (April 6)

[LORNA DUECK](#)

Ironic isn't it, that the federal government's bungling of an apology to the **First Nations** people should take place just prior to Parliament's Easter break. There stood **Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice** with a couple of billion dollars in a negotiated settlement for survivors of **residential schools**, yet all he could say was that no apology would be forthcoming. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet clearly need the inner reflection the Lenten calendar provides to rethink how to deal with our **native people**. Canadians are so far ahead of the government on wanting to heal the wounds of this issue that a national day to gather citizens on Parliament Hill in remorse is probably called for. Invite the country to a national apology and the grounds would fill with thousands who would want to lament the historic policies intended to "take the **Indian** out of the child." Billions of dollars isn't cutting it; it's all lacking heart and we know it.

In seeking to make an authentic apology, picture the Prime Minister inviting **First Nations**, the complicit church and the Queen, since she represents the policy move that took **Indians** from sacred **treaty** partners to wards of the state. Imagine the symbolism.

Instead, we have the rattling of silver coins from the **Indian Affairs Minister** -- \$1.9-billion for the "Common Experience Payment," more funds for the Independent Assessment Program when physical or sexual abuse was involved, \$60-million for a five-year truth and reconciliation process that would involve the whole country in talking and learning about the wrongdoing, \$125-million to renew funding for the **Aboriginal Healing Foundation** to continue programs such as www.wherearethechildren.ca, \$20-million for commemoration activities such as monuments and books, and about \$100-million in legal fees to pay off lawyers working 22 different class-action suits.

But we can't verbalize a national apology? The 1996 Royal Commission on **Aboriginal** Peoples with its 440 recommendations paved the way for this settlement and, two years later, issued an official statement of reconciliation for those who suffered sexual or physical abuse. But it was not an apology.

Consider how this must sound to a woman such as Janie Jamieson, who handles press relations for her Mohawk people at the ongoing **treaty** land dispute at **Caledonia** in Southwestern Ontario. She sees the legacy with **Indian residential schools** this way: Her mother was raised in them and never knew what it was to be loved by family and so ran away to the city early looking for love. She had too many children too young, too fast, and when Janie was 2, her mom committed suicide in despair. Could Ms.

Jamieson's determination in the standoff at **Caledonia** reflect her anger at what's been lost?

Former grand chief Matthew Coon Come, 50, has a little less edge on the pain, but the first white person he saw was the Mountie coming to take him away from his parents and place him in **residential schools**. After **university**, he went on to lead a canoe expedition that shut down a \$7-billion hydroelectric project on Cree land in Quebec.

School attendee Pen Pratt from B.C. was less productive with his pain when he took a court payoff. "It's not like the money will make me happy or make me feel better, but I might as well get something for what those bastards did to me."

How do you apologize to a nation of warriors who, as Gary Merasty, an **aboriginal** MP from Saskatchewan, stated in the House last week, know Canada had the "primary goal to destroy **aboriginal** people, languages, and culture"?

When churches began to make their apologies for how they ran the **residential schools**, native elders received the words, but didn't fully accept them, said Rev. James Scott, counsel with the United Church of Canada. In 1986, when the church first offered its apology, they said they wanted to see the it "walk the talk," he said. "We've been on a journey of growing awareness on the extent of damage to individuals and communities in addition to the specific physical and sexual abuse. As we've become more aware, that deepens our sense of **accountability** . . . and we understand our apologies as only the first step in beginning to walk a different way with **aboriginals**."

That explains why the federal policy is in need of what the churches have learned on this file -- Catholic, United, Anglican churches, all have sold churches, closed programs, and laid off staff to help pay for their **residential schools** sins. In August, Very Rev. Peter Short, then moderator of the United Church, the largest Protestant church in Canada, wrote to **Indian Affairs Minister** Prentice on the need for an apology to be included in this \$2-billion settlement, but to date, Mr. Short says there hasn't even been an acknowledgment of that letter.

This Easter week, the letters from Church leaders have been bumped up to the Prime Minister's desk, with the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada posting his complaint worldwide, saying that "people whose lives have been shattered through no fault of their own are immensely helped by having their sufferings acknowledged and validated and by hearing the words of apology." The story is rich with parallels to lessons of the cross -- guilt, shame, remorse and the bearing of forgiveness to enable new birth in our fallen selves and nation.

[LORNA DUECK](#) hosts Listen Up TV, a weekly newsmagazine on spiritual perspectives in current events, seen on Global TV, Salt and Light TV, CTS and Christian Channel.

Residential schools cash draws closer

Canada's residential schools survivors are closer to finally receiving their long-sought compensation

Macleans.ca

JONATHON GATEHOUSE | April 16, 2007 |

Canada's residential schools survivors are a step closer to finally receiving their long-sought compensation. Last week, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal dismissed a federal government challenge over legal fees that had threatened to derail the historic deal, handing controversial Regina lawyer Tony Merchant a partial victory.

Merchant, who claims to represent as many as 10,000 former students of the church- and state-run native school system, had been seeking \$50 million for his firm's work prior to the class-action settlement. Ottawa balked at the bill, with Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice telling Maclean's that the lawyer would not receive "one red penny" without submitting his accounts to independent auditors. But the Court of Appeal has agreed with a lower court judge, ruling that the verification agreement Ottawa signed with Merchant only covers fees in excess of \$25 million.

Settling now for 50 cents on the dollar may well be a wise investment for the Merchant Law Group. Under its client agreements, the firm stands to reap tens of millions more after the deal kicks in Sept. 20, and tribunals start awarding individual compensation to those who suffered physical and sexual abuse.

So far, 2007 has been a tough year for the Merchants. In January, Matthew, one of the three lawyer sons of Tony and his wife Pana, a Liberal senator, was disbarred by the Law Society of Alberta for threatening clients and deliberately misleading the court. The decision is under appeal. In February, a B.C. court awarded a former Merchant client \$300,000, ruling the firm had improperly taken a huge slice of an accident settlement, and behaved in a "reprehensible" manner. This week, Sally Merchant, the clan matriarch, died at 88.

Tories launch their slings and arrows

[Doug Cuthand, The Leader-Post](#) (page B1) (April 9)

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 the business of 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 counter-insurgency manual being prepared for the Canadian Forces listed militant **aboriginal** 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", which 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 Canadian Forces 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 **aboriginals** 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 **First Nations** have received from the federal government.

The slights didn't end there. The Stephen Harper government has refused to issue an apology to 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 media release, the United Church called it "completely unacceptable" and the Anglican media 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 order 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 rights that Canadians have to assemble and to speak freely. 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.

- Cuthand is a Saskatoon-based writer.

Whose pocket?

[Richard Durec, Calgary Herald](#) (page A11) (April 8)

Settlement - Re: "Native **schools** settlement reached," March 24.

The federal government has completed an agreement to compensate **natives** forced into **residential schools**. They will receive a base amount and any who were subject to sexual abuse will be eligible for further compensation.

Conspicuously absent from the article was any information on financial contributions to this program made by the organizations that ran these **schools** and thus employed the perpetrators of this sexual abuse.

Are we to assume that the taxpayers are on the hook for the entire compensation program? Could this be why there was no money available in the last budget for tax cuts?

Richard Durec, Calgary

Let's talk about it

Counsellors discuss **residential schools** in Tuktoyaktuk

[Philippe Morin Northern News Services Tuktoyaktuk](#) (April 9)

People who suffered abuse in **residential schools** can be affected for life, said counsellor Terry Garchinski.

And while some people might feel embarrassed to discuss their experiences there - or any resulting addictions or bad behavior, stemming from unresolved feelings of anger or shame - Garchinski said it's important to talk about it.

"It's a huge impact," he said, describing the school's effects on traditional communities.

"It affects both the people who went, and also future generations." From March 12 to 16, Garchinski and Yellowknife facilitator George Tuccaro helped former **residential school** wards speak out in a series of workshops held in Tuktoyaktuk.

The two counsellors spoke with many elders about addictions, feelings, and the importance of avoiding self-destructive behavior. "I teach each person they are their own healer," Tuccaro said.

And, since he is also a country singer, Tuccaro said he also sang a few songs between sessions, which lightened the mood.

"The humour helps, and it helps to balance the heaviness," said Garchinski.

The workshop was also made possible thanks to the **Inuvialuit** Development Corporation's **residential school** coordinator, Sarah Krengnektak, and Catholic Sister Fay Trombley, who offered space in the community's Mission House.

Kids are the only experts on child-rearing

Winnipeg Free Press (page A19)

[Tom Oleson](#)

[Tom Oleson](#) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the 18th century French philosopher and one of the early and great proponents of public education and a champion of domestic life, had five children by his mistress, Therese le Vasseur, a barmaid in the Parisian inn where he lived when he was writing the seminal works that would change the way in which the world thought about itself.

All five children were dropped off at orphanages immediately after birth, their care, education and maintenance left to the state. Neither parent, as far as is known, ever saw them again. And as every parent knows, this practice has a certain appeal to it.

No matter how much you may secretly, in your heart-of-hearts, love them, the idea of dropping your kids off at a state-run institution as soon as they are born is tempting. You've already had by then the only real pleasure you're ever going to get out of the process -- everything else, all that is still to come in the actual birth and raising of the children, is going to be heartache, sorrow and hugely expensive.

Rousseau's critics have used his somewhat careless regard for his children as evidence of a cavalier attitude towards his personal responsibilities, an inconsistency between his thought and his action. But according to more modern thinkers, he may simply have been far further ahead of his time than even his contemporaries thought. Parents, it seems, are generally unfit to raise the children they too easily have -- the state and its institutions are better and more competent care-givers.

Books and movies and television, someone once noticed, are always about the fun of making love and hardly ever about the business of having children or the travails of raising them. Real life, however, is exactly the opposite, which is why most of us tend to prefer the book, the film or the TV version of it all.

Children can be such a burden, such a worry, a responsibility from which there is no escape. They are the "consequences" threatened in the old caution against sex -- that the position is ridiculous, the pleasure is fleeting and the consequences disastrous -- but we keep producing them, eternal proof that people don't learn from their parents' or even from their own mistakes.

Modern child-rearing philosophies, however, offer parents a Rouseauvian solution to this dilemma. A new Canadian report -- Early Years Study 2: Putting Science Into Action -- basically concludes that most people are fundamentally unfit to look after their children. Rousseau had it right, after all -- we should, for the sake of the kids and the sake of society, just drop them off at the local day care and pick them up 18 years later after they have been properly institutionalized.

Being raised by their own parents leaves children open to all kinds of problems, ranging from juvenile diabetes to juvenile delinquency. Bad eating habits, poor school performance, anti-social, even sociopathic behaviour, criminal behaviour and children poking each other with sharp sticks can all be traced back to bad parental influences.

According to Fraser Mustard, a "child development expert" at York University and one of the report's authors, most of us are not very good at being parents. Almost 20 per cent of us, in fact, are "godawful" in that role, and an even larger percentage are bad influences on the "brain development" of our unfortunate spawn.

He does not mention whether his own parents fell under the godawful or just plain bad categories -- although that might put his report into perspective. Perhaps they were among those rare specimens of enlightened parents who somehow managed to cope with raising kids without the government intervention that the report advocates. In which case the rest of us and our godless, ill-behaved children can only wistfully sigh "Lucky Mr. Mustard" and hope for the government to come and take our kids away.

It seems to me that there was a time when, although they were usually amateurs, actual parents -- sometimes called Mom and Dad -- were considered to be the real "child development experts" and somehow, before social scientists were invented, before people went to university to become professional "child development experts," the world got along pretty well.

We have tried institutionalizing children before in experiments to socialize them better but they never worked very well. Can you say "**residential schools**?" Can you say "British public schools?" Can you say "sexual abuse, sadism and social dysfunction?"

The true child development experts are not social scientists who wouldn't recognize a real kid if he kicked them. Not even goodhearted, well-intentioned parents, well accustomed to being kicked as they may be, are true child-development experts. The real experts are the children themselves, who instinctively know where they should be -- with their mother, or even their father, but preferably both. They understand that, most of the time, even poor parents are better for kids than institutions. G.K. Chesterton, who was almost always right about human nature, once wrote that to say "my country, right or wrong" is like saying "my mother, drunk or sober," but in this case he got it wrong. "My mother, drunk or sober" is the cry of the institutionalized child, whether she is in day care or a **residential school**, because no child ever prayed for "my bureaucrat, right or wrong, my worker drunk or sober."

Kids always know where they belong. It's parents and social scientists who just don't seem to get it.

She beat the odds

Winnipeg Free Press (page A11) (April 9)

[Colleen Simard](#)

[Colleen Simard](#) At 15, Vanessa Kozak dropped out of high school. Now 18, the soft-spoken Cree explained over coffee that she'd been a good student. But things changed. She started getting into trouble at home and at school.

"At first it was OK," says Kozak. "Labels **aboriginal** people are given; sooner or later you start to believe it."

Kozak grew up in Winnipeg knowing next to nothing about her **aboriginal** culture. Her mom is from South Indian Lake, but Kozak has never been to the northern Manitoba reserve. Kozak's dad isn't **aboriginal**. After her parents' divorce several years ago, she stayed with him.

Kozak lives on her own now, with a roommate. She could have remained a statistic among the high numbers of **aboriginal** youth who drop out of school both on and off reserve, but she didn't.

Canada's 2001 census says 48 per cent of Winnipeg's **aboriginal** population hasn't finished high school; provincewide it's 56 per cent compared to 38 per cent for non-**aboriginal** Manitobans.

Kozak has beaten the odds. She'll be graduating in June. There are many lessons to be learned from this young girl and her experiences.

Kozak had enough support to go back to school after six months. She says the school she attends now -- Argyle Alternative School -- feels like home. And it's true. On a visit there, I instantly noticed the warm atmosphere in this little school near the Disraeli Bridge.

Argyle's **aboriginal** program introduced Kozak to the age-old culture of her people. It nurtured her pride and identity. She told me about the latest project -- a medicine wheel collage the students are putting together. They're also learning drumming and singing.

Kozak has blossomed. She's a leader and a role model.

She's involved with the school's leadership committee, a group that links students and staff. She's doing a job internship with Assiniboine Credit Union, and is part of an MTS mentoring program. She makes time to be a board member at Urban Shaman, a local **aboriginal** art gallery. That's not all.

Kozak is a source of pride; not just for her family but for everyone who works at the school every day. Career **education** co-ordinator Maria Poworoznik saw a quiet determination in her and knew she was an ideal candidate for a global leadership program.

Kozak was nominated to represent her school, native community and country at Global Youth Leaders Conferences (GYLC) in either Europe or the United States this summer. GYLC participants are chosen on their outstanding academic and leadership skills. She'll learn more about diplomacy, international law, human rights, peace, economics and the role of the United Nations.

Whether she goes to the European or North American conference site depends on the success of her fundraising efforts.

"She wants to make a difference in her **aboriginal** community," says Poworoznik. "Vanessa, in particular, deserves this."

Why do **aboriginal** kids drop out of high school at such high rates? Maybe one way to attack the problem is to look at what makes **aboriginal** kids succeed.

Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in **Aboriginal** Schooling is an extensive report released last month. It profiled 10 outstanding **schools** in **aboriginal education**.

Some of its recommendations echo the difference in Kozak's life.

We need to teach **aboriginal** languages to kids throughout their **education**. We need more culturally relevant materials in their curricula. Strengthen the supply of quality staff and train more **aboriginal** staff from the community.

Schools need strong leadership. They need strong connections within their community, and increased parent involvement. It's no easy task, considering the mistrust inherited from the **residential school** era.

Increase assessments on **aboriginal** students and programs so we can see what works and what doesn't. **Indian Affairs** partially funded this report, so I'm sure they'd agree **aboriginal education** needs help.

We've got to invest time, training, and yes, money to make success a reality. Not just for **aboriginal** people, but for everyone. After all, don't we want more leaders like Vanessa Kozak in our communities?