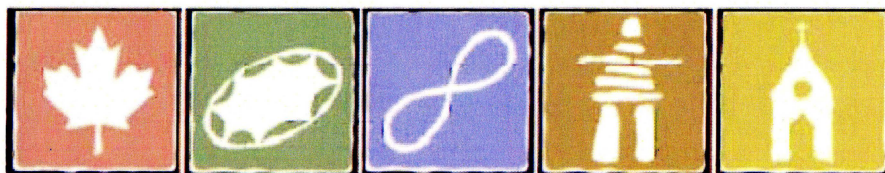


**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



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

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Revealing new layers of dark history

Residential-school victims will gain access to stories of alleged abusers

[BILL CURRY](#)

The painful, personal stories of Canada's **residential schools** will soon include the perspective of the alleged abusers, as teachers' private journals and thousands of other documents held by churches are gathered and released for the first time. The massive exercise is part of a five-year project to document one of the darkest chapters in Canadian history.

Called a **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**, the \$60-million project is a key, but mostly overlooked, aspect of Ottawa's **residential-schools agreement**. The **\$1.9-billion settlement** was officially approved by the courts last month.

The project bears the same name as the six-year commission led by former Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa, where people of all races shared searing personal stories of violence and racism during the country's apartheid past.

The purpose of Canada's exercise is to give former students a formal opportunity to tell their stories and to create a final report that will be Canada's official historical record of the period.

But while the report will focus on the broad perspective, many natives will also want to access the papers and photos to learn about their own experiences and family history, said Phil Fontaine, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, himself a victim of **residential-school abuse**.

Seeing the meticulous church records will be an important new part of the story, he said.

"We will learn what transpired on a daily basis -- because the officials kept daily journals -- and come to understand how they viewed these **schools**, the children that they were responsible for," Mr. Fontaine said. "This is an important missing piece at the moment. Because all we've heard is the stories of the survivors, and this is just now coming out. But we haven't heard from the churches."

Amid widespread claims by former students of physical and sexual abuse, the process presents the possibility that victims could look up the diaries of their abusers.

A **statement of principles** in the terms of reference states that the commission must "do no harm" and that all involvement must be voluntary, but the process is sure to be difficult for many who take part.

Mr. Fontaine conceded that the process will be painful at times, but he said it will ultimately help natives move on and allow all Canadians to understand the impact **residential schools** had on native society.

"We have to be prepared to expose the ugly truth of the **residential-schools** experience because that's part of the **healing and reconciliation** that has to occur. We know that it's been traumatic for survivors . . . this is not easy because we're dealing with painful experiences. But it's all very important. This is not about causing further harm to individuals. It's really about making things better and fixing things and making sure people understand this experience in a way that will enable us to turn the page."

Three commissioners will be named to hear from former students and teachers and comb through the historical records currently archived by churches and governments.

The records include thousands of photographs, student profiles, reports by visiting church officials and teachers' personal journals.

Residential schools were originally an extension of the missionary work of European religious settlers who sought to convert aboriginals to Christianity. **The federal government** became involved in joint ventures with the churches in 1874 and took over the **schools** completely in 1969. The last residential school closed in 1996.

While specific lawsuits dealing with sexual and physical abuse continue, the **\$1.9-billion settlement** recognizes that all students suffered through loss of **culture and language** and by being forcibly removed from their homes to live at the **schools**.

Although the commission will have access to any records it wishes, meetings are under way to determine the level of access extended to individual survivors.

Public release of the records will be subject to the federal access-to-information and privacy laws, meaning that individuals named in the documents will likely have to be consulted. Library and Archives Canada will be closely involved in the effort, but the undertaking is clearly daunting for those in charge of the records.

Nancy Hurn, the national archivist for the Anglican Church, manages the church's records with the help of one part-time assistant.

The church is willing to share whatever is needed, she said, but she is concerned about meeting the volume of requests that are likely to flood her desk. The commission's terms of reference says a report on "historic findings and recommendations" must be produced within the first two years.

"I think that is the one thing in the **agreement** that gives me concern. One is the timing and the other is how the [access and privacy] legislation is going to be applied," she said. "We're doing everything we can to make them available."

Harper Poised For Cabinet Shuffle

Possibly This Week

Norma Greenaway, CanWest News Service

OTTAWA - As 2007 dawns, there is virtually no doubt Prime Minister Stephen Harper is poised to shake up his Cabinet, possibly as early as this week.

There also is virtually no doubt Ottawa's worst kept secret of recent weeks will be confirmed.

Barring a spectacular change of heart on Mr. Harper's part, embattled Rona Ambrose will get the hook as environment minister, making way for a new minister who will be charged with selling a retooled Conservative environmental plan in time for the next election.

Given the muscle-flexing by all parties in the minority Conservative Parliament, betting is fierce 2007 will be an election year. The only serious debate revolves around whether it will be sooner or later in the year.

In the meantime, Cabinet ministers have been advised to stay close to their phones and Black Berries. One news report quoted Labour Minister Jean- Pierre Blackburn as saying ministers were told to be readily available starting today.

A shuffle early this month would give Cabinet ministers time to get a handle on their new portfolios before MPs return to the Commons on Jan. 29.

Most speculation about Ms. Ambrose's replacement involves either **Jim Prentice**, another Alberta minister who has been quietly and competently handling the key Cabinet operations committee and the challenging Indian Affairs portfolio, and Industry Minister Maxime Bernier, a smart and politically savvy Quebecer whom Mr. Harper trusts.

Among other considerations, Mr. Harper must decide who would have the best shot at being seen as credible on the file by Quebecers, where skepticism over the Conservatives' environmental policies is rampant.

Also top of mind is the challenge posed by Liberal leader Stephane Dion, whose surprise victory at the Montreal convention after making sustainable environmental development a centerpiece of his campaign, left no doubt green politics is good politics.

The big unknown is how big the Cabinet shuffle could be.

Will Mr. Harper keep it small in the expectation he will have another change to reshape the body before an election?

Or will he use it as a chance to dramatically reshape the first Cabinet he unveiled 11 months ago, thereby relaunching his government with a string of promotions and demotions?

If he goes big, someone like Liberal turncoat David Emerson, who is not expected to seek reelection in Vancouver, could be cast aside as international trade minister in favour of adding someone who will be around.

Also, a couple of respected and hardworking Conservatives left out of the first cabinet could finally get the nod, including B.C. MP James Moore and Calgary MP Diane Ablonczy.

Ms. Ambrose, widely seen as the fall girl for Mr. Harper's tin ear on the environment, is unlikely to be punted to the backbenches unless the Prime Minister has plans to offset the move by promoting another woman or two.

A multilingual former Alberta bureaucrat who specialized in intergovernmental affairs, Ms. Ambrose is someone who could slip easily into other less intense portfolios.

Elsewhere, questions circulate around the heads of Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Mac-Kay, Health Minister Tony Clement and Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn.

Also, Ontario MP Peter Van Loan may not be a permanent fixture in the Cabinet.

Mr. Van Loan was quickly named in late November to replace Michael Chong after his surprise decision to quit as intergovernmental affairs minister over Mr. Harper's resolution declaring the Quebecois a nation.

By contrast, there appear to be no question marks over the heads of Finance Minister James Flaherty, who is preparing a budget for as early as February, Treasury Board President James Baird or Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day.