

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada  
Media Clips**



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

**Wednesday, November 29, 2006 ♦ mercredi, 29 novembre 2006**

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November 29, 2006

## **Motion Seen not to Affect Native Status : Aboriginal Recognition Already Enshrined in the Constitution, Prentice Says**

*Globe and Mail*

By : Bill Curry

There is no need for the federal government to further recognize aboriginal nations following Monday's Commons vote on the Quebecois, Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice says.

"I think Section 35 of the Constitution really deals with the specific position of aboriginal rights and first nations in Canada. I deal with 630 first nations on a daily basis and I continue to do so," he said yesterday after he appeared before the Commons aboriginal affairs committee. "I don't think there's anything in the motion that the House adopted [Monday] that in any way changes the status or the position or the rights of first nations in Canada," he said.

Native leaders have expressed concern that the Quebecois nation is being recognized but not aboriginal nations. Three of the four aboriginal Liberal MPs -- Tina Keeper, Gary Merasty and Nancy Karetak-Lindell -- did not vote for the Quebec motion.

Ms. Keeper said she felt the debate was rushed and objected to a discussion about founding nations that does not include first nations.

"To speak about the issue without speaking of first nations is irresponsible in my view," she said.

During his committee appearance, Mr. Prentice also said the federal cabinet is preparing a new approach to help natives who make the transition from rural reserves to urban centres.

Known as the urban aboriginal strategy, the four-year, \$50-million program introduced by the Liberals is set to expire in March.

Mr. Prentice told MPs that he is impressed with the program's results so far and suggested he is pushing his cabinet colleagues to support a similar approach.

He said he is also in "extensive discussions" with Heritage Minister Bev Oda on the subject of friendship centres, which fall under her department.

Friendship centres are normally housed in downtown locations and provide services such as computer access, job-hunting skills and cultural connections to all aboriginals, regardless of whether they are status Indians. The centres have long complained of inadequate funding.

On the issue of the residential schools agreement reached in April, Mr. Prentice said the government has processed 9,308 of the 12,685 applications it has received for fast-track payments. The \$1.9-billion deal called for former students who are sick or over 65 to receive immediate payments of \$8,000. He said about 1,200 applications have been rejected because they did not meet the criteria.

The fast-track payments to date total \$74.5-million.

## Lies Straight out of History

*The Winnipeg Sun*

By : Robert Marshall

First Nations people are never far from the news. Land claims. Residential schools. Abhorrent living conditions saw the hopeless of Davis Inlet pack up everything a few years ago. Tainted, unsafe drinking water is the catalyst behind thoughts of a permanent move for Kashechewan, a community displaced three times in the last 18 months. Garden Hill, in Manitoba, has similar problems. Aboriginal homes without flush toilets and hot water are too common. Negativity abounds with their over-representation in prison populations, suicide rates and poverty.

Despite the billions spent in the name of Aboriginal People, they remain a largely ignored population. Maybe history can tell us why.

Last weekend I flipped through an old set of encyclopedias published almost a century ago. The Book of Knowledge, with an introduction by a principal of McGill University, lays out in blunt terms the societal thinking of that day. Likely those pages influenced attitudes that left the aboriginal population feeling unwelcome in their own land, set up barriers to a fit survival, and gave rationale to the mainstream who witnessed the destruction of a culture.

The section, Indians in Canada, starts with a simple, tacit acknowledgement that the "first attempts to civilize Indians were not kindly received," with many of the Jesuits attempting to Christianize them, tortured and put to death. But as an early 20th century reader might expect, "good" prevailed and it was happily reported that "most of the formerly pagan Indians have joined one or the other of the Christian denominations."

The books tell that most of the turn-of-the-century Indians lived on reservations gifted to them by the Canadian government. That in return for the rest of Canada. Although they were allowed to roam and hunt at will, most reservations encourage them to "follow a civilized mode of life." Government supervision through white Indian-agents who were a big help ensuring Indians "receive an annual grant of money, provisions, blankets and seed-grain." And not a swindler among them.

Continuing on, the impressionable young reader learned that "the Indians in Canada today are a quiet and peaceable, law-abiding people. Like most ignorant races, however, they are easily stirred up, and they sometimes talk unreasonably about their rights and privileges, and about the freedom they have lost."

Problems persisted with their unsystematic work ethic and to their peril the writers wrote that "(Indians) naturally despise rules and dislike hard or continuous physical

effort." But the early 1900s brought advancement "under the forces of civilization," and 1912 was a year to brag about with the shipping of over 11,000 Indian children to industrial schools. And that white education opened up opportunities that included jobs such as fruit picking, fishing or even working in a canning factory.

The bragging though was tempered with grim predictions and the concluding paragraph states, "disease, because of the unsanitary conditions of their dwellings, will gradually diminish them. They will become absorbed in other races. In time the Canadian Indian will vanish from the earth."

Predicted extinction a hundred years ago. Maybe that's why they became an ignored society.

Canada's progress was quick and largely positive for most of the 20th century. Not so for Canada's First Nations. The gap between Aboriginal People and mainstream Canada must be narrowed. We have to do better and we must offer more than political bluster.

Are we up for the challenge of real and meaningful change that involves more than just throwing around dollars?

## Poor Education Keeps Natives Jobless

*The Edmonton Journal*

By : Larry Johnsrude

EDMONTON - Many aboriginal people are missing out on record-high employment across Canada because they lack education, says the Canada West Foundation.

In a paper for the Calgary-based research group, Ben Brunnen says attempts by aboriginal communities to create jobs are frustrated by lack of education and other resources.

"Many aboriginal rural and remote communities in Canada are struggling to create employment opportunities for their members, but a lack of physical infrastructure to access markets, the inability to secure venture capital for economic development and an inadequate level of human capital to participate fully in the economy are all hindrances to success," says Brunnen, a former policy analyst for the foundation.

"Moreover, lower levels of aboriginal human capital participation can be partially explained by the fact that many aboriginal communities do not have access to quality education programs, and, of those that do, finding ways to keep the aboriginal youth interested in school can be difficult."

His paper is part of a package on aboriginal issues being distributed on behalf of the Canada West Foundation. He says nearly half of aboriginal Canadians don't have a high school diploma. As a result, the unemployment rate among aboriginal people is at 20 per cent -- three times the national average.

"Let's put that into context: the last time Canada experienced unemployment rates this high was in the 1930s," he writes. "It's time for a change."

He says investment in human capital can be up to three times as important to a country's economic growth over the long run as investment in physical capital.

"How can this be accomplished? Education service providers need to work with the student's support networks to convince aboriginal youth of the value of staying in school."

## Auditors Give Treaty Process an Easy Ride

*Times Colonist*

By : Les Leyne

Considering the enormous amount of time and money invested compared to the tiny measure of accomplishment, the governments of B.C. and Canada got off easy in two audits released yesterday.

B.C. acting Auditor General Arn Van Iersel and his federal counterpart Sheila Fraser conducted matching audits of the treaty process in B.C.

Both have a lot of clout to throw around when it comes to examining government spending. And Fraser in particular can blow a mean whistle when she sees taxpayers' money being wasted.

But their reports -- one on B.C.'s involvement and one on the much larger federal commitment -- were mild affairs.

There aren't many government enterprises that can spend hundreds of millions of dollars over 14 years to little effect and get away with only mild admonitions from the watchdogs about the process they're using.

Here's the situation they were looking at: The two governments and the First Nations Summit created a treaty process 14 years ago. The goal was to settle all claims by the year 2000. But almost \$1 billion later, as 2006 winds down, there is precisely one yet-to-beratified treaty with a little Prince George band.

There are two others nearing final agreement, but the majority of talks are stalled and most bands involved are years away from agreeing with the governments about anything.

And 40 per cent of the eligible B.C.

First Nations aren't even participating in the process.

The verdict on that sad state? "Limited results" arising from "differing views" add up to the view "things are not working as well as expected." And there's a muted warning that progress will continue to be difficult.

Why are the auditors so circumspect and muted in their accounts? Because the only other route to the goal of rectifying the historic wrong is through the courts, and that's a trip no cost-benefit-conscious auditor would ever hint at preferring.



Both auditors express anxiety that the treaty process is so moribund that court decisions on native claims "may make litigation a more attractive option than negotiation." But litigation is just as expensive, frustrating and time-consuming and has much more risk attached, as no one knows how the judgments will go.

Also, even if First Nations win those cases and get clear title to huge tracts of B.C. returned to them, no judge can create the relationships needed to cement their claims and make them work in the 21st century.

Negotiation is the only way.

Both auditors appear to recognize that. So you can almost picture them throwing up their hands after looking at the treaty process.

It's a ridiculously slow, expensive trip, but as far as value-for-money is concerned, it's better than rolling the dice in court.

There's also an intriguing analysis of the B.C. Liberals' new relationship with aboriginal people.

That formal undertaking to regard each other on a government-to-government basis has been universally hailed since it was hatched 18 months ago.

But Van Iersel wonders exactly how it fits with the treaty process and even sees elements of it as a barrier.

"The province has not yet determined how the treaty process can be supported and complemented by this broader range of options. Until the province clarifies the link between its new relationship and treaty negotiation policies, some First Nations are taking a 'wait-and-see' attitude. This is contributing to the slow pace of negotiations." Even before that course change, B.C. was busy signing interim measures agreements.

Pushed by the courts, it was and is doing forest management deals, oil and gas consultations and park co-management arrangements.

Now the new relationship is in vogue, backed by \$100 million in development money. And flowing from the new attitude are commitments like this week's promise to spend millions more on closing the health gaps natives endure.

First Nations are achieving enough goals outside the treaty process that there's no urgency to getting into it, say the reports.

In other words, there are a lot of carrots on the table, but nothing in the way of sticks. (Not that they'd work, either.) Just So You Know: If it comes down to a choice of

furthering good relationships with First Nations or playing hardball to get deals done, the Liberals will opt for the first outcome.

The formal response from the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation dismisses the concerns about the new relationship.

And it sidesteps the lack of progress by saying "our achievements in moving relations forward ... should not be solely defined by participation in the treaty process or in the signing of a final agreement. Treaties are important milestones ... but they are not the whole story."

## Tony Blair Condemns Britain's Role in Slave Trade but Offers no Apology or Compensation

*The Whitehorse Star*

Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned the African slave trade and expressed deep sorrow for Britain's role - but stopped short Monday of offering an apology or compensation for the descendants of those victimized by it.

Activists are putting pressuring on Britain to offer an apology - and reparations - for its role in slavery before it marks the 200th anniversary of the law that banned the country's participation in the Atlantic slave trade.

Blair wrote in an article in the New Nation newspaper it is right to recognize the active role Britain, its ports and its industry once played in the trafficking of human beings.

"I believe the bicentenary offers us a chance not just to say how profoundly shameful the slave trade was - how we condemn its existence utterly and praise those who fought for its abolition - but also to express our deep sorrow that it ever happened, that it ever could have happened," Blair wrote in the black community newspaper.

Race issues continue to afflict multicultural Britain, with periodic outbursts - such as riots in the central city Birmingham last year - laying bare smouldering tension stemming from inequities in education and the workplace. Arguing slavery's legacy continues to affect race relations, activists are demanding a formal apology from the government as a step toward healing old wounds.

Activists have criticized Blair's statement, arguing his careful language reflects the government's fear of paying out huge reparations for wrongs committed hundreds of years ago. They argue those who benefitted from the slave trade should admit their role - and pay for it.

"It is no longer justified to ignore this question," said Esther Stanford, vice-chair of the pan-African Reparations Coalition in Europe.

"Those who do so are complicit in the genocide and covering up of the crimes against African people and her descendants worldwide."

Other countries and institutions have also recently examined their role in the slave trade.

France launched efforts to heal lingering wounds linked to its colonial legacy, holding its first annual commemoration of victims of the slave trade earlier this year.

The Church of England voted this year to apologize for its role in the slave trade, while in the United States, banking giant JP Morgan Chase also publicly apologized after disclosing between 1831 and 1865 two of its predecessor banks accepted 13,000 slaves as collateral on loans and took ownership of hundreds of them when plantation owners defaulted.

Activists said the slave trade was so odious - and left such a lasting legacy of discrimination and racism - that governments must compensate the descendants of those who suffered in Africa, the Caribbean or Asia. Organizations promoting such compensation argue help could be funnelled to African governments, for example - rather than offering direct compensation payments to individuals.