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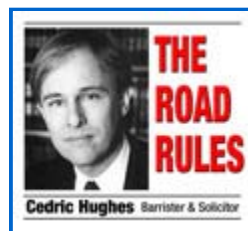
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# Survivors hurt

## 'Shell game' with Indian residential settlement money

**Paul J. Henderson, with files from Elizabeth Thompson, The Times; Montreal Gazette**

Published: Friday, November 16, 2007

One local Indian residential school survivor is "angry and troubled" about reports the federal government has been performing a "shell game" by quietly dipping into the Indian Residential School Settlement Trust to fund other government programs.

The Conservatives redirected \$82.6 million from the settlement funds to pay for cost overruns in its summer jobs program, according to a story in the Montreal Gazette.

Government officials could not say how this would affect their ability to administer cheques to the thousands of survivors who have applied for compensation, nor why the money was taken from the settlement funds when the government declared a \$14.2 billion surplus.

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"I can't begin to tell you how much this news will hurt survivors of residential schools," said Grand Chief Clarence Pennier of the Sto:lo Tribal Council, himself a residential school survivor. "They had to fight for decades for the modest compensation payments they will get for all the years of abuse and loneliness they endured in those schools. This move on government's part is both a disgrace and an insult."

Pennier called upon Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Chuck Strahl to explain why government may be taking money from residential school survivors to pay for "mismanagement of programs elsewhere."

A representative for Strahl said he would be issuing a statement after the Times went to press.

Details of the financial transactions involving the trust are outlined in the government's Supplementary Estimates, which were tabled in the House of Commons the same day Finance Minister Jim Flaherty unveiled a budget update that provided for wide-ranging tax cuts, including a cut of one percentage point in the GST.

"This yet again shows a complete lack of respect to residential school survivors," said Liberal Indian Affairs critic Anita Neville, in a press release issued Nov. 15.

"The Minister must be prepared to answer to the survivors who have already gone through enough, it is time for this government to stop playing politics with peoples lives."

According to Neville, no more than one in eight of the survivors who had applied for compensation by Sept. 19 have yet received cheques.

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