

**Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada
Media Clips**



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

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AFN urges awareness of Res Schools deal

Grassroots News
Len Kruzenga

The Assembly of First Nations is urging frontline workers working on reserves and native communities to ensure that survivors of Indian residential schools students are made aware that an “opt-out” period, which will commence if the new Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement is approved by courts, is “not a vote on the deal.”

John Phillips, who helped the AFN negotiate the proposed settlement agreement with government and churches, said students who have no objections to the agreement “don’t have to say anything,” but those who want to have no part in it must tell the government about their decision in writing.

“No one will be forced to take the deal. If you opt out, you can litigate,” Mr. Phillips told workers based in the eastern region who attended an AFN conference on the agreement late last November.

However he explained that those who opt out would not be able to access the Common Experience Payment (CEP) and the Individual Assessment Process (IAP) provided by the agreement. The CEP provides former students a compensation of \$10,000 for the first year of attendance in residential schools and \$3,000 for each additional year. AFN negotiators estimate that the average stay of students in residential schools was five to six years, which means claimants will get anywhere between \$24,000 to \$25,000 in CEP. However, acceptance of the CEP releases the government and churches from any further court action but allows students who have suffered sexual, physical and psychological abuse to follow the IAP to claim compensation. The IAP replaces the current alternative dispute resolution process.

The “opt-out” period, which will last five months, is a court requirement for class action suits. If 5,000 out of an estimated 80,000 residential schools students opt out of the agreement, “the deal falls, unless government decides otherwise,” said Mr. Phillips, who also clarified that the agreement does not cover former students who attended day schools.

He said that with 12,500 residential schools-related cases in courts, the AFN estimates that the last trial could end in 2053.

AFN chief Phil Fontaine, has often described the agreement as “a complex agreement struck by diverse interests” but has maintained that AFN views the deal as “fair, just and comprehensive” and that it would “enable us to turn the page of our tragic history.”

The National Chief also urged people not to dwell on how much lawyers are going to benefit from the agreement. "There is a feeling that lawyers are getting rich off our backs. But there are so many good lawyers who have invested in this process to protect our interests and many did important work for years without receiving a single penny because many of the survivors are poor," he said. "Whatever has been allocated (for lawyers) is reasonable and fair."

Under the agreement, the federal government will pay \$40 million in legal fees to a national consortium of 19 law firms after the settlement is approved, and a further \$40 million to Saskatchewan's Merchant Law Group subject to the verification of claimants. Mr. Fontaine said that the amount represents less than 3 per cent of the agreement, which has an estimated value of \$4.5 billion.

In several media reports, Gina Wilson, senior director general of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, says the government estimated the nine courts would make their ruling by December.

Ms. Wilson, who was one of the speakers at the conference, said the government has so far received 12,598 applications for the advanced CEP, which has been provided to students ages 65 and older. She added that government agencies dealing with the schools agreement are trying to address the problem of missing records of former students, which has been a concern raised repeatedly during hearings conducted by courts across Canada.

Ms. Wilson also said that once court agreement is reached, the first \$2 million of the \$60 million budgeted for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would be released.

Anglican clarification

Globe and Mail

Nancy J Hurn

I am happy to see that you have recognized the importance of the truth and reconciliation process to the former students of Canada's residential schools. Your article *Revealing New Layers Of Dark History* (Jan. 2) has generated a number of inquiries about the Anglican Church of Canada's residential school records. However, while the church's General Synod Archives holds the school administration records created by the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, the entity that ran the schools, we do not hold the student records. It is also important to clarify that the General Synod Archives has provided open access to our records, especially since the apology was made by Archbishop Michael Peers on behalf of the Anglican Church in 1993.

Prentice stays put Premier pleased federal cabinet shuffle leaves Indian Affairs minister in place

**Northern News Services
Jason Unrau**

Rumours Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice would be moved to the federal environment portfolio were put to rest last Thursday after Prime Minister Stephen Harper shuffled his cabinet.

NWT Premier Joe Handley expressed some relief that Prentice would remain minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

"We've got too many outstanding issues we've made progress on (and) I wasn't looking forward to doing an orientation (on the issues) with a new minister," said the premier.

So does this bode well for getting a revenue sharing and devolution deal done by the end of the 15th Legislative Assembly?

"We made a major step along with aboriginal leaders, who agreed we should work towards an agreement-in-principle (on devolution and revenue sharing) by the end of March," said Handley, adding he hoped to meet with Prentice next month.

Federal Minister of the Environment Rona Ambrose, who had been chastized by environmentalists and the opposition for inaction on climate change, got the hook from her post.

Ambrose has been replaced by Ottawa West-Nepean MP John Baird.

"I don't know how much (Baird) knows the North," said Handley of the new environment minister. "I'd certainly like to see him come up here to learn about, brief him about the North as we're certainly seeing the impacts of climate change in advance of the rest of the country."

Handley added he would like to see the new minister "put some teeth" into the Conservative government's Clean Air Act. Introduced to Parliament by Ambrose in October, the act would commit the government to achieving between 45 and 65 per cent reduction of 2003 greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.