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Apologies aren't enough

Group calls for justice, land claim settlements

Posted By **BY ANGELA SCAPPATURA, THE SUDBURY STAR**

Posted 1 day ago

Indigenous and non-indigenous people gathered at Victoria Park to assert their support for the struggles of aboriginals in Canada on Saturday.

Heavy rain did not prevent more than a dozen people from attending the day-long event, which included a drumming workshop, personal stories and musical performances.

The event was organized by Sudbury Against War and Occupation and was designed to raise awareness of aboriginal issues.

Gary Kinsman is a member of Sudbury Against War and Occupation and said the inaugural event displays solidarity between both indigenous and non-indigenous people.

"I think it's important

because what we're showing is that the government's apology around residential schools was not enough," he said while standing beneath a tarp protecting a barbeque and food from the rain.

"The government policies around indigenous people are, in general, pretty bad."

Many of the day's events highlighted the group's concern surrounding First Nations land claims. Kinsman, who is not an aboriginal, said there needs to be justice for the community.

"There has been attempts to criminalize, to throw in jail the various leaders of indigenous struggles," he said. "We're here to say that's not going to be tolerated, that people in Sudbury are going to join together and oppose those policies until there is justice for First Nations people."

The smell of burning tobacco wafted through the small room as traditional aboriginal drumming group, Sha Daa Kim opened the day's workshops.

Aboriginal elder Barb Riley addressed the gathering and said it is time for the Canadian government to settle land claims.



She said the day of solidarity signifies that settlers (Caucasians) are learning the value of land.

"I hold a mortgage to my residence here in Sudbury. If I didn't pay that mortgage, the bank would come after me and foreclose," she said. "I think that is what the First Nations should start doing. Foreclosing on the land. Not take the land back, but make them pay through royalties."

Riley said the government needs to reassess its "paternalistic" attitude toward First Nations.

"We are smart people, we don't need people making decisions for us," she said. "Maybe we did at one time when they put the residential schools in place, but many of our people now have law degrees and PhD's to run their own businesses and affairs."

Riley was a student at a residential school and said the recent apology made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper is meaningless if they don't settle land claims.

"It's just words," she said. In soft, even tones, she



Aboriginal elder Barb Riley sits outside of Victoria Park in Sudbury. She attended the first Indigenous Struggles Solidarity Day on Saturday afternoon.

Angela Scappatura

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it occurs to me that our gov'ts. really might lack the jam to go after awfully big business ... with their lobbys, deep pockets,

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described what she believes is a genocide being committed against First Nations people. She said the residential schools was part of it. Now, she said, the removal of children from aboriginal homes and placement with the Children's Aid Society is another version of it.

"It isn't helping our children," she said.

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