



The banner features a purple gradient background. On the left, there is an image of a yellow nutrition facts label and a white measuring tape. The text 'Wawatay WEIGHT LOSS CHALLENGE!' is prominently displayed in white and yellow. To the right, a list of three goals is shown with green checkmarks.

**Wawatay**  
**WEIGHT LOSS**  
**CHALLENGE!**

1. Sign Up! ✓
2. Get in Shape! ✓
3. Live a Longer Happier life! ✓

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The banner has a dark blue background with a green aurora borealis effect. The text 'WAWATAY NEWS Online' is written in white and yellow, with 'WAWATAY' in all caps and 'NEWS Online' in title case. Below this, there is a line of Cree syllabics. On the right side, there is a smaller graphic with the text 'VISIT SEVEN giving NAN youth a chance to share their voice'.

**WAWATAY NEWS Online**  
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VISIT  
**SEVEN**  
giving NAN youth a chance to  
share their voice

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## Time for action in wake of apology

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Brent Wesley - Wawatay News

Tears trickled down the cheek of Garnet Angeconebe as the words, “We are sorry,” were spoken by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Angeconebe, a Lac Seul member and residential school survivor, has long been an advocate for sharing the impacts of the residential school era. But in his advocacy, Angeconebe faced what seemed like an impossible task. At first, no one would listen to his story of the life he faced at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School, located near Sioux Lookout. “I was met with silence,” he said of his attempts to share his story. He often felt alone in the

days when talking about residential schools was taboo. “It was painful,” he said as he often felt alone. “But today, I know that the silence has been broken.” On June 11, Angeconeb heard what he has waited a long time to hear – an apology. In Ottawa, Harper made an apology on behalf of the Canadian government for its involvement in the Indian residential school system. “The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. We are sorry,” Harper said from the House of Commons as Angeconeb watched the apology from site of his former residential school. Other supporters and survivors were also gathered with Angeconeb to listen to the Prime Minister. It was a quiet, still and solemn crowd at the very spot where a residential school had operated for almost 50 years. Many in attendance had gone to the school. Throughout the years, many healing gatherings have taken place at Pelican Lake, now the site of a First Nation-operated high school. But as Harper made his apology, a new sense of healing was felt by one survivor. For the abuse and suffering inflicted during the residential school era, Wava Fox said the day brought validation for the experiences suffered by Aboriginal people, including her self. “It made us feel like, ‘Hey, we’re humans after all, this actually happened to us,’” she said shortly after the apology. Lorraine Kenny is also a residential school survivor, having attended the school at Pelican Lake. To her, it wasn’t just about her individual healing, but the apology recognized the harm caused to her parents. “For me the main thing was to acknowledge the pain that my parents must have suffered when they had their children removed one by one,” Kenny said of she and her siblings being taken away to attend residential schools. Although many were grateful for the apology, Harper’s words will mean little if not backed by action. “The follow through is what’s going to be important. They have to put action behind their words,” Kenny said. Fox is of the same thought. She wanted to hear the prime minister address plans to mend the suffering of survivors. “There’s certainly been a great deal of damage that has been inflicted upon Aboriginal people,” Fox said of the residential school era, its impacts and the need for continued healing. Harper made no mention of further action, but opposition leaders also addressed the issue of residential schools. They spoke about relations with Aboriginal people. NDP leader Jack Layton and Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe both called on the Conservatives to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada was one of four countries who did not support the declaration. Layton also expressed the need to rebuild nation-to-nation relations with Aboriginal peoples. The comments resonated with Helen Cromarty, another former student at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. “As First Nations, they were and they still are sovereign nations,” Cromarty said, who spent 10 years at Pelican Lake and Shingwauk residential schools. She was five when she was taken from her home. She believes its time to forge a new relationship, a feeling shared by the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine. With the arrival of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Aboriginal judge Harry Laforme, there is an opportunity for Canadians to learn an untold history and its impacts on Aboriginal people. “This is why the apology is historic,” Fontaine said in a statement. “Residential school students, who were persecuted as children, have not only survived; they are now guiding Canada toward reconciliation.” Angeconeb is putting his faith into the commission as well. Gone are the days of silence. No longer alone, Angeconeb now sees what he originally envisioned. “We are now talking,” he said. “What is happening now is people talking to people.”

Published in [Wawatay Online](#), [June 26, 2008](#), [Volume 35, No. 13](#)

- Next story: [Mi-i-ishise chiwaakawiiyaang ekiimichinawesiwaach](#)

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Monday, June 30, 2008

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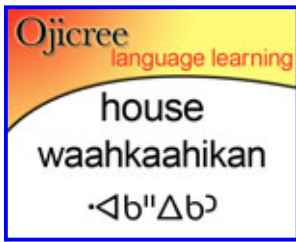
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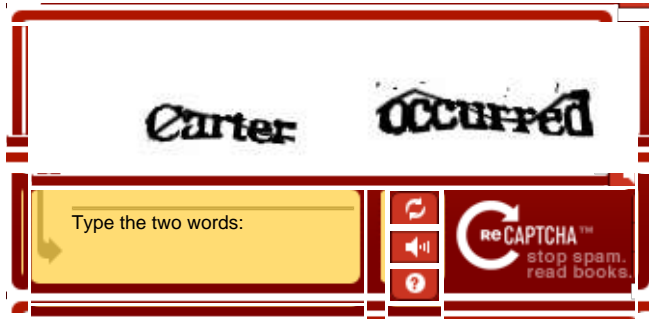


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