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# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## *Backgrounder*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 9, 2008**

### **Long-term Impacts of Canada's Indian Residential School System**

#### ***Aftermath of Residential Schools***

- Residential schools have come to represent a significant impediment to the advancement and even survival of many Aboriginal people who. After spending much of their lives away from their families, many survivors entered adulthood with no sense of basic life skills or how to care for their children.
- In 2004, it was estimated that there were 87,500 survivors in their thirties or older, down from 105,300 in 1991.
- The poor standard of education provided in many of the schools did not allow students to further their education or obtain gainful employment. In many cases this led to a distrust of educational institutions among survivors that resulted in them not encouraging their own children to do well in school or advance their education.
- A lack of parental role-modeling, breakdown of family cohesion, lack of ability to foster interpersonal relationships, feelings of inferiority, loss of cultural identity and discontinuation of family traditions have all been identified as impacts of the residential school system.
- A 1989 study sponsored by the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories showed that eight out of 10 girls and five out of 10 boys under the age of eight had been victims of sexual abuse.
- Aboriginal communities experience abnormally higher rates of violence: physical, domestic abuse (three times higher than Canadian communities); sexual abuse: rape, incest (four to six times higher); suicide (six times higher); health problems: diabetes (three times higher), heart disease, obesity; high school dropout (63 per cent do not graduate). Additionally First Nations communities also suffer from markedly higher levels of addiction, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy.

#### ***Some Milestones***

- In 1992, a research study conducted in BC examined the effects of residential schools on survivors. As a result of its findings, the RCMP formed the Native Task Force to investigate allegations of abuse. Based on their investigations, 13 charges against former supervisors and clergy were laid.
- In 1994, the Indian Residential School Survivors Society was created as the first provincial organization dedicated to residential school issues.

- In 1998, Canada responded to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report with *Gathering Strength*, its plan for addressing the residential school issue. The Minister of Indian Affairs offered the *Statement of Reconciliation*, which established the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The foundation received \$350 million to fund community-based healing projects—this was in addition to \$40 million received in 1995, as well as another \$125 million under the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*. There is still debate surrounding whether the *Statement of Reconciliation* constituted an apology.
- In 2003, the Alternative Dispute Resolution process (ADR) was introduced as an alternative to going to court. The ADR provided compensation and psychological support for residential school survivors who were physically or sexually abused, or who were placed in situations of wrongful confinement.
- Negotiations to settle all the outstanding claims began in 2005, culminating in a \$5.2 billion compensation package. Known as the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*, it proposes more funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, a commemoration program, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, select support services for healthcare and individual compensation.
- Survivors can apply for compensation under two categories: the Common Experience Payment (CEP) and the Independent Assessment Process (IAP). Under the CEP any person who can be verified as living at a federally run Indian residential school in Canada is entitled to compensation based on the number of years attended (\$10,000 for the first year attended plus \$3,000 for every year attended thereafter). Under the IAP any survivor who was physically and/or sexually abused, or who suffered subsequent loss of opportunity or loss of income can apply for compensation.
- As of May 26, 2008, over 92,700 applications have been received.

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*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the B.C. Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs. The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.*

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