

44 Monday, January 5, 2015

NEWS

Leader-Post • leaderpost.com

### FIRST NATIONS Residential school settlements reach \$2.6 billion

JASON WARICK AND JANET FRENCH THE STARPHOENIX

SASKATOON — More than \$2.6 billion has been paid out in settlements to former residential school students across the country but some say money alone will not heal their wounds.

There's still a lot to be done. There are many different ways of healing. Leanne LaRue, a former residential school student, said.

As of Dec. 18, \$2.6 billion had been paid out by the federal government in more than 30,000 settlements across Canada, according to the Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat.

More than 2,000 of these claims came from Saskatchewan.

That figure is sure to climb. There are still 1,091 claims in progress, including nearly 2,000 from Saskatchewan.

In an interview, chief adjudicator Dan Shapiro said everyone is working hard to resolve the outstanding claims before spring 2016.

"We're doing everything we can to achieve that," he said.

There's no set budget, and he hasn't estimated the cost of the settlements.

Shapiro's office has 100 staff members, including 100 former residential school students and can award settlements based on the degree of abuse suffered.

A Saskatoon lawyer, Shapiro agreed that financial settlements alone will not achieve healing for former residential school students.

"This is only one element of justice," Shapiro said.

Cook-Deveraux has been following the case of one former student, Bobby Ford.

The 19-year-old boy disappeared from the Thunder Bay Children's Home in 1989. Decades later, DNA tests confirmed remains found in a field were Bobby's.

It's thought to be Bobby's, it's thought to be Bobby's, more than 200 kilometres north, before finding to death.

Cook-Deveraux said representation of First Nations culture and abuse weren't the only harms caused by the schools. Hundreds of children died of tuberculosis, from violence, or in desperate attempts to run home.

She said many students and families were reluctant to speak about their experiences and the harmful legacy. She's glad to see that's changing for Bobby Ford's family and hundreds of others.

"It was a dark secret. People were so ashamed," she said.

She said the general public is beginning to understand what the estimated 150,000 children nationwide went through in the schools.

She wonders if the federal government is willing to be true partners in reconciliation.

The Tribes that operation was left off the list of official residential schools, denying students the compensation, support and justice sought by others, she said.

The La Ronge Indian Band and others are continuing the fight in court.

Shapiro said the adjudication secretariat was expected to resolve approximately 12,000 claims, which it began in 2007, but has received just under \$100 million. The agency is working with law firms to expedite the process, and encourages anyone with a pending claim to seek with legal counsel.

## FSIN vice says more could die in fires

Funding a key issue on reserve

JASON WARICK AND JANET FRENCH THE STARPHOENIX

SASKATOON — More people will die in fires on Saskatchewan First Nations if funding continues to lag for firefighting, housing and other necessities, says the vice-president of Saskatchewan Indian Federation (FSIN).

The comments come as family and friends prepare to attend Tuesday's funeral for 61-year-old Donna Kay and her 19-year-old grandson Dwayne Abraham.

They were killed in a house fire last week on the Akahkook First Nation. They died in the blaze that destroyed a habitation house at Akahkook last Monday. The blaze is not considered suspicious.

Cameron said First Nations leaders, elders and others have identified the need for help over the last year with their requests.

"In terms of action, nothing has really changed. It needs to, or those won't be the last deaths we see," Cameron said in an interview Monday.

Ahabkook, with a population of close to 1,000, does not have a fire department. It relies on the fire department in Cameron.

Chief Larry Abraham said last week, Cameron is about an hour's drive from the reserve.

"The minister said he admired Kay who treated him like a member of her own family," he said in an email on Earth. She showed everyone how to live.

Cameron cited another fatal fire last year in his home.

First Nation of Wapikwan Lake. A girl died in a drafty old house that required piecing in heaters and other devices.

"Everyone just wants to stay warm and safe. They can't do it when the funds are not there," Cameron said.

Keisha Doolittle, 12, died in a fire on the First Nation of Danville First Nation in August. Solomon Ballantyne, 18, and Josiah Ballantyne, 19, died last January on the Pelican Narrows First Nation.

First Nations receive far less money for fire prevention and fire fighting than other Saskatchewan communities, but that's not the only problem, Cameron said.

Federal funds for social housing on First Nations have not come close to keeping pace with the rapid population growth. With just \$18.9 million in funding per person, it's difficult to build quality housing, particularly in remote areas, he said.

A statement last week from federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt offered the department provides First Nations with funding to support operation and maintenance of firefighting equipment and training. Each First Nation manages how it spends that money to meet its community responsibility, he said.

The department has previously said it provides \$10 million for such equipment and training for reserves across the country's last year, some of those funds went toward three fire trucks, construction of three fire halls, and fire protection equipment on Saskatchewan First Nations, the statement said.

Valcourt's office said the provincial government's involvement is limited in what it can do to improve fire safety, says Deputy Minister of Emergency Management and Fire Safety with the Ministry of Government Relations.

"This can't be a situation where the feds and the province come in and tell people what they need to do, and they're responsible for that," Mofsky said.

Programs the ministry offers to towns and cities across the province are also available to First Nations upon request, Mofsky said.

Those prevention programs include smoke detector programs, where the ministry can help the band council develop a resolution to require smoke detectors in homes and buildings, train local people to install and maintain smoke detectors, and teach children to make and enforce a fire escape plan.

The ministry will also train volunteer firefighters, and give teachers access to fire safety lessons for Grades 1 to 6 students that fit into their curriculum.

Mofsky said the safety funds have a meeting school in the wake of the fire. However, when asked how many Saskatchewan First Nations take advantage of the fire safety programs and training the ministry offers, he said, "It's not a lot."

He knows of five First Nations implementing fire prevention programs using provincial resources. A couple of First Nations use the elementary school awareness programs, he said.

The provincial fire commission also investigates many fires on First Nations, but can do little more than provide a report into the cause and make recommendations.

The three levels of government are trying to develop innovative ways to improve safety on reserves, Mofsky said.

"This issue has been around for a long time. Obviously, in those reporting those services have failed to provide the level of services adequate to decrease the impact," he said.

Sometimes Saskatchewan First Nations have their own fire department, and in some have contracted fire service agreements with nearby towns or villages.

Following three fatal fires on Saskatchewan First Nations in six months, provincial Government Relations Minister Jim Butler met with federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt to discuss fire safety on reserves.

Among the problems are difficulty recruiting a stable lineup of volunteer firefighters, the lack of building code requirements on reserves, increasing more flammable building materials are often used or permitted to be used to build or renovate reserve properties, and First Nations houses are not subject to mandatory fire inspections.

After the March 20 meeting, the minister said the federal government was open to the idea of creating the National Building Code apply to reserves, but had to investigate jurisdiction issues first.

Individual reserves have the power to implement their own building codes if they wish, Mofsky said.

With Rita from Charles Hamilton



Donna Kay, 61, and 19-year-old Dwayne Abraham, both from Akahkook First Nation, were found dead at the site of a recent house fire on the reserve.

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With Rita from Charles Hamilton



Dan Shapiro



Bobby Ford



Leanne LaRue



Keisha Doolittle



Donna Kay and Dwayne Abraham



Young girl from fire victims' family



Young boy from fire victims' family



Young girl from fire victims' family



Young boy from fire victims' family

### NEW DANCE HORIZONS



Dylan Crossman and Manuel Roque perform in Ce n'est pas le fin du monde if it's not the end of the world. The show is part of New Dance Horizons' Men in Dance festival, which opens Monday.

### Festival makes way for Men in Dance

ASHLEY MARTIN LEADERPOST

When Bobbie Potrait first saw Ce n'est pas le fin du monde, she knew she was a lot of things and stereotypes of course, that dance is a woman's activity and not a man's," Potrait said.

But that is changing as more and more men get involved in dance.

Potrait points to studios like FallBalance and the Youth Ballet studio, which run classes just for men. Lots of folk dancers are performed by men.

"If you look at powwow, you've got the men's fancy dance, you've got the chick on dance, you've got the traditional dance, so dance is not segregated but it's celebrated," said Potrait.

A variety of styles, languages and cultures are included in the festival, from powwow (Terrance Little)

to Merle Jigging (Marcus Mearns) and Modern Mexican to Mexican folk (Luis Hernandez) in a Cosecha "viva classic" to dance.

"The Brothers Field, crew and 30 years ago. Bill Coleman and Mark Shabab are performing the same on Saturday at Village RV. Dances are "they almost come across like two sides of the same coin," said Potrait.

All of the pieces fit under the veil of contemporary dance, as their works are formed by history and years of training, said Potrait.

Some include visual art, like Peter Trotter and Jeremy Gortel's Box Tops. With audience participation, they build a large installation sculpture out of packing tape, which resembles a spider web or wavy lines that dance inside of it.

But the festival is not all performance. It includes reasonable discussions and dance workshops that are free and open to the public.

"If you can walk, you can dance," said Potrait. "That said, dance is very athletic. A dancer's training is very like an athlete's. People often don't make that connection. I remember talking boxing and I was amazed at how similar some of the training was to dance. We did a lot of skipping and jumping. It was incredibly athletic."

Fact: Legendary Saskatchewan Roughriders players George Reed and Ron Lancaster took jazz dance, said Potrait.

Dance can be scary for new audience members, so Potrait recommends reading the artist statement before a show, and being open to something new.

"The range of works is incredibly diverse. If you see a work that you find too challenging, hopefully you'll go to see something else."

Maybe even see it a second time. There's so much to dance that you can't get it in one talk necessarily. I'm always amazed at the second viewing of a work; I will see things that I hadn't seen at all and take away a very different meaning," said Potrait.

A highlight of Men in Dance is Friday's night's Saskatchewan Men Dancing, which features Littleton, Graham McDevie, Paul Adams and Chance Frey.

Another highlight is Sunday's Theatre Dance and Merle Jigging, which includes performances and a lesson.

Men in Dance runs until Jan. 11, mostly at U of R.

A festival pass is \$100. Individual tickets are \$70. Most shows are family-friendly. The ones that aren't aren't cheaply labeled. For more at newdancehorizons.com.

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