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THE GLOBE AND MAIL
CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

NATIVE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS » FROM THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, THE PRIME MINISTER APOLOGIZES

TOM HANSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

"The government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home. ..."

We are sorry"

BY BILL CURRY AND GLORIA GALLOWAY OTTAWA

Prime Minister Stephen Harper had yet to utter a single word of Canada's apology to former Indian residential schools students when the cheering began. Native drumming and shouts turned into loud, simultaneous clapping. Raw emotion bursting for an apology decades overdue. There were many smiles.

For the sexual and physical abuse that occurred at the schools, Canada apologized. For the efforts to wipe out aboriginal languages and culture in the name of assimilation, Mr. Harper expressed remorse.

But aboriginal eyes in the now quiet House of Commons room began to tear when the Prime Minister acknowledged the ongoing, generational impacts of residential schools.

"We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow," he said. "Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry."

Known as the generational effect of the schools, it is the lesser-told story. Many children who never set foot in one have grown up with parents who never learned that children need hugs. Some grew up with parents and relatives who learned the ways of abuse at the schools.

"You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey," Mr. Harper concluded. "The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of aboriginal peoples for failing them so badly."

Unlike Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in his apology to aboriginals in February, Mr. Harper made no promises to improve aboriginal social conditions.

» SEE 'SCHOOLS' PAGE 8

Geronimo Henry was given the number 48 at the Mohawk residential school in Brantford, Ont., and describes his experience there as a nightmare. SAMI SIVA/THE GLOBE AND MAI

REACTION

'Just a bunch of words'
» For Geronimo Henry, 71, the apology is too little, too late. NEWS, PAGES 8 »
» For students at one B.C. school, there was no way for them to even watch the apology. GLOBE B.C., PAGE 3 »

THE GLOBE'S VIEW

A process only just begun
No longer mired in the past, Canada must now turn its attention to the sins of the present: entrenched dependency, abject poverty and unsettled land claims.
EDITORIAL, PAGE 14 »

IN COMMENT

Whither reconciliation?
Canada has spent billions and the biggest winners have been the lawyers. What could that money have bought if we'd paid it forward instead of back?
MARGARET WENTE, PAGE 15 »

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

GlobeSalon kicks off
In a new online feature, Margaret MacMillan, Michael Adams and othe luminaries discuss the PM's apology beginning today at 9 a.m. (ET).
GLOBEANDMAIL.COM »

A group of aboriginals participates in the Honour Walk in support of former residential school students in Shubenacadie, N.S., yesterday. MIKE DEMBECK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Prime Minister Stephen Harper listens to National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations yesterday. CHRIS WATTIE/REUTERS

CHIEF FRANK JOHNSON, 57

INVOLVEMENT
Student, Alert Bay Indian Residential School, B.C., 1959-1963, Alberni Indian Residential School, 1964-1968

CURRENTLY
Chief of Wuikinuxv First Nation, B.C.

I always remember my first day, I got in a fight with one of the boys. The supervisor locked me in a locker, six feet by two feet wide.

The schooling, it was rough for me. ... We were told our father would go to jail if we didn't go, so we went willingly.

Our father went to residential school [at Alert Bay] and he treated us the same way. When we got ... beatings, we never cried.

In Alert Bay, I witnessed young boys being molested by the older boys. It was no different in Port Alberni. They tried once, but I fought, I fought. They wouldn't touch me after that.

I thought it was a way of life, both my parents were alcoholics, they both went to residential schools. I quit [drinking] about 20 years ago. But I see the effect with my children.

I try to lead by example. I want to make sure that we know who we are. I'm still working on that. I'm giving to my grandchildren what I didn't give my own children, and I think that's so important. » *Jamie Komarnicki*

BERNICE LOGAN, 76

INVOLVEMENT
Teacher and supervisor. All Saints residential school, Prince Albert, Sask., 1949-52 and Shingwauk Home, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., 1952-55

CURRENTLY
Advocate for former teachers of residential schools, Tangier, N.S.

The Anglican Church was advertising for young people to come and give a few years of their life to help these Indian children to work in the Indian residential schools. It was appealing to me to go and work with Indian children.

... We loved it. We enjoyed working with the children. They were well-behaved kids to work with. They were very artistic.

There were different reasons why the children were there. Nobody went out and tore the children from their parents.

... When I heard all this negative reporting, I thought, there's no way I can let that go unchallenged. I know there were some staff accused of sexual assault, I know that's happened. That does not mean all the staff out there were dysfunctional and abused the children. They're calling it a trauma, the darkest chapter in Canadian history. ... This is not true.

... We were always proud of everything that we did.

[But now] we're the criminals. » *Jamie Komarnicki*

TED NOLAN, 50

INVOLVEMENT
Family and friends attended Shingwauk residential school, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

CURRENTLY
Head coach, New York Islanders

I think we're all affected by the residential schools, no question.

As a young boy, I just remember sitting around and listening to stories and watching my uncles and friends [that attended Shingwauk residential school] that came to our house sitting and crying. There were some real sad sob stories about how they were treated in residential schools. I just remember wondering why white people would treat people so cruelly and meanly.

It's a weird thing. I was more impressed with their power to overcome than feeling sorry. ... I vowed to myself, one thing I was going to fight for was respect. I made myself stronger for it.

I think it's affected our whole nation. We're all connected.

... It's so hard for some people to move on because of the hurt and the anguish. When people ask me, how did you make it to the NHL as a player, how did you make it as a coach, I used to answer it, 'Like everyone else, I loved hockey and played.' But it wasn't quite that way. They didn't have the burden of residential schools that really affected our people. ... » *Jamie Komarnicki*

INSPECTOR GERRY PETERS, 45

INVOLVEMENT
RCMP constable, file co-ordinator and lead investigator for the Native Indian Residential School Task Force created in 1994

CURRENTLY
RCMP E Division (B.C.) Inspector

I was asked to lead and co-ordinate ... allegations of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools [in B.C.].

... My experience in interviewing many, many dozens of victims is that the allegations were mainly against the lay people that worked at the schools: janitors, cooks, that sort of thing.

My own personal reaction, all of these statements I took – and I took dozens of statements – every single statement I took was, it was sad. It's a sad story. It's not pretty. Abusing a child, an aboriginal child or a child of another race, it's about one of the ugliest things you can imagine.

I think it's a pretty tough thing to tell your story to a complete stranger ... In some cases these people were telling very detailed... very painful stories for the first time. My heart just went out to some of them.

I don't think anyone has seen the end of the investigation, to be quite honest. Who's to say there isn't someone out there waiting to give their statement, still summoning the courage to come forward? » *Jamie Komarnicki*

JUDGE ALFRED SCOW, 81

INVOLVEMENT
Student, Alert Bay Indian Residential School, B.C., 1936-1942

CURRENTLY
Retired provincial court judge, and first aboriginal person to graduate from law school and be called to the bar in B.C.

My father and mother wanted their children to have an education so my sister and I were enrolled in the residential school.

I was nine years old. I was in the school for six years.

We were enrolled in August of 1936 and we had a wonderful time. ... For the first part, we had picnics everyday. Then when September rolled around, the picnic was over, and the school began. We became exposed to the military-type lifestyle because the vice-principal was a First World War captain.

We didn't enjoy everything about the residential schools. ... If we were caught speaking our language, we were punished.

It wasn't until I was out of the system of residential schools that I realized that much of the objectives of the residential schools were to disregard our culture ...

It did not ruin my life. But, if anything, what I learned about the residential schools after I left there caused me to want to prove to the world that Indians were as intelligent as other people. » *Jamie Komarnicki*

A MEMORY WORTH CHERISHING

Baseball hats and button blankets crowded together as more than 1,000 Lower Mainland natives and their leaders squeezed into the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver to hear Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology for the physical, emotional and cultural damage caused by Canada's residential school system.

Elders and their grandchildren sat side by side inside the auditorium, while others stood, all listening as Mr. Harper read his official statement in a broadcast shown on two large screens. Tissue boxes placed around the auditorium were frequently reached for, and several people left in tears.

Few clapped during the apologies read by Mr. Harper and Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion, but many were more receptive to those of Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe and the NDP's Jack Layton.

The gathering was the largest of about 50 held around B.C.

Premier Gordon Campbell told the crowd he "hoped that healing will evolve ... and that it will be a significant step toward closing a tragic chapter in Canada's history."

Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit attended the Lejac residential school in northern B.C. as a child. He called the apology "long overdue."

"The impact on our people was real and multigenerational. We have a destiny in Canada," said Mr. John, calling for the government to stop "the further fragmentation and breakdown in families."

He said politicians paid attention to the abuse of native children in residential schools only after lawsuits were filed by those abused.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip called yesterday's apology "a memory I will always cherish" and said he felt proud of the other speakers, particularly the national native leaders who responded to the apologies.

"I am a little disappointed he [Mr. Harper] called it a 'sad chapter' because it doesn't really show the depth of the tragedy for so many of our people." » *Cathryn Atkinson*

NATIVE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS » CANADA'S APOLOGY

FROM PAGE 1 » SCHOOLS

Tory MP casts doubt on value of compensation

» Instead, he pointed to the 2006 out-of-court settlement and the five-year truth and reconciliation commission on residential schools as examples of government action.

The opposition leaders had their say, offering sentiments similar to those of the Prime Minister. Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe and NDP Leader Jack Layton each won applause with jabs at the Conservatives for refusing to endorse the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

When the politicians had finished, five aboriginal leaders who were seated in a circle on the floor of the House of Commons with six former residential school students were given the unprecedented opportunity to stand in the middle of the room and speak.

In full native headdress, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine went first. A victim of residential school abuse himself, he pulled no punches.

"Brave survivors, through the telling of their painful stories, have stripped white supremacy of its authority and legitimacy," he said. "The memories of residential schools sometimes cut like merciless knives at our souls. This day will help us to put that pain behind us."

When Inuit Tapiriit leader Mary Simon spoke, she turned to face the Prime Minister directly.

"I wanted to demonstrate to you that our language and culture is still strong," she said in Inuktitut, thanking Mr. Harper for having the courage to apologize. "There have been times in this long journey when I despaired that this would never happen. But after listening to the Prime Minister and the leaders of the political parties, I'm filled with hope and compassion for my fellow aboriginal Canadians."

The Prime Minister's message of healing was undercut yesterday by one of his own MPs, who spoke sarcastically of the size of the residential schools settlement on talk radio.

"Along with this apology comes another four billion dollars in compensation for those who partook in the residential schools," said Tory MP Pierre Poilievre, adding dramatic emphasis to the $4-billion, during an appearance on CFRA Radio just before the apology. "Some of us are starting to ask, are we really getting value for all of this money and is money really going to solve the problem?"

Last night, Mr. Poilievre issued a statement about his comments.

"I stated that aboriginals deserve protection under Canada's human rights laws and that the record dollars that the government is spending on aboriginals should reach the people in need," the e-mailed statement said.

On the grounds of Parliament Hill, the apology was well received by the couple of hundred people gathered to watch history on a giant video screen. Some were aboriginal, some were not. A few cried and hugged each other, but most watched in sombre silence.

Lance Migwans brought his four-year-old son, Braiden, to Ottawa from Manitoulin Island on Lake Huron to hear the apology.

"Everything that has happened still trickles down to our children, and will trickle down to his children and maybe his grandchildren," he said brush-

Betty Campbell of the North Vancouver Squamish Nation watches Prime Minister Stephen Harper's speech through satellite at the Squamish reserve yesterday. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Marguerite Wabano, 104, and other aboriginals shake hands with M in the House of Commons yesterday. CHRIS WATTIE/REUTERS

JANICE ACOOSE, 53

INVOLVEMENT
Student, Cowessess Indian Residential School, Sask., 1959-1961

CURRENTLY
Associate English professor, First Nations University of Canada

My story is connected to a bigger circle of people. My parents were following in the tradition of their parents. I don't think my parents realized they had a choice. Where else would we have gone to school?

I was seeing the school through a five-year-old's eyes. My first reaction to it was, of course, fear.

Even though I had three older sisters and an older brother that were already there, that didn't mean I had the support of family. We were divided into small-girls dorms and big-girls dorms.

One of the first things they do is they try to institutionalize you by taking away your name. I was given a number and that's [how] I was identified. All my personal belongings were taken away from me. I remember the smells mostly. That kind of smell of disinfectant everywhere in the school. That smell of fear, too, if you know what fear smells like.

I don't wear the badge of victimization. I want to move ahead in my life in ways that I don't carry that stuff any more. Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

» *Jamie Komarnicki*

DORENE BERNARD, 51

INVOLVEMENT
Student, Shubenacadie Indian Residential School in Nova Scotia, 1960-1967

CURRENTLY
Front-line youth worker in Indian Brook, a native community just north of Halifax

"Three generations of my family went to the school, including 10 in my grandmother's family. ..."

Ms. Bernard was 4 when she and her two sisters and brother went to the school, shortly after her parents separated.

Ms. Bernard said one of her most traumatic memories during her years at the school involves her brother, Robert.

"The boys and girls were separated so they could not talk to each other. One day, I passed him in a corridor and a [staff member] grabbed Robert and threw him against a radiator for saying 'hi' to me. ..."

Her brother died in a car accident in 1977. He was 23. "...That was the hardest part of my life. It took me a year of drinking and trying to come to grips with his death. I was lost without him. ..."

Ms. Bernard left the residential school when she was 15. She eventually got a bachelor's degree in social work and spent 20 years working in child welfare. But she said she knows she is not completely healed from her years at Shubenacadie. » *Karen Howlett*

BISHOP DAVID ASHDOWN, 57

INVOLVEMENT
Supervisor Stringer Hall hostel for Sir Alexander Mackenzie School and Samuel Hearne Secondary School, Inuvik, NWT, 1970-1974

CURRENTLY
Bishop, Diocese of Keewatin, Ont.

I arrived at noon, the administrator gave me the keys ... gave me some instructions and said, the first students will be arriving at 8 o'clock tonight. I just felt absolutely, quite frankly, overwhelmed. I'd have left immediately if I had the money to pay for my airfare out.

After that I developed a real affection for the place.

This may sound strange now but I thought one of the ways I could contribute was helping people get their own voice, was to go North and work with aboriginal youth to try and promote this sense of self-determination.

Perhaps I was a bit naive. I was certainly enthusiastic.

The negative part of it is that the residential schools were part of an assimilation process and that's where I think in many ways we need to focus on what was wrong. Twenty years ago, I would have said it was a good system with some bad people. Now I realize it was a bad system with a lot of good people in it.

» *Jamie Komarnicki*

DARWIN BLIND, 61

INVOLVEMENT
Student, Gordon Indian Residential School, Sask., 1954-1963

CURRENTLY
Family support worker, Gordon Wellness and Therapy Centre, George Gordon First Nation, Sask.

I spent nine years in a residential school. I was six years old when I went. My parents had no choice.

... My first experience was getting in a line-up of several children my age and being doused with louse oil. They believed every first nation person who came to school was filled with lice and diseases.

Many children like myself suffered physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse. There was nothing ever mentioned at that time in regards to abuse. It was kind of accepted as the norm.

... [We were strapped] for anything. Anywhere they could hit you. It didn't matter if you had a shirt on or not, those straps left marks. I've got scars on my body that I'll die with.

Most of the [sexual abuse] happened at night in the dark in the big, crowded room or when you went to the bathroom. When you're six ... you'd go to the bathroom several times a night.

I'm very lucky though. I've been sober and straight for almost 25 years of my life.

» *Jamie Komarnicki*

ALEX JANVIER, 73

INVOLVEMENT
Student, St. Paul's Indian Resid tial School, Alta., 1943-1953

CURRENTLY
Artist

I just got picked up on the reserve, they'd haul us like cattle on the back of the truck, throv on the back.

I tried to communicate in my native language but they only spoke English. The first day w lost day. No idea what hit me.

It was an authority haven. T authorities had all control on a our lives night and day. They h the whip and the power.

... I never got used to it. I jus survived one day at a time.

They instilled fear into you. That thing hung around me fo long, long time in my life. Fea everything – fear of people, o places and things, institutions, and fear of authority. It took m many years to dissipate that ...

What happened when I was about 12 years old, there was Parisian priest that took over t school. He had a different visi of how to run that place. I gue he was told I was good at art. saw I was leaning towards tha sort of thing and he said, 'I wi do something about that.'

That was the beginning of a slow turn for me. ... The art ki of held me in there. It replace my cultural loss.

» *Jamie Komarnicki*

A CHILDHOOD TAKEN AWAY

'It's just a bunch of words'

For one native man, now 71, PM's apology comes 'a little too late'

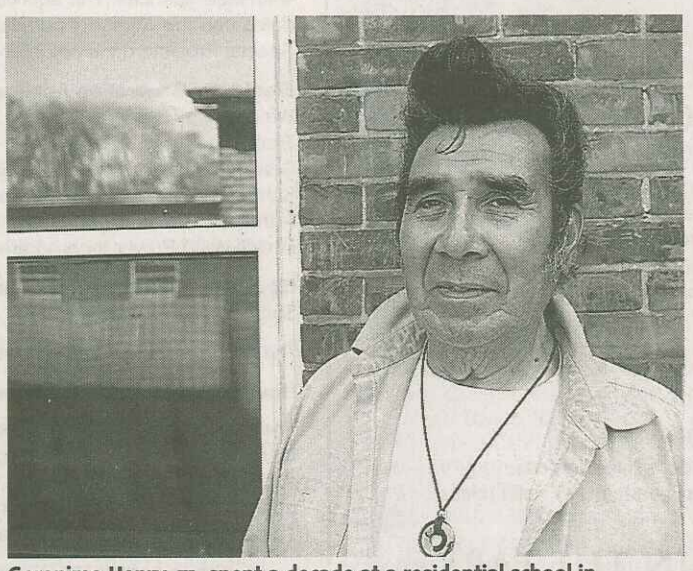
BY CAROLINE ALPHONSO
BRANTFORD, ONT.

The feeling of suffocation begins for Geronimo Henry as he walks back through the main doors of the two-storey brick building where he spent his school years.

He can tolerate it for only a handful of minutes before it pushes him to retreat outside.

"I can breathe now. That was scary," he said, filling his lungs with fresh summer air.

The building triggers some of the worst memories for Mr. Henry. He was brought here at the age of 5 to be a student at the Mohawk Institute Residential School, and couldn't escape for the next decade. An



Geronimo Henry, 71, spent a decade at a residential school in

A DIFFERENT VIEW

Schools not entirely bad, native writer contends

BY WENDY STUECK VANCOUVER
AND SARAH BOESVELD TORONTO

Ojibwa writer Richard Wagamese went out on a limb last month, stating in a newspaper column that for some students, residential school might have been a godsend, "or at least, a stepping stone to a more empowered future."

Mr. Wagamese cited his mother, who attended residential school as a child and spoke to him not of catastrophic experiences but instead of how she learned to cook and clean and sew, skills he saw reflected in her tidy home.

In broaching the subject of possible good in residential

"I can't possibly believe t every one of those peop functioning as missionaries and clergy were predators.

Ojibwa writer
Richard Wagamese

er, Marjorie Nabish, said sh rarely spoke of her resident school experience to her ch dren because to do so mad her sad – and because she feared they would see such disclosures as attempts to e