
Uncertainty Lerks Over Residence: As Marieval Gets Temporary Reprieve By Indian Affairs

Peter Harrington

SASKATCHEWAN INDIAN MAY 1978 v08 n05 p14

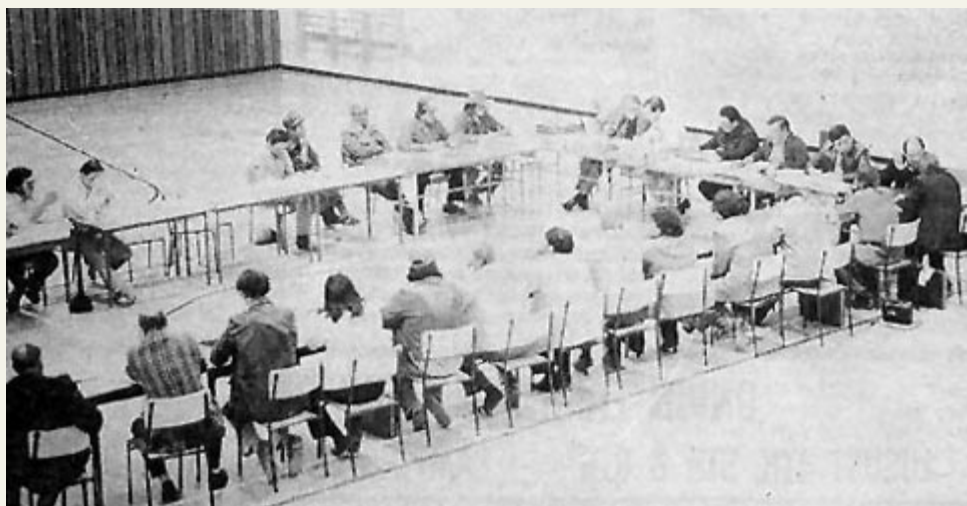
The air was thick enough to be cut with a knife the other day when Indian Affairs officials and the Marieval Student Residence Board of Directors and Yorkton Chiefs met at the Residence to decide the fate of the 80 year old structure.

The Department of Indian Affairs enveloped the meeting with officials by bringing Joe Leask-Director General for Saskatchewan, Emil Korchinski-Director of Operations, Jim Freeman-Director of Education, Hugo Watt-Yorkton District Manager, and Elwood Belt-District Superintendent of Education to the meeting to bargain with the Chiefs and Board members along with a number of interested parents.

Korchinski cited three reasons why the building should be closed including the returning of problem children to a home setting, the historic age of the building and the massive cost of \$7,300 a year per child kept at the residence.

A number of alternatives were outlined by Department officials to include, shipping some of the residents to other areas of the province, expanding homes on the reserves by adding rooms so that families could take two or three children in, consituation of group homes on reserves and a better support to child care services to the 50 children at Marieval by utilizing child care workers on the reserves.

This presentation met with great opposition. Henry Delorme, Chairman of the Marieval Board of Directors told Korchinski that supervision at Marieval was adequate and if young people were forced to go back to their home situation they could end up in the court system. He cited the costs of operating Rancher-lo Society homes between \$16,400 to \$19,100 per child which is far more than the operation at Marieval.



DECIDING THE FUTURE for Marieval Indian School's residence and for fifty residence students, staff and teachers. This meeting of the Board of Directors and the school, citizens of Marieval and surrounding reservations and the federal DIAND representatives was held on April 28th in the gymnasium at Marieval. The Indian people are completely opposed to the idea. The matter is, apparently still undecided, and the fates of the 50 residents is still in the balance!

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Delorme told officials that other residences' were full and by adding to homes would create a number of other problems. Another concern expressed by the Board Chairman was the possibility of thrusting 21 people out of work and onto the welfare roles.

Chief Ken Sparvier of Cowessess told officials that it was about time that something was done to benefit Indian Bands and not the Department of Indian Affairs. He said, "*there is no space in other residences and that Marieval should remain open.*"

WHITE PAPER STILL ALIVE

Chief Sol Sanderson cautioned the meeting that the 1969 white paper is still alive and well. He told the meeting that if Marieval is allowed to close other residences will be closed soon after. Sanderson reminded Korchinski that a number of resolutions have been presented to Indian Affairs by the Marieval board that have not been acted upon. By ignoring these resolutions at the local and regional level certainly is in line with the 1969 white paper and the concentrated effort by the Department to close all student residences in Saskatchewan.



Head Table at Marieval meeting includes from left; Joe Leask, Emil Korchinski, Chief Sterling Brass, Henry Delorme Vice President, Chief Sol Sanderson F.S.I consultant.



Marieval Indian School-at the left is the new schoolroom-gymnasium complex, built in 1976. At the right is the residential building, home for about 50 resident Indian students from the age of six to 14. It is the residential portion of the school which has come under the "guns" of of the federal Indian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development who say it costs too much to operate. However, the alternatives they suggested at an April 28th meeting are, at best, questionable and do not impress the Indian Board of Directors and the residents and staff in the least.

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Sanderson told officials that housing a child in the welfare system costs Indian Affairs \$6,900 so the cost of \$7,300 is not out of line and does not constitute a valid argument. Sanderson also expressed concern about the housing proposal outlining the conditions of homes on reserves and said, "*about 75 per cent of homes on Saskatchewan Reserves have two or three families living in them*".

"Indians are just as capable as non-Indians to look after children in foster home situations but the department does not pay provincial rates to Indians. That is why Korchinski has been able to come up with the cheaper cost of housing Indian children in Saskatchewan in foster home situations", said the Chief.



Joe Leask, DIAND-Saskatchewan and Emil Korchinski Director of Operations listen as Chiefs and Marieval Student Residence Board put forth their case to keep the residence open.



MARIEVAL INDIAN SCHOOL-a beautiful site which provides Indian children with education, love and care. The federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development feels there should be a closure of the residential school portion of the school or staff cutback. The Indian Board of Directors feels differently.

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Sanderson also told officials that if there were space in other residences, then he knows about 175 children that were turned away from the Prince Albert Student Residence that could use a home.

Chief Sanderson pledged the support of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians to the Marieval Board of Directors and the Yorkton Chiefs in their fight to keep Marieval in operation. He said, "there is no security in moving in the direction of child care services as rendered by the Department of Indian Affairs."

GRISLY STATISTICS

Delorme outlined 1971 statistics that showed 83 per cent of the children placed at Marieval were there due to child neglect with the other 17 per cent for a variety of other reasons. He said, "these statistics have not changed one point today they are the same".

Chief Joe Williams of the Sakimay Reserve told Korchinski in no uncertain terms that Marieval was to remain open. He mentioned the treaties which were signed over 100 years ago guaranteeing education as long as the sun shines, the grass

grows and the rivers flow.

Williams also heaped critical words on the Department for their attempt to take Indian capital dollars into the town of Grenfell for the construction of a school gymnasium when Indian Bands were refused capital funds for Band construction. He suggested that any money for the Grenfell School Unit be spent on Marieval to upgrade the facilities.

Mrs. Bigeagle of the White Bear Band told Department officials that homes on her reserve housed two or three families and that a few extra rooms would do no good. She said the overcrowded conditions are the same on all the reserves in the area and a boarding house program would not work out.

Chief Louis Taypotat told Korchinski to keep the place open considering the great deal of money that had already been spent on Marieval.

Cowessess Councilor, Herbert Gunn accused Indian Affairs of playing the numbers game by putting reserve against reserve by suggesting their housing scheme. He said that the Department is so far behind in housing starts that by the time they catch up Marieval will be around a long time.



Elwood Belt (left), Yorkton District Education Superintendent is busily taking notes, while Jim Freeman, Regional Director of Education just sits and thinks.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER

Board Chairman, Henry Delorme told the Department of Indian Affairs to get their act together and make Marieval a permanent situation for children. He asked Korchinski if he would be prepared to have a dead foster child on his conscience by placing them on reserves with absolutely no fire protection.

Delorme lambasted IAB officials for failing in their trusteeship role for Indian people and said, "*this problem would not be so glaring if the Department had done their job properly in the first place*".

Chief Sterling Brass, Yorkton District Chiefs Representative and the Chief of Key Band, near Norquay told officials that it is time to think of the children. "*We must speak for our children and not someone at headquarters*", he said. Brass told the officials that, "*we do have the solutions but we are not allowed to put them into practice*".

The Chief went on to say that a number of resolutions have been passed giving Korchinski and his department crystal clear instructions to work on our behalf. "*These have been ignored*", he said, reminding the meeting that by getting rid of Jim Wright, a past IAB official is catching up with them now.

Brass accused IAB officials of crippling Indian children by taking away their educational opportunities and indicated that, "*our defenseless children are paying the price for Indian Affairs bungling*". He said, "*in 1971 the Residence was under attack--we stood up to fight and we'll stand up to it again*".

NOT TO CLOSE

Joe Leask, Regional Director General told the meeting that he wanted to get a couple of things laid to rest right away. He said, "*Marieval Student Residence was **not** going to close and it is not the intention of the Department to close down any other student residence in the province*".

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He suggested a study be done to see if the Chiefs and the Board could offer alternative, if, in fact, that was what they wanted.

Leask also suggested that a treasury board submission be drawn up to bring student residences under the social services branch of Indian Affairs.

KORCHINSKI NOT SO POSITIVE

Emil Korchinski, Director of Operations did not take such a positive stance on the subject. He told the meeting that such a study would look at possible alternatives in order to streamline the whole operation.

Chief Sol Sanderson reminded the meeting that once a child was in the care of Indian Affairs for 18 months they were transferred to the province and after 24 months a child was placed for adoption with no notification, to the parents or the Chiefs. Consequently Indian children eventually lose all their treaty rights.

He cautioned the Chiefs on playing the numbers game with staff cuts as well. He said, "*if staff is cut, then the student ratio is cut down too, thereby allowing the viability question of the residence to arise again*". "*The man years are there if proper presentation is made to Treasury Board*", he said.

"*Long term plans are to either justify the retention of the residence or look for alternatives*", said Korchinski. A committee has been formed in order to evaluate the whole situation, but the general feeling of the meeting was to retain the Marieval Student Residence with some expansion to the present facility.

THE CHILDREN WAIT. . .

Meanwhile, the battle rages on between the Department and the Indian people of the area with 50 children and 21 staff being weighed against the costs of such an operation. However, the residence will be open again in September, but for how long is anybody's guess.

"*A liar must have a good memory.*" Quintilian



...And while DIAND ponder over the fate of Marieval Student Residence, these little children just sit and wait to find out if they have a home to give them the same love and care they are NOW receiving at Marieval!
