

Courts to issue further notice to former students of Canada's Indian residential schools and their families: the settlement has been approved by the Courts, and now former students must decide whether to opt out.

OTTAWA, ON, March 29, 2007—The second phase of a national notification programme has begun, on behalf of Courts across Canada, to alert former students of the Indian residential school system and their families that they must decide whether to stay in the settlement or remove themselves (opt out) from it by August 20, 2007. Notices will be distributed, published, mailed, and broadcast throughout Canada, describing the settlement benefits and how to get them for those who stay in, and explaining what it means to opt out and how to opt out.

This is the continuation of a notification programme that began in June of last year, when former students and their families learned how to give their views about the fairness of the settlement. Then, nine Courts across Canada held public hearings. All of the Courts approved the settlement after those hearings. The opt out period formally began immediately following a Court hearing on March 22, 2007, and notices were placed on the Court website www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca. Community outreach coordinators will begin informing former students across Canada, and phone calls will be placed to those who previously came forward. The settlement provides:

- 1) At least \$1.9 billion for "common experience" payments to former students who lived at one of the schools. Payments will be \$10,000 for the first school year (or part of a school year), plus \$3,000 for each school year (or part of a school year) after that.
- 2) A process to allow those who suffered sexual or serious physical abuses, or other abuses that caused serious psychological effects, to get between \$5,000 and \$275,000 each. Those students could get more money if they also show a loss of income.
- 3) Money for programmes for former students and their families for healing, truth, reconciliation, and commemoration of the residential schools and the abuses suffered: \$125 million to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation; \$60 million to research, document, and preserve the experiences of the survivors; and \$20 million for national and community commemorative projects.

Family members who were not students will not get payments. Former students who opt out will not get any payment from the settlement. However, former students or family members who opt out will keep any right they may have to sue the Government of Canada, the Churches that joined in the settlement, or any of the defendants in the class action lawsuits, over residential schools. The opt out deadline is August 20, 2007.

Those who wish to opt out must complete, sign, and mail an Opt Out Form postmarked by August 20, 2007. The Opt Out Form is available at www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca, by calling 1-866-879-4913, or by writing to Residential Schools, Suite 3-505, 133 Weber St. North, Waterloo, Ontario N2J 3G9.

Eligible former students who stay in the settlement can get a payment from it. However, former students—and family members—who stay in the settlement will never again be able to sue the Government of Canada, the Churches who joined in the settlement, or any other defendant in the class actions, over residential schools.

Those who want to stay in the settlement and ask for a payment, may write, call 1-866-879-4913, or go to the website. Claim forms will be mailed after August 20, 2007. A toll free telephone call center at 1-866-879-4913 has been set up to handle inquiries, with a link to crisis line services. Also, a website displays the detailed notice, settlement agreement, list of recognized schools and hostels, and other information at www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca.

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/SOURCES: The Alberta Court of Queen's Bench; the Supreme Court of British Columbia; the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench; the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories; the Ontario Superior Court of Justice; the Québec Superior Court; the Supreme Court of the Yukon Territory; The Nunavut Court of Justice; and the Court of Queen's Bench for Saskatchewan.

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