

Indian Residential School Settlement Update

By Claudia Belda
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As most of you already know, the opt-out period portion of the settlement is almost done. Former residential School students have until August 20th, 2007 to let the government know if they do not want to take part in the settlement package.

So far, only a handful of people across Canada have opted out, so the settlement will be ready to be implemented soon. The forms for the Common Experience Payment and the Independent Assessment process will be available after September 19th, 2007. You will be able to access those forms online at www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca or you can contact us and we will mail you the forms.

Once you have completed your application for the Common Experience Payment, we anticipate that the money will begin flowing in late November. If you do not have your records or you have tried to get them but the government was unable to find them, don't panic. New records continue to be found and the Churches will be opening up their records. There will also be an appeal process in place to help you get evidence that you attended residential school.

As for the Independent Assessment Form, we still recommend that you get a lawyer., because it is a more complicated process and form. You can find a list of lawyers that signed on to the agreement and have experience dealing with residential school claims in the same website where you can get your forms.

Remember that relatives of people who passed away before May 30, 2005 cannot make a claim for compensation. However, if the survivor died after that date, a personal representative can still make a claim for the CEP money on behalf of that person's estate.

We have also been receiving calls from people who are concerned because they have attended schools that are not on the approved list.

There is a process whereby you can have schools added to the settlement agreement. As of this moment, there are many schools all over that are being considered. In Ontario those schools include:

Aeroland Indian Day School
Algonquin College
Burleigh Falls
Father Moss School
Stirland Lake High School

We will find out which of these schools make the cut after August 20, 2007.

In the meantime, we are continuing to provide as much information as possible to the

NAN communities. If you have any questions regarding the Residential School Settlement, please contact Claudia Belda.

Furthermore, at the beginning of this year, NALSC carried out information workshops for the Matawa Communities on this topic. We are hoping to continue to provide that service to all the NAN communities starting in October of this year.

We anticipate that we will conduct two-day workshops in all the communities explaining the settlement package components and some of the problems that may arise from the influx of money into the communities, as well as providing help for those who need it when filling out their forms and documents. We are trying to partner with local service providers in order to have not only lawyers and community legal workers there, but also support from mental health professionals, counselors, etc.

We will begin to advertise those workshops as soon as we have them finalized.