

Pamphlet # 28

Myths and facts About First Nations Peoples

1 Myths and facts

Myth: *Indians get all kinds of government money.*

Fact: Treaty People get a \$5 Treaty once per year, in cash. This is the same amount they got under the Treaties, over one hundred years ago. There has been no adjustment for inflation.

Myth: *Life is great on First Nations Reserves – it seems everyone has a new truck.*

Fact: First Nations living conditions are rated as being similar to those of countries in the so-called Third World. In 2006, CBC found that 76 First Nations were under boil water advisory. In 2003, a Winnipeg Harvest study found that while a 4-litre jug of milk cost \$3.40 in Winnipeg, costs \$12.09 in Wasagamack.

Myth: *All Aboriginal people go to University for free.*

Fact: Access to education is not free, but a treaty right. The Government of Canada claims to meet this obligation through funding to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). However, the government has capped increases to PSSSP funding far below inflation and population growth rates. Band councils have been forced to choose between forcing students to wait years to attend university or providing

smaller grants to students that do not fully cover the cost of tuition and living expenses. When adjusted for inflation, funding through Indian and Northern Affairs for Aboriginal post-secondary education, declined by \$14 million dollars between 1998 and 2002.

Myth: *The Treaties were signed a long time ago. Aboriginal already have their Reserves. Land claims are phony.*

Fact: The Treaties designated exact amounts of land for every Aboriginal person. When original reserves were formed, most short-changed the First Nations on the amount of land they were to keep. Land claims today are correcting these errors.

Myth: *First Nations are the responsibility of the federal government. Provinces have no obligations to First Nations people.*

Fact: Western provinces took jurisdiction over natural resources from the federal government in 1930, with no consultation with First Nations. They now refuse to negotiate a new sharing policy arrangement. As a result, they owe a great deal, and this will no doubt have to be settled in Court.

Myth: *Once someone becomes Chief, they are on easy street.*

Fact: Most Manitoba Chiefs earn less than \$60,000 per year. When they lose an election they do not get severance pay or pensions like non-Aboriginal politicians do. They cannot even collect E.I.A.

Myth: *Manitoba Hydro is an environmentally-friendly source of energy and benefits everyone.*

Fact: Manitoba Hydro refuses to negotiate fairly with many northern Aboriginal communities such as Cross Lake, Pukatawagan and Grand Rapids. Southern residents and businesses benefit from cheap electricity, while many First Nations continue to lose a means to sustain themselves as shorelines, hunting grounds, sacred burial sites and entire communities are lost to flooding due to hydro dams.

Myth: *Indians should get mortgages and build their own new houses.*

Fact: An individual cannot get a mortgage for on-reserve construction. Real property on reserves cannot be used as collateral for a mortgage. Could you afford to build a house without taking out a mortgage?

Myth: *First Nations people do not pay taxes.*

Fact: All Inuit, Métis, and Non-Status Indians pay taxes. Status Indians who live off-reserve pay taxes. The only Aboriginal people who are exempt from paying income tax are Status Indians who earn their income on a reserve for a company or organization located on the reserve.

Myth: *Residential Schools are history. Get over it!*

Fact: The earliest residential school was found in 1620 and last closed in 1996. Children were forcibly removed from their families, as the system was compulsory and not “Boarding School”.

Children's names were taken away and new names and numbers were given in their place. Language, culture and religion were beaten and humiliated out of them with the purpose of "killing the Indian in the child". In some schools, half of the children died from Tuberculosis, malnutrition, or other diseases. Many suffered the worst kinds of abuse at the hands of school authorities.

The education received was never intended to be on par with the mainstream, and by-the-large, survivors haven't been able to gain decent employment or take their rightful place in Canadian society.

Financial compensation is small and not easy to obtain. Most of the money has gone to lawyers and state bureaucrats. A new "healing industry" has grown out of the compensation. The survivors and their families are still devastated by a

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3. Sources

If you have any questions or concerns about the sources used on this fact sheet, or want to get involved with debunking other myths and stereotypes about First Nations People, please email us at:
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