

Replace Indian Act: AFN national chief

Last Updated: Tuesday, July 20, 2010 | 1:36 PM CST [Comments 124](#)[Recommend 48](#)

The Canadian Press



First Nations leaders stand during Tuesday's opening of the Assembly of First Nations annual meeting in Winnipeg. (CBC)

The head of the Assembly of First Nations is calling for a new relationship with the federal government and an end to the Indian Act within five years.

Shawn Atleo told the assembly's annual meeting in Winnipeg on Tuesday that federal laws governing aboriginal people have led to high rates of suicide, poverty and health problems.

Atleo said he'd like to see aboriginal people get out "from under" the Indian Act and strike a new relationship with the government on land claims, resource sharing and education.

"Is it time to boldly suggest that within two to five years, the Indian Act will no longer be part of our lives?" he said as part of the opening address of the annual assembly.

The national chief said aboriginal people are still fighting for health care, land and other things promised in treaties more than a

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century ago.

perpetuates our poverty.'

—Shawn Atleo, Assembly of First Nations

Instead of having legislation or an entire department governing aboriginal lives, Atleo said the federal government should set up agencies to ensure that those promised items are delivered.

"We will once and for all work to dismantle the unnecessary machinery of the Department of Indian Affairs, which only perpetuates our poverty," he said.

"The department then will give way to efficient entities like a ministry of First Nations-Crown relations ... and a treaty rights tribunal," he said.

He also wants native people to get more funding from non-government sources, for example, through agreements with corporations.



Drummers perform at the grand entry for the start of the Assembly of First Nations annual meeting. (CBC)

"At this assembly alone we will advance partnerships to build houses, to create jobs and to better support our students in school," Atleo said.

Star contractor consulted

AFN leaders will announce a deal with a major Canadian home builder Wednesday to address some of the severe housing shortages on reserves. The organization said it is consulting with Canadian professional contractor Mike Holmes and his company The Holmes Group.

Holmes is famous for his televised home-renovation show, *Holmes on Homes*.

Atleo, a 43-year-old businessman from British Columbia, was elected national chief of the AFN a year ago.

About 2,000 chiefs and other delegates from 633 Canadian First Nations are in Winnipeg for the annual general meeting, which is being held in the city for the first time in 16 years.

Much of the discussion will focus on how to ensure that aboriginal rights to land, resources and self-governance are respected.

"We are all too quiet. Residential schools quieted us," said Morris Swan-Shannacappo, grand chief of the Southern Chiefs Organization, which represents First Nations communities across southern Manitoba.

'Let's start making noise and demand a seat in Parliament, and demand a party in Parliament ... where our people can be viewed as equals, as original land owners.'

—*Morris Swan-Shannacappo, Southern Chiefs Organization*

"Now let's start making noise and demand a seat in Parliament, and demand a party in Parliament ... where our people can be viewed as equals, as original land owners."

The event is expected to draw 6,000 people to the city and create \$2.5 million in economic activity in Winnipeg.

In addition to the policy meetings at the Winnipeg Convention Centre

from July 20-22, there will be several cultural and entertainment events. There will be a three-day international powwow at The Forks national historic site, a spiritual summit that is expected to draw up to 4,000 people and a rodeo at the Swan Lake First Nation just west of the city in Headingley.

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[sturbs87](#) wrote: Posted 2010/07/20

at 5:02 PM ETyes its about time. i would love to see aboriginals in parliament and it would make them equals in our beatiful nation this should have been brought to the table years ago!!

- [15](#)
- [11](#)

[15Agree 11DisagreePolicy Report abuse](#)

[WWJD re Names](#) wrote: Posted 2010/07/20

at 4:56 PM ETThe land in scripture was meant to be a sacred trust between the people of the land and the earth itself, like a marriage. Some corporations have "married" toxic ponds and polluted water tables then. We don't need that kind of marriage as aboriginal people, nor to marry these corporations, any more than we needed a marriage with the HBC. An intelligent business relationship is one thing but marriage is by far to serious, unless you know them well and can trust them. Marrying the land should be that kind of relationship and we might expect honesty and honour from like minded Canadians.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2062:4-6&version=NIV>

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bury_My_Heart_at_Wounded_Knee

When I was in my late teens I read Bury My heart at Wounded Knee. I had thought that the title came from a quote from an Indian source but it was an American poet writing his poem called American names. It is well worth reading.

American Names

by Stephen Vincent Benét (1927)

the last stanza, but see the link for the poem in its entirety:

<http://poetry.about.com/library/weekly/blbenetjuly4th.htm>

"I shall not rest quiet in Montparnasse.
I shall not lie easy at Winchelsea.
You may bury my body in Sussex grass,
You may bury my tongue at Champmedy.
I shall not be there. I shall rise and pass.
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee."

The most distinguishing characteristic of the relations between our peoples were the lies and the broken promises, but with some noticeable and honourable exceptions on both sides. As Canadian Indians the picture is similar. If we were not cheated, the land was surveyed out from under us.

Delete the Indian Act but take care not to delete Canadian's rights in favour of the corporate wrongs of legal fiction.

- [0](#)
- [0](#)

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[CallmeDave](#) wrote: Posted 2010/07/20

at 4:52 PM ET I am all for this as long as both sides come to the table and deal with each other fairly and realistically.

I don't know if there is more to this story than CBC had space for, but the proposal, while interesting, seems very short on details.

- [4](#)
- [0](#)

[4 Agree 0 Disagree Policy Report abuse](#)

[USviewOnCanada](#) wrote: Posted 2010/07/20

at 4:52 PM ET The US had forced segregation. Canada has self segregation.

When people want to be equals, we can all fight for that. But when people waive the right to be equal like all else, one cannot forcefully fight for that cause.

- [4](#)
- [2](#)

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[taxmeplz](#) wrote: Posted 2010/07/20

at 4:52 PM ET Put this in your new relationship.

Stop destroying and murdering Pacific Salmon for profit.

- [5](#)
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