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## Fake flood evacuees in Manitoba about to lose benefits

CBC News Posted: Apr 20, 2012 6:04 AM CT | Last Updated: Apr 20, 2012 11:04 AM CT



The Lake St. Martin First Nation in Manitoba was evacuated by flooding that began last spring. (CBC)

The federal government is preparing to cut off Lake St. Martin First Nation members in Manitoba who have been fraudulently claiming flood evacuation benefits.

Some members of the First Nation weren't living on the reserve when it was rendered uninhabitable by flooding last spring, forcing 800 people from their homes in May, but they were claiming benefits from the government.

Many evacuees were put up in Winnipeg hotel rooms, where they remain almost a year later.

As of last month, Lake St. Martin had more than 1,300 registered flood evacuees.

In one case, a woman who had been living in Winnipeg all along moved into a hotel room just to claim flood benefits, according to an evacuee.

### Misinformation given

Lake St. Martin Chief Adrian Sinclair said a review of the First Nation's flood claims shows some of them are clearly not legitimate.

"There was a lot of misinformation given to us from the evacuees where they didn't fully come straightforward with the truth," Sinclair told CBC News on Thursday.

"We're justifying that today, correcting it, and it's going to be a long process."

Officials with the Aboriginal Affairs Department met with Sinclair on Wednesday and provided him with a list of evacuees who could not be confirmed as on-reserve residents when the flood hit, according to a department spokesman.

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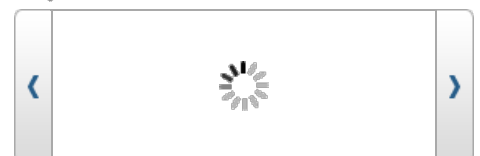
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Sinclair has until Friday to review the list. Members he cannot account for will then receive cutoff notices from the federal department.

## Members are transient, band official argues

Band officials say the department has already told them about 100 claimants are ineligible for benefits.

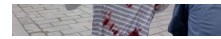
But Matthew Traverse, the First Nation's flood co-ordinator, said that's not fair, since members tend to be transient.

"We use Lake St. Martin as our home base and we move home when the job is over," Traverse said. "This is, I believe, [what] everybody does."

Fake flood claims could cost taxpayers as much as \$100,000 every month.

The First Nation will be responsible for paying back the money that was given to the fake flood evacuees, according to the Aboriginal Affairs Department.

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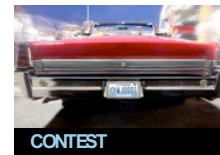
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