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# First Nation teen told not to wear 'Got Land?' shirt at school

## Controversy resolved after additional meetings with nearby First Nation

CBC News Posted: Jan 14, 2014 11:36 PM CT | Last Updated: Jan 15, 2014 9:02 AM CT



1st Nation schoolgirl told not to wear 'Got Land?' shirt 2:19

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'Got Land, Thank An Indian' Sweater Creates Controversy 11:22

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A Saskatchewan student was told not to wear a sweatshirt in school that has the words "Got Land? Thank an Indian" on it, although officials have since relented.

Tenelle Starr, 13, is in Grade 8 and goes to school in Balcarres, about 90 kilometres northeast of Regina. She is a member of the nearby Star Blanket First Nation.

"It supports our treaty and land rights ... It's important." Starr told CBC News Tuesday, as the issue over the message on her shirt reverberated at her school and online through her Facebook page.

### CBC Aboriginal

The front of her bright pink sweatshirt says "Got Land?" The back says "Thank an Indian". The message references the link between historic treaties and land for what would become Canada.

In Saskatchewan, most First Nations have treaties with the Crown dating to the late 1800s. The so-called Numbered Treaties, which cover all of Saskatchewan, are formal agreements that created a relationship between the Crown and First Nations.

Starr said she wore her new sweatshirt to school on the first day of classes after the Christmas break, with no problems.

'They told me to remove my sweater because it was offending other people.'

- Tenelle Starr

Since then, however, she was told other students had complained about the message on her sweater and was asked to change.

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"They told me to remove my sweater because it was offending other people," she said.

Starr added that one of her teachers told her that some people viewed the message as racist.

"I didn't think it was racist," she said, adding she was embarrassed by the request to change. Although she did wear a cousin's shirt on the day she was first asked to change, she wore the sweatshirt again on subsequent school days.

That led to a meeting with school officials, Starr and her mother.

After that, she was told to wear the sweater inside out.

"I didn't really want to," Starr said. "I thought, what's the point of wearing it inside out?"

Starr said she reminded officials about some of the lessons she had learned.

"We were taught Indians were on this land first," she said. "So why are people offended?"

She later learned that some people in the community had contacted the school to complain about the sweater, although it was not clear how they came to hear about the shirt.



Tenelle Starr goes to school in Balcarres, Sask., about 90 kilometres northeast of Regina. (CBC)

Tenelle said all the attention has been stressful and she can't understand how the shirt generated such controversy.

"I wear it proudly around the school," she said, even though some students have told her the message is "cheeky" and "rude".

## Controversy resolved

Additional meetings between the school and leaders of the Star Blanket First Nation led to an understanding that Star's sweatshirt, and its message, were acceptable after all.

"We're all on the same page," Sheldon Poitras, a council member from the reserve, told CBC News Tuesday night. "They're in full support of the students wearing that type of a T-shirt or sweater and they had no intention of infringing on anything."

Poitras said he believes some parents were reacting to overblown reports, from other students, about the message on Starr's sweatshirt.

"They didn't understand what was really going on, or what was meant by the shirts being worn," he said.

### A Saskatchewan girl has sparked a lot of discussion with her 'Got land? Thank an Indian' shirt. What's your reaction?

- That slogan offends me.
- It made me think.
- I applaud her wholeheartedly.
- Where can I get one?

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[Replay the Saskatoon Morning live chat about the sweatshirt.](#)



### Truck auction for Kids Hospital

2:05

A modified truck is on auction to benefit a children's hospital in Saskatchewan, Bonnie Allen reports.



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10:06

Late Night News from Saskatchewan

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Live chat: Jan. 15

Wednesday January 15, 2014

6:05  **Matt Kruchak:**  
Good morning, Saskatoon!

6:05  **Matthew Kruchak**  
@MattKruchakCBC 

Good morning, Saskatoon! It's a lovely break from the frigid weather. #yxe #bcyxe pic.twitter.com/KUCRHVglxn



With files from CBC's Joana Draghici

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2059 Comments



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**RKD5.9**

That is a TOTALLY offensive slogan !!!  
How about "get a treaty cheque? thank a taxpayer" !!!!  
Is this slogan equally as offensive????

1 hour ago  
0 Likes

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**Pierre**

It is good to see young people being active with political concerns.

1 hour ago  
0 Likes

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**Olaf Art**

Don't post anything remotely negative about this

2 hours ago

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**Big Tedd**

If you think we took the lands from the FN. check out the map of the land claims. If your house and property is on that land, go to the local FN reserve and sign over your land owner title to them. Don't wait for the government to tell you that your mortgage was in vain, and that your house belongs to the FN.

2 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**Jay-Walker**

barbfish: "I think the sweatshirt is great because it draws our attention to the idea that we settlers should ALL be grateful that Indigenous ancestors agreed to share their land with us."

It was of little value to the people living here at the time, other than of hunting; which is why they readily traded it for things that WERE of value to them; like metal tools, rifles, ammunition, snare wire, clothing and blankets, seed, livestock, fishing gear . . . .

3 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**BC**

How about we thank war veterans for our land and freedom.....

4 hours ago  
4 Likes

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**Protectprivacy**

<http://www.ombudsman.cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/> If you are as fed up with the censorship as I am.

5 hours ago  
5 Likes

Like Reply  
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**Jay-Walker**

@Protectprivacy

I'm not complaining, I'm actually 1 for 10 today!

3 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**thoughtfullythinking**

I think it is unfair for this 13 yr old to bear the brunt of the consequences of wearing this sweatshirt...she may not have understood the mixed feelings that it would bring about. That being said, as I read through the comments, I continue to notice two points that are constantly brought up:

1. If the FN did not own the land, how could they cede the land in treaties to anyone?
2. If no one owned the land, then it was free for the taking. That is the history of mankind, if you are powerful ... » more

6 hours ago  
1 Like

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**eddye63**

@thoughtfullythinking Just throwing in my 2 cents, if a 13yo decides to wear that kind of sweatshirt its because she or he believes in the cause, not because its a pretty looking shirt. Look at it good and tell me she wore it cause she totally loved the design. I don't think so, hats off to her and I support her 100%. About owning the land, well if it was the dinosaur ages I would relate to your comment, unfortunately it was not the dinosaur ages but more like the human era. They owned it, we ... » more

3 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**W\_Bill**

Tenelle has every right to express herself in a free and peaceful way. Whatever was done happened with generations before us, that we had no control over. We all need to learn to

live together and cooperate in a fair and equitable manner.

6 hours ago  
2 Likes

Like Reply  
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**JeepersCreepers**

@W\_Bill Unfortunately as long as some continue with the "them" against "us" mentality, this will never happen.

5 hours ago  
2 Likes

Like Reply  
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**Justin-Case**

@JeepersCreepers

What other civilized country in the world has two standards for its citizens based on race?

3 hours ago  
1 Like

Like Reply  
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**Duncan Girl**

I like what Tenelle Starr has done, to wear her sweatshirt to school, with the message that speaks the truth. She has a lot of courage, and a healthy attitude. She has certainly brought out many issues that native and non-native people should discuss.

I have found that Canadian history taught in the education system has been biased, and has not included First Nations side of the story. It is time that everyone learns what has happened, that First Nations people have been traumatized ... » more

7 hours ago  
2 Likes

Like Reply  
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**Justin-Case**

@Duncan Girl

Sorry Duncan Girl, the history currently being taught in school has been sanitized and made incredibly biased and untruthful by the PC police and reflects little of what actually happened 100 or 150 years ago.

4 hours ago  
2 Likes

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