

Ex-FSIN chief praises Hitler in speech

James Parker

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A respected Saskatchewan Indian leader said Friday Hitler did the right thing when he "fried" six million Jews during the Second World War.

In comments one local Jewish leader described as unfortunate, David Ahenakew, a senator with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), a former chief of the organization and a former chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), said in an interview Friday the Nazi leader was trying to clean up the world during the war.

"The Jews damn near owned all of Germany prior to the war," Ahenakew said.

"That's how Hitler came in. He was going to make damn sure that the Jews didn't take over Germany or Europe. That's why he fried six million of those guys, you know. Jews would have owned the goddamned world. And look what they're doing. They're killing people in Arab countries."

The 68-year-old Ahenakew made his remarks after giving a 45-minute, profanity-laced address to between 150 and 200 delegates attending an FSIN conference on a new Health Canada policy requiring Indians to sign a consent form before receiving certain health services.

During his wide-ranging speech, in which he complained about bigotry in Canadian society, accused the media of creating racial conflict and continually referred to non-Indian Canadians as "immigrants," Ahenakew said he lived in Germany during the late 1950s when he was with the Canadian army.

He said Germans told him the Jews started the Second World War. He said Israel and the United States are about to start a third world war, a reference to the current troubles in the Middle East.

Approached afterwards to clarify his comments on Jews and the Second World War, Ahenakew said he agreed with his German friends. When asked how he could justify the Holocaust, Ahenakew said: "How do you get rid of a disease like that, that's going to take over, that's going to dominate?"

Ahenakew said when he served in Egypt in 1964, he saw Jews kill people. When asked for details, he said mines planted by the Israeli army killed civilians.

"All I know is what the Germans told me. Of course, I believe them. I saw the Jews kill people in Egypt when I was there. The Palestinians, Arabs. I saw them (Israel) f---ing dominate everything."

Ahenakew said the Canadian army was trying to liberate the world when it fought in Europe during the Second World War, not liberate Jews. When reminded the Nazis committed genocide against a variety of ethnic and social groups, he said "exactly, they were trying to clean up the world."

"I don't support Hitler. But he cleaned up a hell of a lot of things, didn't he? You would be owned by the Jews right now the world over. Look, a small, little country (Israel) like that and everyone supports them. Who the hell owns many of the banks in the states, many of the corporations? Look at here in Canada. Izzy Asper (chair of CanWest Global, the owner of The StarPhoenix). He controls the



David Ahenakew,
former
FSIN chief

media. What the hell does that tell you? That's power. That's f---ing power."

Ahenakew, who was FSIN chief from 1968-78 and AFN chief from 1982-85, grew impatient when told non-Jews own media companies, as well.

"The hell with the Jews. I can't stand them. And that's it. I don't want to talk about them."

FSIN vice-chief Lawrence Joseph sat at the conference's head table while Ahenakew gave his speech.

After hearing a tape recording of the interview, Joseph said the conference was about government oppression, not about the war or the Jews.

"Whatever he says personally is an opinion as a war veteran. He has that right. Similar to (Saskatoon MP) Jim Pankiw (who has sent out controversial pamphlets on Indian issues); he's entitled to an opinion, negative or otherwise."

Joseph said Ahenakew is an unelected official who does not speak for the FSIN. All former FSIN chiefs are eligible to become lifetime senators should they choose with the organization.

"It depends on how it's packaged," Joseph said when asked whether he thought Ahenakew's comments would be damaging to the federation.

"If the headline is superseding a very important event about consent (forms), it's up to you to do that."

FSIN chief Perry Bellegarde, who did not attend the conference, also stressed Ahenakew was not an elected official.

"It's not an official position of anybody except Dave Ahenakew. That's where it rests. He's entitled to his opinion. We, as indigenous peoples, are fighting for our survival. We also push peaceful co-existence between our peoples and everybody else."

When asked if he feels comfortable having Ahenakew represent the FSIN at public functions, Bellegarde said, "you're the guy writing this. Don't quote him."

Roger Pavey, a retired rabbi and a university lecturer, said Ahenakew's comments are especially unfortunate because many Jewish people are supporters of First Nations people and "their claims and demands."

"It's up to them as to who they want as their leaders. It's unfortunate he has those opinions and I wish he didn't. I hope he isn't representative of the Native leadership. I don't think he is."

Ahenakew, the father of FSIN vice-chief Greg Ahenakew, is renowned in the Indian political world for his blunt talk.

In his speech, he criticized the provincial auditor for demanding better management at the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA). In his fall report released Thursday, Fred Wendel said SIGA hasn't done enough to clean up its business practices.

"They don't give a shit about you," Ahenakew said of the report.

"You (First Nations people) spent your tax money building the Regina and Moose Jaw casinos (which are owned by the province). They used your money. How much did they spend creating our casinos? Not one bloody penny. And yet they say the money is theirs right from the word go, that it's public money and we have to account to them. What kind of bullshit is that? We don't even have to talk to these suckers."

Ahenakew told the gathering he has warned provincial officials that "40 years down the road, we're

going to be taking over (because of population growth among Indian people). We're going to be the government. You (non-Indians) are going to be the Indians and we're going to be the bosses. And you (the government) better start preparing right now."

He also complained about bigotry in city schools.

"My great grandson goes to school here in Saskatoon. These goddamned immigrants -- East Indians, Pakistanis, Afghanistan, whites and so forth -- call him a dirty little Indian. He's the cleanest of the old goddamn works there. That's what I'm saying. It's starting right there, at six years old."

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