

An Address for the 2nd Annual Conference
on Care for the Caregivers of Intergenerational
Residential School Survivors

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November 25, 2002
Vancouver, British Columbia

Check Against Delivery

Thank-you for the opportunity to address you today.

I would like to use this time to provide you with a brief update on the work of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

It is also fitting that I speak about the work which lies ahead, from the point of view of the Foundation.

Before I speak of the Foundation, however, I acknowledge the Foundation staff's respect for you —

— for the caregivers, the survivors, and the descendants of survivors of the Indian Residential School System.

For many the healing has just begun, but that it has begun at all is a testimony to your resilience.

It is good to begin with a recognition of this simple yet powerful fact.

As you all know, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is now nearly 5 years old.

In this time, we have committed over 276 million dollars to 1,043 projects.

Here is a more detailed account of the work that is underway.

An interim evaluation conducted by the AHF shows the uses to which the healing fund has been put:

- Individual healing services have been provided to an estimated 90,053 participants
- Group healing (which has the whole community as a target) has been attended by 73,336 participants
- Approximately 20,399 participants received training
- 3,117 paid employees have been hired – 1,832 full-time, with about 2,743 of them Aboriginal and about 1,558 of them survivors
- In a typical month, over 21,148 volunteer hours are contributed to AHF-funded projects

The Evaluation estimates that an additional 106,036 individuals could be served if

projects had adequate time and resources.

I will be glad to give you additional information about the work of the AHF, or direct you to the appropriate staff, while I am here.

And of course, you may contact the office with questions or concerns, or visit our website — www.ahf.ca — for more information.

I will now speak of the time ahead.

Since January, 1999 we have received over 4,000 proposals asking for over 1 billion dollars.

There is a great need for healing, but as you know, time and money are running out for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Our commitment as Aboriginal people to promoting the healing needs of residential school survivors and their descendents is strong, and will remain so.

Through our remaining initiatives, the Foundation hopes to address as far as possible, with our limited resources, the healing needs of our communities.

But as I said, the time is running out. The final deadline of February 28 is only weeks away.

We will be able to fund fewer new projects, and with tighter requirements, as we take upon the renewal of a growing number of existing programs.

After March 31, 2007, there will be no further payments to projects.

That does not mean of course that the need for support will end.

The demand that existed even in 1999 was beyond the AHF's capacity to meet.

As we at the Foundation look forward, a few things are apparent.

If the Foundation is no longer to be viable in the years ahead, the time has come to begin discussions of alternative sources of support.

Many of you have begun to do this.

I am also encouraged by the degree of networking and cooperation that I see.

We at the AHF speak of partnerships and linkages. That is the reality here – you are doing just that.

Aboriginal people now have a great deal of experience and expertise in the work of healing.

Like our right to govern ourselves in the manner we see fit, like our relationship to the land and to our histories, what we have learned cannot be taken away.

Gatherings like this show that we are of one mind – that we are together committed to the well-being of our peoples.

And so I am confident that we will find solutions — perhaps involving the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, or perhaps some other arrangement.

As we at the Foundation look back, we see that we have had the honour of playing a modest role in the healing work of Aboriginal communities.

But the bulk of the work is being done at the community level.

In our communities, healing is not just work. It is of course that — but it is also an inheritance that we hope to leave for our children.

That is why we look forward to a time when the abuse of the residential school system has been meaningfully resolved, and the cycle of abuse broken —

— to a time when our families, communities and nations sustain their well-being, and the well-being of future generations.

This is the vision which guides and sustains us.

May it continue to do so.

Thank-you.