

Tobique First Nation, NB March 2011

Wulustuk Times

Wulustuk - Indigenous name for St. John River

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Table of Contents- March 2011

**NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP IN NEW BRUNSWICK? -GUESS AGAIN!
TOBIQUE AND RED BANK LARGEST LAND CLAIM IN ATLANTIC CANADA
CHEVRON FINED BILLION OVER AMAZON 'CONTAMINATION'
FEDERAL PLAN ANNOUNCED TO PROTECT GRAND CANYON FROM URANIUM MINING
YUKON FIRST NATION ADOPTING OWN JUSTICE SYSTEM
FIRST NATIONS YOUTH LEADER QUILTS
MÉTIS LAND CLAIM APPEAL REACHES TOP COURT
BRAZEAU NOT "LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE" OF FIRST NATIONS: ONTARIO CHIEFS
DEAN'S DEN:"SHOUT IT OUT"**

Wulustuk Times:

Each month we gather and publish the latest, most current and relevant native information for our readers. Proceeding with this concept, we feel that a well informed person is better able to see, relate with, and assess a situation more accurately when equipped with the right tools. Our aim is to provide you with the precise tools and the best information possible.

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NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP IN NEW BRUNSWICK? -GUESS AGAIN!

p.paul, Tobique First Nation, NB

An untimely dilemma has arisen for this generation and for other generations to come. The nature of it is, that we, one day, may be saddled with a nuclear waste dump right on our doorstep according to a CP news report released February 20, 2011.

The report indicated that Canada apparently is taking a harder and a closer look at two different locations across the country to store its nuclear waste on long-term basis. One site identified is in New Brunswick and the other in Saskatchewan where each of these provinces extended a tentative nod for hosting a nuclear waste dump in their province if preliminary discussions prove successful.

For years Canada has been actively looking for the right place and a relatively safe location to store the ever-increasing inventory of nuclear waste materials generated

across the country. Although finding a receptive location for storing the waste has been an upward battle so far, some optimism surfaced recently when New Brunswick and Saskatchewan offered possible sites for the waste.

Possibly from this time forward the issue might just be a matter of time and choice for the governments involved to come to a decision on where to build the storage site, and how exactly to deal with the budget arrangements, plus studying the related socio-economic issues involved and wrestling with the touchy political aspects and finally negotiating with the host province.

Upon completion of these preliminary steps the issue should then clear the way for establishing the waste dump in either one of the two provinces.

As an observer, it would seem that the green light is already been lit except for possibly dealing with one major hurdle that could either 'kill the deal' or bring it to a more advanced stage, that is, to begin soliciting for the site and assessing the feedback and reaction from the general public whether they approve of it in their province or not.

In delicate situations like this, the road is never crystal clear or paved with golden bricks even if the economic climate is running cool to lukewarm or the timing is questionable within the host province. To succeed in establishing a nuke waste dump anywhere in this country there will be many hurdles and obstacles to overcome while at the same time dealing with fears, uncertainties and pessimism that could rise among the people affected.

The long term effects of establishing such a facility can literally shake the system to the core whereby the promoters and the government agencies involved can literally be forced into calling a 'quick-fix' general election focused mainly on the subject and also to achieve a resolution and validation on it. This will be an interesting area to watch during the next few months.

However, because of the long-term consequences involved, or the endless lethal affects that can emerge from nuclear waste sites, the land and everything around them could be subject to permanent damage, or be rendered unfit, unsafe or unusable for any other purpose than as a nuclear waste dump in perpetuity. This too stands a little scrutiny.

A nuclear waste dump is a permanent fixture anywhere, anytime, no matter how safe and secure it is built and operated. Additionally, it could possibly create a very severe ongoing discord in the area affected or a major environmental problem in the event of an accident or some freak mishap which could affect the surrounding areas and populations, and could disable the land permanently where it is situated.

Remember also New Brunswick being a close friend and ally to the state of Maine might draw fire internationally depending on where the dump site is eventually located.

Nuclear waste can never be rendered inert, static or dormant, nor can it ever be safe for anyone to be near it if they hoped for a long and healthy life. The lethal radiation emitted from these sites can continue 'ticking away' their deadly rays, 24/7, for untold

centuries, or reportedly for as long as 200,000 years as it winds down through its half-life existence, which in human terms in 'time-accounting' represents a gateway to a 'forever' moratorium.

The people of New Brunswick cannot be left out of this sensitive scenario in any way, shape or form. They have to become wholly and totally involved from day one and be present right to the end. They must be given the chance to bid their 'yeas' or 'nays' on the question one day, which in effect would allow the concerned parties or committed agencies to, 1) move ahead with their plan, or, 2) to cease operations altogether on this horrific proposition.

Not to overlook the fact that New Brunswick is a relatively small province in proportion and space to host such a controversial facility that could easily effect large parts of the province and would have wide, sweeping repercussions on all forms of life from one end to the other.

The other willing province, Saskatchewan, on the other hand, is vast in comparison, roughly ten times the size of New Brunswick with wide open spaces abound everywhere, that could undoubtedly better accommodate a waste facility on safer grounds in the long run. Must a tiny province like New Brunswick be subject forever to a hellish dredge like this? It will ultimately be up to each New Brunswicker in the end to answer this question.

One thing must be understood loud and clear, that at the end of the day, the one golden rule that must never be forgotten is, that all bodies and governments involved must heed, respect, respond and abide by the wishes of the people, their constituents on this monumental question, lest they be held liable and responsible for any fallout that results, and/or otherwise be forced to call a special general election just on this issue alone, or be ready to concede or experience a much briefer tenure in office.

Nid layig!

TOBIQUE AND RED BANK LARGEST LAND CLAIMS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Telegraph-Journal

Negotiations: Two New Brunswick Native reserves expected to win tens of millions of dollars in land settlements

Two native reserves in New Brunswick are negotiating land claims with Ottawa that are expected to result in the largest settlements ever paid out to First Nations in Atlantic Canada, the Telegraph-Journal has learned.

Metepenagiag First Nation, a small Mi'kmaq community west of Miramichi, is nearing a settlement with the federal government for compensation for 1,335 hectares of land surrendered in 1895.

And Tobique First Nation, a Maliseet community near Perth-Andover, has been negotiating since 2008 for compensation for 4,856 hectares below the Tobique River surrendered in 1892.

It's unknown how long the Tobique land claim may take to settle.

Together, the Metepenagiag and Tobique settlements are likely to exceed the amount of compensation the federal government has paid out over nearly three decades of native land claim settlements in New Brunswick, which is roughly \$20 million to date.

"This is not an overnight process, but we are getting very close to reaching an agreement and settling it," said T.J. Burke, the lawyer negotiating the deal for Metepenagiag First Nation.

Stewart Paul, Tobique First Nation chief, didn't respond to requests for an interview about the land claim his community is negotiating.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs declined to provide any official for an interview on the Metepenagiag and Tobique land claims. In an emailed statement to the newspaper, a department official said it is too early to comment on the compensation for the claims or when they may be settled.

"These are important claims for the First Nations and represent surrenders of significant acreage...It is difficult to predict time lines and it is premature to speculate on the possible range and nature of the compensation finally negotiated," spokeswoman Margot Geduld wrote in the email.

Burke said the parcel of property Metepenagiag First Nation is seeking compensation for is 1,335 hectares of land alongside the existing reserve that had been specifically set aside for the community (formerly Red Bank First Nation).

The claim re-examines the terms and conditions of the 1895 surrender of that land.

Burke, who is a First Nations band member and a former New Brunswick attorney general, said land claims are often sparked by the oral history surrounding the boundaries of aboriginal communities. To prove a claim, a band often has to hire researchers and experts who can provide more detail about the history of the reserve and its boundaries.

"As non-native settlers started moving into the areas, they would go to see the (Indian) agents for various parcels of property or representatives of the government...In some cases, the boundaries were redrawn by the agents to give parcels of land to non-native settlers in the area," he said. "They would physically carve out a part of the reserve."

In the case of Metepenagiag, he said, the people "have so much information about that land. They know that land the best.

"You have to take that information from the elders, from the councillors, from their leadership and utilize that information with the experts to develop a claim for land."

After a claim is filed with the federal government, Ottawa has up to three years to decide whether a claim is substantiated. Once negotiations begin, a land claim can take years to settle.

Burke said the Metepenagiag claim has been in the works for at least 11 years.

"We're negotiating the value, loss of use and current market value of 3,300 acres of property," he said.

Burke said he can't say for certain what the settlement amount is going to be, but based on previous settlements for smaller parcels of land, it's expected there will be a large payout attached to the Metepenagiag land claim.

"There's been speculation that the claim is going to be in the tens of millions of dollars, but I can't say for certain what the claim is going to be worth at the end of the day," he said.

The first land claim in New Brunswick was settled back in 1983 when Oromocto First Nation was paid \$2.55 million for the improper surrender of 29 hectares at Oromocto Point for use by Canadian Forces Base Gagetown in 1953.

Since that first settlement, 29 other land claims have been initiated in New Brunswick. Nine of those have been settled and six are still in various stages of progress. The remaining 15 have either been closed, resolved or there was no federal government obligation for compensation found.

Of the six still unresolved, three are still being assessed by Ottawa and three are in negotiations for a settlement, including Metepenagiag, Tobique and Eel Ground, a small native community just west of Miramichi that's seeking compensation associated with the 1946 surrender of land.

"Not all of them are for millions of dollars," Patrick Francis, deputy minister for New Brunswick's aboriginal affairs secretariat, said of all the claims settled or still outstanding for the province.

"Some of them are for small parcels of land that have been misappropriated or that people have squatted on."

While land claims are most often negotiated between First Nations and the federal government, provincial governments can get involved, depending on the nature of the land claim.

In New Brunswick, the provincial government hasn't played a major role in negotiating the claims that are in progress. The province sometimes provides information about land that is the subject of a claim, including titles, the value of land and taxation issues.

Francis, who grew up on Tobique First Nation, said land claim settlements have the potential of lifting up aboriginal communities, which often struggle with high unemployment rates, poverty and dilapidated housing.

Land claim compensation money can be used as a "tool for economic development," he said, if the funds are invested in land where businesses can be developed.

"Usually the land claims are looked as an opportunity, a stimulus," he said.

The federal government will not return property that is now being occupied by non-native settlers, so Ottawa gives First Nations money to cover the loss of use and the current market value. The government provides reserves the opportunity to purchase 1.5 acres of property for every acre lost anywhere in Atlantic Canada through the department's "additions to reserves process." Once purchased, it can be designated reserve land.

Some First Nations have bought land in urban centres to develop new aboriginal businesses and to provide a way into the mainstream job market for First Nation people.

Francis said land claim settlements also provide closure for First Nation people and are a way of "righting a wrong."

"They want what was originally granted to them through the establishment of a First Nation only to be able to have something to pass on to their family and say, 'Look, at least we still have this'," he said.

Canada first established a process for handling land claims through negotiation in 1973.

This process allows aboriginal people to receive full recognition of their rights under historical treaties or as the original inhabitants of Canada.

These treaties date back to the 18th century when the British Crown entered into treaties to encourage peaceful relations between aboriginals and European settlers. They signed treaties to define the respective rights of aboriginal people and governments to use and benefit from lands that aboriginals had traditionally occupied.

In what is now New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the British made a series of "peace and friendship" treaties with the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet tribes between 1725 and 1779.

The British Royal Proclamation of 1763 set aside an unspecified area of what is now Canada for aboriginal people. The proclamation forbade any unauthorized purchase or possession of those lands by non-native settlers.

In the roughly 250 years that followed, aboriginal communities lost control over some of the lands and rights they were originally promised. Land claim settlements aim to provide compensation for that loss.

The federal government has settled 343 specific land claims across Canada for a total compensation of roughly \$2.6 billion, according to the Indian and Northern Affairs website.

An additional 529 specific claims are still in the works.

What are they? A negotiation process established by the federal government in 1973 to recognize aboriginal rights associated with historic treaties, the way it managed First Nation funds or assets, such as reserve land. Land claims can re-establish First Nations rights in areas where there were no treaties.

Two types: Specific claims deal with past grievances related to Canada's obligations under historic treaties; comprehensive claims arise in areas where there are not historic treaties that set out aboriginal rights. All New Brunswick claims have been specific in nature.

Who's involved? First Nations negotiate primarily with Ottawa but provincial and/or territorial governments can also be involved.

How specific claims begin: A First Nation files a claim with the federal government in Ottawa with the help of historical researchers and a lawyer.

What happens next? The federal government then assesses the facts of the claim to determine whether it has a legal obligation to the First Nation. Those claims that are validated are then negotiated for settlement.

How long does it take? Ottawa has up to three years to decide whether a claim is validated for negotiation - a process that can take years with the help of researchers, historians and other experts. If a claim isn't referred for negotiation, the First Nation can bring it to the Specific Claims Tribunal for review.

How are they settled? A settlement is reached when all parties agree. A First Nation community holds a referendum so that band members can vote whether to accept the settlement.

CHEVRON FINED \$BILLION OVER AMAZON 'CONTAMINATION'

Ecuadorian judge finds oil giant responsible for widespread damage to Amazon basin caused by drilling

Dominic Rushe New York

An Ecuadorian judge has ruled that Chevron was responsible for widespread contamination of the country's Amazon basin and fined the company \$8 billion. The oil firm blasted the ruling as a "fraud".

Pablo Fajardo, the plaintiffs' lawyer, told Associated Press the judgment at the provincial court of justice of Sucumbíos in Lago Agrio was "a great step that we have made towards the crystallization of justice", but the fine was too small and he may appeal.

The epic and bitterly fought lawsuit over the "Amazon Chernobyl" has been going on for

18 years. It was brought on behalf of 30,000 people whose health and environment were allegedly damaged by chemical-laden waste water dumped by Texaco's operations from 1972 to 1990. Chevron bought Texaco in 2001.

The lawsuit alleges that Chevron should be held responsible for \$27bn in damages from illness, deaths and economic loss suffered by the Amazon residents. The case was the subject of 2009's award-winning documentary *Crude* and has attracted celebrity supporters including Sting, Trudie Styler and Daryl Hannah.

The case goes back to the 1970s when Texaco partnered the government oil company PetroEcuador to drill wells. Texaco ended its Ecuadorian operations in the 1990s and was assigned responsibility for cleaning up sites proportional to its share in the project. The company spent \$40m on the clean-up and argues that it was legally released from further claims or liabilities. But the suit claims the clean-up failed to address faulty drilling practices by Texaco that caused damage to wide areas of jungle and harmed indigenous people.

The case has triggered a slew of related legal action in the US and international courts and has led to an arbitration case in The Hague. This month Chevron lawyers sued a group of trial lawyers and consultants, claiming they were organizing a campaign to rig the Ecuadorian court system in a bid to win billions in the pollution claim.

Last week an international arbitration panel in The Hague ordered Ecuador to "take all measures at its disposal to suspend or cause to be suspended the enforcement or recognition within and without Ecuador of any judgment" against Chevron in the case. Chevron had claimed that Ecuador was violating the terms of a 1997 trade pact with the US.

A 2009 US state department report entitled *Investment Climate Statement for Ecuador* stated: "Systemic weakness and susceptibility to political or economic pressures in the rule of law constitute the most important problem faced by US companies investing in or trading with Ecuador." The report claimed "corruption is a serious problem in Ecuador," and that "the courts are often susceptible to outside pressure and bribes".

Chevron said the judgment was "illegitimate and unenforceable", adding: "It is the product of fraud and is contrary to the legitimate scientific evidence. Chevron will appeal against this decision in Ecuador and intends to see that justice prevails.

"United States and international tribunals already have taken steps to bar enforcement of the Ecuadorian ruling. Chevron does not believe that today's judgment is enforceable in any court that observes the rule of law. Chevron intends to see that the perpetrators of this fraud are held accountable for their misconduct."

According to a report by Sweden's Umeå International School of Public Health more than 30bn gallons of toxic wastes and crude oil had been discharged into the land and waterways of Ecuador's Amazon basin - or "Oriente". This compares to the 10.8m gallons spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster in 1989 in Alaska or 205m gallons spilt in BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster. The report claims there are at least two big oil spills per week in the area.

FEDERAL PLAN ANNOUNCED TO PROTECT GRAND CANYON FROM URANIUM MINING

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. — The Obama administration today announced a draft plan to protect 1 million acres of public land around Grand Canyon National Park from new uranium mining. Conservationists and tribal leaders hailed the move, citing thousands of new mining claims threatening Grand Canyon's watersheds, fragile seeps and springs, American Indian sacred sites, critical wildlife habitat and the region's tourism-based economy.

"Tourism, not mining, is the mainstay of our region's economy," said Roger Clark with the Grand Canyon Trust. "BLM is grossly inflating revenue projections for uranium mining and fails to reveal that most revenues go to Utah or overseas—not Arizona. Uranium mining imposes long-term health risks on local communities and is costing federal taxpayers billions of dollars to clean the mess from its last boom. We simply cannot afford another round of this deadly legacy."

On July 21, 2009, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar issued a two-year "segregation order" banning new mining claims across 1 million acres of public lands around the world-famous national park. Today's draft environmental impact statement proposes a 20-year "mineral withdrawal" across the same 1 million-acre area, banning new claims and blocking new mining on existing, unproven claims.

"This is an important step in protecting the people, the water and the wildlife of the greater Grand Canyon area," said Sandy Bahr, chapter director of the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon Chapter. "Now all those who support protecting Grand Canyon — tribal leaders, local communities, water districts, conservationists — must work to make sure the final decision for these lands is as protective as possible."

Uranium pollution already plagues the Grand Canyon region. Proposals for new mining have prompted protests, litigation and proposed legislation. Scientists, tribal and local governments and businesses have voiced opposition. Dozens of new mines threaten to industrialize iconic and regionally sacred wild lands, destroy wildlife habitat and permanently pollute or deplete aquifers feeding Grand Canyon's biologically rich springs.

"The world would never forgive the permanent pollution of Grand Canyon's precious aquifers and springs," said Taylor McKinnon, public lands campaigns director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The only sure way to prevent pollution of the Grand Canyon is to prevent uranium mining."

The release of the draft plan will start a 45-day public comment period. Public meetings are slated for early March in Arizona and Utah. A final decision on the proposed protections is expected this summer.

YUKON FIRST NATION ADOPTING OWN JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Teslin Tlingit Council in southern Yukon has signed a historic agreement to run its own justice system, allowing the self-governing First Nation to enact its own laws and set up its own court. Teslin Tlingit Chief Peter Johnston signed the Administration of Justice Agreement with federal Indian and Northern Affairs Minister John Duncan and Yukon Premier Dennis Fentie at a ceremony Monday in Teslin.

"The Teslin Tlingit Council now has the legislative, executive and judicial powers over its self-government jurisdictions, enabling us to further enshrine the Tlingit way of life into everything we do," Johnston said in a release.

"We look forward to working with Canada, Yukon and our citizens to continue advancing our social, economic and constitutional visions."

Peacemaker court to be created The agreement allows the First Nation to enact its own laws in a variety of areas, including wildlife protection, control of the First Nation's settlement land, controlling overcrowding of homes, local zoning and planning, adoption, the solemnization of marriages and wills and inheritances, according to the release. The First Nation will establish a "peacemaker court" to prosecute violations of its legislation, impose penalties and resolve disputes based on traditional Teslin Tlingit processes.

As well, the First Nation will set up its own corrections programs and services for those who receive sentences from the peacemaker court.

The Teslin Tlingit will not take over criminal law cases or matters under federal jurisdiction, such as national security, according to federal officials.

Agreement sets precedent in Yukon Teslin is located about 150 kilometres southeast of Whitehorse, on the shores of Teslin Lake near the Yukon-British Columbia border. The Teslin Tlingit Council's traditional territory spans about 1,100 square kilometres. The Teslin Tlingit becomes the first among Yukon's 11 self-governing First Nations to sign a justice agreement with the territorial and federal governments.

As part of the Umbrella Final Agreement, which was signed by the federal, Yukon and First Nation governments in 1993, the parties have committed to reaching justice agreements with each self-governing First Nation. The Teslin Tlingit's justice system will not only apply to its own citizens — regardless of where they are in Yukon — but also to non-citizens who are visiting or residing on Teslin Tlingit traditional lands.

First Nation to have greater say The agreement calls for startup funds of \$252,000, as well as continuing implementation funding of \$395,000 a year. Tlingit elders who spoke at Monday's signing ceremony said the First Nation's younger people will have to pay much more respect to their elders and to the community, now that the First Nation will have a greater say over how people will be sentenced under the new legislation.

The First Nation has already drafted legislation governing the peacemaker court and local corrections procedures. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply

to the peacemaker court, according to federal officials.

The Teslin Tlingit Council's new legislation is expected to come into effect in the next six months.

FIRST NATIONS YOUTH LEADER QUILTS

The StarPhoenix

One of the province's young First Nations leaders has left her position on the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) youth council over what she sees as a lack of transparency within the national aboriginal youth organization.

"I couldn't in good conscience be associated with an organization that doesn't disclose individual council members travel and per diems," said Jarita Greyeyes, the female youth representative of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN).

Greyeyes, who is from the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, holds a master's degree in indigenous governance from the University of Victoria. She was elected as FSIN youth representative last year. The position automatically gives her a spot on the AFN national youth council, which is made up of 20 regional representatives from across the country. Involvement in the national body is voluntary and unpaid, but members can travel frequently to meetings if they have the time. Accommodation and travel costs are reimbursed.

Last year Greyeyes visited Ottawa twice and attended a recent meeting in Vancouver, which was funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and held at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in downtown Vancouver.

Greyeyes believes her peers across the country should provide public records and documentation of travel expenses and per diems when attending these meetings, and at the meeting on Feb. 13 in Vancouver tabled a motion that would require members release audited financial statements.

"To me it seemed very straightforward," she said.

The motion resolved to require the youth council to disclose all travel and per diem expenses, a list of meetings and a narrative report by each youth council member. The motion also resolved to make this report available at the annual general assembly and online at the National Youth Council website. It also encouraged council members to provide this information to regional youth councils and/or regional AFN offices.

Seven youth council members voted in favour of the motion and nine abstained, meaning the motion passed. Despite the lack of outright opposition, Greyeyes believes the abstentions demonstrated a lack of support for her motion and she promptly resigned from the council.

"I really felt that it was a signal to me that the youth council wasn't committed to the same values that I was," she said. "It's not a social club. It's certainly not about going on

trips, staying in hotels. It's about doing work for the people of Saskatchewan."

She said the lack of support for her motion tells her her time and energy is better spent doing work at home in the province.

"Actions speak louder than words. You can say in spirit you support transparency and accountability but if you aren't willing to have a line item with your name and your travel and per diems as well as a list of meetings attended and a narrative report, I would say you don't truly support the intent of the motion," said Greyeyes.

Tim Catchway, who sits on the AFN youth council and represents Manitoba, seconded Greyeyes' motion and said he has no problem letting the people he represents know how much it costs to carry out work for the council.

In the past fiscal year, Catchway travelled five times for AFN youth meetings, including trips to Quebec City, Ottawa, Vancouver and twice to Winnipeg.

He said he takes his role seriously and realizes how fortunate he is to travel across the country on this work.

"I don't take that job lightly. I'm there advocating on behalf of my region every chance I can get," he said. "Young people deserve to know what I'm doing on their behalf."

He said he understands how Greyeyes perceived the abstentions as a lack of support for the motion.

"I'm definitely sad that she's decided to no longer represent Saskatchewan," said Catchway. "She's a very powerful voice on the council."

Calls to the AFN national office as well as the offices of the youth council's co-chairs were not returned. Attempts to contact both female and male co-chairs of the AFN youth council by email were also unsuccessful.

The AFN receives most of its operating funds from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The youth council provides insight to the AFN secretariat and works on various youth-related initiatives to address areas such as employment, gang violence, sexual health and education.

MÉTIS LAND CLAIM APPEAL REACHES TOP COURT

The Canadian Press

Manitoba federation seeking billions for claim that includes much of Winnipeg

The Supreme Court of Canada will hear an appeal involving a massive Métis land claim.

The high court has granted the Manitoba Métis Federation leave to appeal lower court rulings that struck down a claim potentially worth billions of dollars.

The federation says the Métis were cheated out of land, including present-day Winnipeg, promised to them after Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870.

Some 5,600 square kilometres of land was distributed, but the Métis say the process took too long, some prime land was gobbled up by settlers and Métis were pressured to sell their land after receiving it.

Lower courts have ruled that the Métis lawsuit was filed too long after the land transaction, and have rejected the idea that the federal government failed to live up to its side of the agreement.

Federation president David Chartrand says the group doesn't want land now, but instead seeks compensation that could total billions of dollars.

BRAZEAU NOT “LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE” OF FIRST NATIONS: ONTARIO CHIEFS

National News

OTTAWA- An organization representing Ontario First Nations chiefs has written all MPs and Senators asking them to no longer consider Conservative Senator Patrick Brazeau as a “legitimate representative” of First Nations.

The Feb. 8 Chiefs of Ontario letter signed by nine chiefs representing tribal councils and band councils stated that identifying Brazeau as a representative of “the Indigenous Peoples in Ontario” violated the human rights of First Nations in Ontario.

“Senator Brazeau was never elected to lead or to represent a First Nation in Canada. He has no authority to speak to our issues. Such authority can only come from our people,” the letter stated.”We are therefore deeply concerned with the misperception that Senator Brazeau has any authority, or right, to speak to our issues.”

The letter also stated that while the Conservatives had appointed Brazeau to the Senate, the government had no ability to grant him the authority to speak for First Nations people.

“We have never given up our right to govern ourselves nor to determine our own citizenship ... and while it is the current Conservative government’s prerogative to appoint anyone they wish...we simply ask that these choices do not effectively violate our rights,” the letter stated.

Under international law and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recently endorsed by Canada, Indigenous peoples have a right to maintain their own “distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions...and our right to choose our own representatives,” the letter stated.

Brazeau dismissed the letter as “petty politics” and said it stemmed from a testy exchange with Ontario First Nations leaders during their appearance before a Senate

committee studying a bill on safe drinking water.

Brazeau said it appeared to be another example of First Nations chiefs trying to stamp out their critics.

“If they are trying to do that with certain Parliamentarians, just imagine what they are trying to do to grassroots people across the country,” said Brazeau, who is Algonquin. “As a First Nations person, I am ashamed of these types of letters.”

Brazeau has questioned the necessity of government funded First Nations organization and has fashioned himself as a defender of “grassroots” people against the First Nations political class.

The letter was signed by Assembly of First Nations regional Chief Angus Toulouse, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians Grand Chief Randall Phillips, Grand Council Treaty 3 Ojichidaakwe Diane Kelly, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy, Independent First Nations Chief Joseph Gilbert, Mushkegowuk Tribal Council Grand Chief Stan Louttit and Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee.

DEAN'S DEN:"SHOUT IT OUT"

The fountainhead of what's to come
A yardstick for the year
A solstitial occasion
The "why and wherefore" - when it's here,
An exhilarative provocation
The straw that breaks ole winter's back
Equinoctial anabasis
Aestival rhythm back on track,
Supporting cast and repertoire
The ovum of a summer's sun
The robin's antecedent
Hibernal remnants all but done,
So - let's take time to celebrate
Capriole and clap all day
Shout it out across the nation
Spring is on the way!
--D.C. Butterfield,

Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you can be successful or be happy.