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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 the precise tools and the best information possible.

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WHAT IS AN INDIAN?

By Nogeekadoonkut

What is an Indian? What is a status Indian? What is a non-status Indian? What is an off-reserve Indian? What is an Indian in United States? What is an Indian in Canada? If the Canadian and American borders cut through Indian territory, is the Indian the same person in each place? What is an Indian in India? What is a C-31 Indian? If an Indian woman in Canada marries an Indian man in United States, is she still an Indian? If an Indian woman in Canada marries a man from India, is she still an Indian? How much white DNA in the blood quantum before an Indian is no longer an Indian? If Indian parents adopt a white child, is that child an Indian? If an Indian cannot speak his mother tongue, is he still an Indian? Is aboriginal and Indian the same? Are Métis and Inuit people Indians?

In Canada, the federal government that governs on behalf of the Queen over all the nation, decides what Indians are via the interpretation of the Indian Act. This is because the British Crown had established one single nation to cover this immense territory called Canada. Prior

to there being a federal government, and an Indian Act, there was not just one nation here. Before Canada and United States existed there were over 1,000 nations of First Peoples living here. Each nation was different with different customs than the others. The First Peoples' nations living in the flat and wide open plains lived differently than those in the forests of the interior lands, and differently too than those along the coastal regions. They dressed different, they spoke different, and their customs were different. Some were more militant and aggressive and some were more peaceful and tolerant. Some were hunters and gatherers and some practiced agriculture, growing crops of maize, beans, squash, and pumpkins. Some did both. Along the coasts and in the streams and lakes, some relied on fishing. Their modes of travel differed depending on their region. The southern peoples in areas that seldom saw snow didn't have the art of crafting snowshoes. In the land of birch trees the people there made canoes and wigwams from birch bark as well as other items and utensils. These First Nations each governed themselves independently in their own way. Sometimes, for certain reasons, most often for defense, they grouped together to form federations of five or six nations in a region.

In Canada, under the Indian Act, all First Peoples, regardless of their ancestral nation, were classified generically as "Indians", and all were treated as if a species of wild animals and herded into reserves for domestication. Then they were placed in "residential schools" to strip them of their culture and be taught the white man's ways, language and customs, and to erase their own heritage and assimilate them into the white society. Books and movies invented the Indian stereotype, the imaginary Indian who rode a horse, and always had feathers in his hair, whooping and yelling, carrying a spear, bow and arrows, hatchet, and of course a long knife for scalping. The chiefs always had massive headdresses of feathers. Some of these generic representations were borrowed from specific western nations, and some were purely fictitious.

The initial Indian Act of 1876 remained basically unchanged for over one hundred years until 1985. The old act used a patrilineal rule to determine who was eligible for Indian "status." Eligible Indians' names were put in the Indian Register maintained by Indian Affairs. If the father was a Status Indian, the children were Status Indians. If the father was either white or non-status, the children were labeled as white or non-status. Mothers could not confer status to their children. A Status Indian man who married a non-status woman, did not lose his status, and also he conferred it to his non-Indian wife as well. If a Status Indian woman married a non-status man, she lost her status and could not live on the reserve. Non-Status Indians had no rights under the Indian Act and could not receive any benefits primarily in regards to social services.

Under Bill C-31 which was passed on June 28, 1985 the Indian Act attempted to do away with some of these unreasonable rules. However, it added a new rule that after two consecutive generations of inter-marriage with persons who do not have Indian status, the third generation no longer has Indian status. Eventually this would eliminate Indians completely (by definition). Also there is much confusion around rights of non-Status, Status Indians and Metis, and even more confusion about how to access the services in the government bureaucracy.

In the State of Maine, according to statutory laws there is the Houlton "Band", the Passamaquoddy "Tribe", and the Penobscot "Nation." What is the difference between band, tribe and nation? Is a band or tribe accountable to State, or to Federal laws? This is a battle that has continued to be fought for a century and more. There are Federal common laws, tribal laws, sovereign political entities, inherent sovereign rights, tribal employment rules, grievances, plaintiffs, absent abrogation, criminal, juvenile, civil and domestic matters, intramural matters, petitions for certiorari, citations, litigations, relitigations, suits, lower courts, higher courts, courts of appeals, the Indian Act, the Indian Claims Settlement Act, the State

Implementing Act, and of course all the canons of statutory construction that must be used when interpreting Acts. Give your head a shake!!

In the United States, to be a North American Indian you must have a status card plus a letter from the band attesting to at least 50% blood quantum and your parents identified.

How and why did it come to be so complex? The definition of Indian in government is in reality about gaining control of a peoples, about gradually vanquishing many nations and peoples through assimilation (a form of genocide), and about money.

In the 500 years the Euro-Christians have been coming here, they have never asked the First Peoples what the rights were of the Euro-Christian tourists while visiting in this land. They didn't get stopped for IDs at the territorial borders of all the nations that they crossed through in Great Turtle Island. That wasn't the way of these people. Instead the Euro-Christians enforced their rights on these "Indians" and then decided what remaining rights they would permit these First Peoples to have as specified in treaties and legislation.

In this eastern part of Turtle Island, in the land of the dawn, which was first contacted by the French colonists, many of them were quick to marry Indians and even adopt some of their customs. Thus the first contamination of Indian DNA began. Some French barons, after marrying Indian women, became renowned Indian leaders as did their "half-breed" sons (Métis). Jean-Vincent d'Abbadie de Saint-Castin, was one such man who married several of Grand Chief Madockawando's daughters, a Penobscot Chief. It was Saint-Castin's son, Francois Xavier, a Métis, who signed the 1725 treaty with the white Europeans on behalf of the "St. John River" Indians. A half-white, half-Penobscot person was signing on behalf of the Wolastoqiyik. And so the complexity began.

Ancient Haplotype Markers

In our modern age of high technology anthropologists have done DNA analysis to trace genetic ancestry of people who claim to have Native American blood in their veins. They have discovered that unique "haplotypes markers" are found in 95% of people with Indian ancestry. These haplotypes can be traced back to 6 women who lived about 18,000 to 20,000 years ago. White people do not have these same genes.

But does having one of these haplotype genetic markers make someone an Indian? Do genes alone make an Indian? Whose definition and criteria determines who are Indians and who are not? Here in Wolastoq land, the term skigin (pronounced skee-jin or skee-chin) is used to refer to an aboriginal or a human of their own kind. For those skigins who live in the lands along the Wolastoq River, they are the Wolastoqiyik nation. For those living along the Penobscot River in Maine, they are the Penawahpskewie nation. These First Peoples traditionally refer to themselves by the rivers where they live, hunt and fish. Rivers are their lives. These are nations of peoples living together as a cultural unit in each locality.

So in the end, who has the right to discern or determine who is an Indian? Is it the Queen, the Minister of Indian Affairs, the Judge in provincial court, or federal court, or the Supreme Court? Is it Webster or Oxford dictionaries, or the Encyclopedia Britannica? Would it be beyond all possible comprehension to let Indians decide who they are? Might it confound and paralyze the entire legal and bureaucratic systems if Indians defined the criteria for identifying themselves? For an Indian's definition is not based on imperialistic power, control and materialistic greed.

What different criteria would be addressed under the guidance of Native eye, conscience, interest and traditional perspective, if Indians established the criteria? A new direction such as this would spawn a full spectrum of democracy and self-determination for First Nations never seen before.

An Indian is much more than a legal definition to determine rights and privileges under the government's Indian Act, or the scientific evidence from a person's genetic DNA. An Indian is

known by the spirit that manifests itself from within his/her mind and heart. An Indian is about the innate spiritual relationship and sacred intrinsic tie with the Great Spirit through the Earth Mother.

Here are a few criteria that Indians might use to identify themselves in Wolastokiyik land.

- an Indian honours the spirits of his/her ancestors, keeping their ways. He/she believes we are our ancestors and they are us. They were here, and they are here. Their voices still speak.
- an Indian knows that his/her ancestors first named the rivers, lakes, islands, mountains and other special places in Wolastoq land, and many of those names still exist today, keeping the spirits of our ancestors with us.
- an Indian practices honesty and trustworthiness, just as his/her ancestors did with the first colonists. His/her word is good.
- an Indian regards the earth as his/her spiritual Mother as created by the Great Spirit. The animals and plants are his relations as much as his own people.
- an Indian hears the heartbeat of the Earth Mother in a drum.
- an Indian sees the power of balance and harmony in an eagle feather.
- an Indian feels peace and healing in the presence of sweet grass, and knows that the smoke from burning sweet grass purifies, and it carries his/her prayers to the Great Spirit.
- an Indian believes that whatever the Earth Mother provides is a gift, for which he/she gives thanks to the Great Spirit every day.
- an Indian takes no more from the Earth Mother than he/she needs, and does not waste it.
- an Indian gives back to Mother Earth whenever he/she takes from her.
- an Indian never destroys wantonly for the sake of greed.
- an Indian is willing to share whatever he/she has with all his/her relations.
- an Indian is rich in wisdom, as taught by the Great Spirit through creation.
- an Indian is keenly aware that all of life is a circle, and this knowledge guides his/her decisions each day.
- an Indian looks after the well being of his/her mind and body for the sake of his/her relations, now and for the Seven Generations.
- an Indian will provide for his/her children and for the Seven Generations by respecting Mother Earth and teaching them to be good stewards.
- an Indian knows that together with all his/her relations, there is an inherent right in the order of creation as given by the Great Spirit for all peoples to govern themselves.
- an Indian is someone who looks at the butchered forests and polluted waters, and weeps.
- an Indian is someone who sees barren ground in the medicinal storehouse of the Earth Mother, and is angered.
- an Indian is someone who will patiently and skillfully guide the perpetrators to see the wrong of their actions. This is the peaceful way of an Indian.

It is not important that one meets all these criteria to be an Indian, but if in your heart you strive towards them, you are an Indian regardless of the purity of your genetics or the qualification required by government definitions.

.. All my relations, Nugeekadoonkut

ST MARY'S FIRST NATION WANTS 180-YR- OLD CANOE TO STAY IN NB

CBC News

One of world's oldest birchbark canoes will be at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton until Aug. 31. (CBC)

A Fredericton-area First Nations chief is hoping to find a way to keep what is believed to be one of the world's oldest birchbark canoes in New Brunswick.

The 180-year-old Akwiten grandfather canoe will be staying at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery until Aug. 31, as the University of Ireland searches for a permanent Canadian home for the canoe.

Candace Paul, chief of the St. Mary's First Nation, said she wants to create a museum or centre that would display Maliseet history and culture for future generations. This canoe, which has a lot of significance to the Maliseet, would be a great start, she said.

"We are Wolastoqiyik people, and that means people of the river," Paul said. "So the canoe is the symbol of who we are and it represents us as people."

Terry Graff, the art gallery's curator, said everyone at the provincial art gallery is excited to be part of such an important occasion of bringing the canoe to the area.

"When the canoe arrived at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, there was a ceremony, a smudging ceremony, there was drumming," Graff said. "It was just an important historic event. It meant that the canoe was finally coming home to the Maliseet people."

The University of Ireland, which was home to the canoe for many years, is deciding on where to keep the canoe in Canada. The university has said the canoe's eventual home must be able to care for it properly.

According to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the canoe appears to have been sold to British military Capt. Stepney St. George while he was working at a Canadian outpost, and he shipped the boat to his residence in Galway, Ireland.

When St. George died in 1847, the canoe was donated to the National University of Ireland in Galway.

Some First Nation members, however, are arguing that the canoe may have been taken from the colony and it should be returned to New Brunswick.

No historic documentation has yet been found to either prove or disprove its sale.

MP TOUTS NATIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CENTRE

Ottawa Citizen

Ottawa Centre MP Paul Dewar used the occasion of National Aboriginal Day Sunday to launch a community campaign to revive interest in a proposed national aboriginal centre on Victoria Island that would host First Nations

conferences, environmental think-tank sessions, a city park, an art gallery, arts performances and a historic interpretive centre.

Dewar said the centre would be "a cultural treasure" and "a place for all people to come and see aboriginal history and culture." Victoria Island was an early First Nations settlement site and served as a meeting place for early French and English settlers.

Dewar said a new budget has to be prepared, but organizers at Sunday's event said early budgets four years ago estimated construction in the range of \$50 million, with a similar amount needed to clean up and prepare the site.

Dewar said the National Capital Commission, which oversees Victoria Island, expressed support for the project in 2006, but the project needs the commitment of the federal government. He said the awareness campaign is designed to raise support and encourage the government to make that commitment.

"What we're here to say is that as a community, we're behind the words and the vision ... and we want to support this vision happening," Dewar said. "The community campaign aims at gathering public support. We will take these voices to the government in the fall and request that it immediately begin preparations for the building of this centre."

The project is the vision of Algonquin elder William Commanda, 95, who lives in the Maniwaki area and attended Sunday's event. He has been promoting the project for nearly 10 years, and said he hopes there will be firm news by his 96th birthday in November.

"We were here for thousands of years and we want to come back here. Everyone is free to join us," he said.

Architect Douglas Cardinal, who designed the Canadian Museum of Civilization, has prepared initial plans for the project, which would surround and preserve the historic Carbide Mill that is on the island.

Cardinal could not attend the event, but his wife, Idoia, spoke briefly about the project, which she said would incorporate aboriginal symbols in its design and be environmentally friendly.

More information on the project is available at www.pauldewar.ca/en/aboriginalcentre.

Ottawa Citizen

CANADIAN OFFICERS WON'T RETURN TO BORDER UNARMED

SEAWAY INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE: Union says safety and security of weapons necessary; no discussion with Mohawks so far

MASSENA — Canadian customs officers said they are not going back to work on the Seaway International Bridge without the guns they have been promised.

As yet, there have been no discussions between the protesting Mohawks on the Akwesasne reservation and the Canadian government, much less an agreement on how to reopen the international crossing.

Union members' doctors are now saying that returning to the post would be too stressful on the officers, according to the Canadian Customs and Immigration Union.

"The Border Service Officers' Union leadership has advised me that personnel will not return to the Cornwall Port of Entry unless they can be assured of their safety and security," Christopher McCluskey, spokesman for the Canadian Minister of Public Safety Peter van Loan, said in an e-mail. "They consider that being armed is a fundamental aspect of assuring their security."

Union officials did not respond to repeated calls requesting comment Friday.

The Ministry of Public Safety is now investigating the "long-term viability of the Cornwall Port of Entry," Mr. McCluskey said.

Canadian customs may be moved, temporarily, to share the American facilities on the south side of the St. Lawrence River, according to Canadian media reports.

The Seaway Bridge has been closed for three weeks. Canadian customs officers left their posts shortly before midnight May 31 after hundreds of Mohawks assembled to protest the plan to arm the officers, due to be carried out the next day. Officials say international regulations then forced the bridge to be closed.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, the Canadian branch of the tribe's government, has been protesting the move to arm customs officers for months, saying it interferes with their tribal sovereignty. There have been complaints of racial profiling and provocation from customs officers, according to the tribe. Several cases are pending with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Though tribal officials traveled to Ottawa a few times before the June 1 deadline and did meet with politicians, no solutions were found.

The Mohawk Council is still waiting for the Canadian government, specifically Mr. van Loan, to open a dialogue to find a solution to the problem. Both sides have spoken of creating a liaison officer to work with the tribe, but they have not met with each other to discuss it since the bridge closure.

"Our position regarding the arming of Canada Border Service Agency officers on Akwesasne Mohawk territory hasn't changed, but we need to get to that first step," Mohawk Council spokesman Brendan F. White said. "That first step is going to be a big step and it's going to require Public Safety Minister Peter van Loan to pick up that phone and schedule a formal meeting."

Canada has been working to arm its border agents since 2006. To date, more than 900 officers have been armed.

PRESSURE OVER LAND RIGHTS TO INCREASE CONFERENCE TOLD

As metals and resources become more precious, First Nations people will come under increasing pressure to relinquish their lands to mining operations, participants at a Queen's University conference were told yesterday.

"The First Nations are on lands everybody's attracted to," said Jason Wilson, an Ojibwe from Rainy River who works for the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. "You're going to be flooded with activity."

He said it was important that aboriginal communities become acquainted with upcoming changes to Ontario's Mining Act and also realize the potential economic advantages to their people.

"That's what it's all about -- creating jobs," said Wilson. "We have to start to put a vision forward for young people."

The two-day conference, "Mineral Resources and Aboriginal Lands," was co-hosted by the Queen's School of Policy Studies and the First Nations Technical Institute.

One of the keynote speakers was provincial Ministry of Northern Development and Mines deputy minister Kevin Costante.

"Much of the mining activity is taking place on First Nations land," he said.

Once approved, Costante said, the updated Mining Act should help deter incidents like the 2007 and 2008 standoffs at a proposed uranium mining operation near Sharbot Lake.

"It's to avoid situations like that," said Costante. "Nothing's ever perfect, but I think it will solve a lot of it. It's not going to work for mining companies if they don't pay attention. Good for the First Nations. They got everybody's attention."

Some of the proposed changes to the act include:

- * recognition of treaty rights in the act itself;
- * protection for culturally sensitive areas on First Nations lands;
- * a dispute resolution mechanism;
- * no new mines in the North without community land-use planning and consultation;
- * an awareness program for prospectors to make them sensitive to aboriginal customs and concerns;

* map staking that allows companies to stake claims without having to go on the land.

Along with these recommended changes to the act, the ministry has designated a special Aboriginal Relations Unit that deals full time with native rights as they pertain to the Mining Act.

"The act will help, but there's still a human dynamic that needs to take place. There's lots of laws and acts. It's how people behave that's more important," said Costante.

Former Ardoch Algonquin First Nation chief Bob Lovelace said it was good to see aboriginals participating in the conference, but had his doubts about the effectiveness of the Mining Act changes.

Last year, Lovelace spent three-and-a-half months in jail for his part in the protest at Sharbot Lake.

"These changes don't change the way industry and government do business," he said. Lovelace was skeptical about the effectiveness of the awareness training for prospectors. "The changes to the legislation represent something like a change in the criminal code that says rapists must wear condoms," he said. "It's a low hurdle to jump." Lovelace acknowledged that economic activity from mining can be important to aboriginal communities.

"We all drive automobiles. We all use petroleum-based products," he said. "But it's the way in which the mining is done. We have hit a point in time where we're at peak everything. Peak copper. Peak gold. Peak oil. The desire to exploit them is going to be much greater."

For Todd Lewis of the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin, all sides, especially the Crown, must pay attention to the historic treaties with First Nations.

On Manitoulin Island, he said, the only right granted to immigrant settlers was for the cultivation of land.

"They didn't say you could come here to cut timber or take fish out of our waters -- or to mine," said Lewis. "You have to look at all those aboriginal understandings.

"I see that they're beginning to understand that original relationship again. It's a step in the right direction. Economic activity is a benefit but you've got to understand those treaties."

'REWARDS' FOR RESERVES

The Conservative government is set to unveil a new approach to its relations with Canada's First Nations that will see fresh money flowing to bands where Ottawa believes there is a good prospect of economic success, while bands with a track record of failure will be frozen out.

As part of its move toward a more market-oriented approach, the government is also keen to reform the electoral system used to elect aboriginal chiefs.

Chuck Strahl, the Minister for Indian Affairs and Northern Development, will outline the policy today in a speech in Ottawa.

"There will be a shifting of resources. If you take economic development as an example, there has been a tendency to sprinkle it like pixie dust and hope for magic results. I'm increasingly convinced we have to reward those who are ready to take that kind of help," he said in an interview with the National Post yesterday.

In his speech, he will say the single defining feature of the new approach is that the government is not prepared to "waste time on unproductive and unsuccessful processes."

Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said he was surprised that the government is going down this path.

"The Prime Minister spoke of reconciliation last year with the historic apology [on residential schools], in effect setting the stage for a new era that ended unilateral decisions and the 'we-know-best' approach.

"We're committed to partnership, but we don't want the imposition of government will," he said.

In its most recent budget, the government announced \$1.4-billion of new spending on aboriginal Canadians -- including \$200-million on skills and training, \$400-million for on-reserve housing, \$515-million for on-reserve infrastructure and \$325-million for health programs and child and family services.

Mr. Strahl said new money will be directed toward bands that can strike partnership agreements -- with provinces on education and health issues, and with the private sector on economic development and infrastructure. However, he said, base funding for other First Nations would not be cut as part of the new strategy.

"You're just not going to get extra funding if you're not doing something different and better." The government is intent on rolling out pilot projects in education, where the Minister said partnership agreements with provincial and First Nation governments were proving successful in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; and, in skills development, where it hopes to replicate deals with private-sector employers such as uranium producer Cameco Corp., with which Ottawa has a \$30-million training agreement.

"What I'm not prepared to do is have a system where each schoolhouse has its own school board. It's not practical and the results are no good. There's not much doubt about where we want to go with this," he said.

Mr. Strahl contrasted the benefits of co-operation and partnership with the situation on the Akwesasne reserve, near Cornwall, where residents have closed the Seaway International Bridge as part of a protest opposing the arming of border guards.

The Mohawks of Akwesasne see themselves as a sovereign nation that is not part of Canada, despite receiving millions of dollars for schools, health and social development from the Canadian taxpayer.

Mr. Strahl said Ottawa does not recognize that sovereignty claim and said the rule of law applies to everyone. "Mohawk communities have a particular perspective about pre-Confederation and so on. I hope that nothing I'm saying is disrespectful, but my observation is, notwithstanding all the other interesting discussions, if you don't develop healthy working relations and partnerships with other levels of government and your neighbours, you will suffer because you lack opportunities," he said.

Mr. Strahl said that a number of provincial premiers have told him that the single most important change he could introduce would be to engage in electoral reform to make the system of electing chiefs more accountable. He said chiefs in Atlantic Canada and Manitoba have approached him about resolving what he called a "revolving door" of aboriginal leaders that made striking tripartite deals difficult. He said Ottawa could intervene by introducing legislation that, for example, would introduce fixed election dates, standardized rules on a voters' list and a common appeals process.

HOUSE HONORS SOCKALEXIS COUSINS

BDN Staff

AUGUSTA, Maine — Representatives of the Maine's American Indian tribes are ramping up their campaign to gain public recognition and respect for two cousins from the Penobscot Nation who they claim have been largely forgotten or ignored by sports historians.

That campaign moved to Augusta on Wednesday when the House approved two resolutions honoring Louis and Andrew Sockalexis for their historic athletic feats during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

One of the resolutions urges the Major League Baseball to formally recognize Louis Sockalexis as the nation's first American Indian professional baseball player and chastises both the Cleveland Indians and Sports Illustrated for perceived slights against both Sockalexises and native people in general.

"The Sockalexis cousins have been continuously and blatantly overlooked for their achievements," Rep. Wayne Mitchell, the Penobscot tribal representative, said during a speech on the House floor. "It is a shame that it became necessary for us to present these resolutions today, but these two men have never been celebrated for their athletic feats."

Louis Sockalexis played three seasons for the Cleveland Spiders between 1897 and 1899, batting .338 and stealing 16 bases during his initial season. Throughout his brief career in the

Major Leagues and during his college years as a star player for both Holy Cross and Notre Dame, he was the subject of anti-Indian racism and taunts.

Ed Rice, author of the book "Baseball's First Indian, Louis Sockalexis," credited Sockalexis on Wednesday with breaking what he called the "red" color barrier decades before Jackie Robinson became the first black player in professional baseball. He describes Sockalexis as a "5-tool baseball player" for his ability to excel at hitting, fielding, running and other skills. Rice, a Bangor native who now lives in Canada, also wrote a second book on Andrew Sockalexis, who finished second in the 1912 and 1913 Boston marathons and was a member of the 1912 U.S. Olympic team.

The joint resolution on Andrew Sockalexis recognizes him on the 90th anniversary of his death as "one of Maine's great athletes."

The resolution on Louis Sockalexis, however, takes a much stronger tone. It urges the National Baseball Hall of Fame to recognize Sockalexis as the first American Indian player, a title which is in some dispute.

It also calls on the Cleveland Indians — which Rice and others contend changed its name to the Indians in 1915 to honor Sockalexis — to drop the use of its mascot, "Chief Wahoo." The Penobscot Nation first submitted a petition to the Cleveland Indians in 2000 urging them to stop using what they said was a racist and disrespectful mascot.

Last, the resolution takes Sports Illustrated to task for omitting Louis Sockalexis' name from a 1999 list of the 50 greatest athletes from Maine — an omission that both Rice and Mitchell see as yet another example of disrespect or racism for the Penobscot athlete.

"It's time to dispel all of these myths," said Mitchell, who remembers as a child trying to replicate Louis Sockalexis' feat of throwing a ball across the Penobscot River. "It's time to recognize these athletes for who they are. For so long, these people were buried at the bottom of the heap."

FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS AT TURNING POINT

Blair Gable, Reuters

Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, speaks yesterday about his decision to retire in July. So far, four candidates have entered the race to replace him.

You could be forgiven for thinking that Canada's relations with its First Nations are on the edge of a precipice -- what with images of Mohawk Warriors threatening to storm a Canada Border Services Agency post if guards are given guns, and candidates for the national chief's position claiming aboriginal Canadians "don't need the white man's money."

In fact, behind the cameras, relations have improved sufficiently that the National Day of Action held two years ago will this year be a National Day of Reconciliation.

This is not to suggest that harmony reigns. Chuck Strahl, the Minister of Indian Affairs, unveiled a new approach to dealing with First Nations yesterday that emphasizes striking partnership deals with Ottawa, provincial governments and the private sector. The policy means Ottawa will effectively pick winners and losers -- even if Mr. Strahl does not want to frame it that way (he said that characterization is "incorrect" when asked yesterday). But the net effect is that when bands come forward with innovative proposals to partner with Ottawa and the provinces on education and health, or with the federal government and the private sector on economic development and infrastructure, they will receive a chunk of the \$1.4-billion in extra funding announced in the last two budgets. Those bands without the wit or will to strike partnership deals or submit compelling proposals will have to struggle on with base funding that has been capped for a decade.

The approach to make the money work more effectively replicates the Conservative government's more focused strategy on foreign aid spending, an area where there was a similar feeling that money was being spread far too thinly, with far too few signs of progress. The Assembly of First Nations has accused Mr. Strahl of working unilaterally, which is not entirely fair. Mr. Strahl is candid that he would far rather Ottawa fund partnership deals with First Nations than set up standalone federal programs, which have had a spotty success rate in the past.

The AFN is on firmer ground when it says some bands will be left behind -- at least in the short run. But, as Mr. Strahl says, it's time to take risks -- something you don't often hear from government ministers, for whom courage is often career-limiting.

Journalists are prone to claim that events are at a crossroads -- a classic device to get their story on the front page -- but the importance of the Strahl announcement has been heightened by the news that Phil Fontaine, the AFN's National Chief, is not going to seek re-election. Mr. Fontaine has been a strong advocate for aboriginal tradition, while at the same time recognizing the importance of economic development.

The election of his replacement will be a defining moment in First Nation relations in this country -- and the choice is likely to be stark.

So far there are four declared candidates -- Shawn Atleo, British Columbia Regional Chief; John Beaucage, Grand Chief of the Union of Ontario Indians; Perry Bellegarde, former AFN Vice-Chief for Saskatchewan; and, Terrance Nelson, Chief of Roseau River First Nation in Manitoba.

Most observers consider the race to be between Mr. Atleo, who is strong in the West, and Mr. Beaucage, who has more support in the East. Government insiders say they could do business with either man.

The nightmare scenario for Ottawa, and one that thankfully seems unlikely at this stage, is a victory for Mr. Nelson, who once said that the only way to get the attention of Canadians is to "pick up a gun." He has already caused a stir in the leadership race by saying "it's time to quit being legal Canadians."

This is not to suggest that either front-runner would be a patsy for the federal government. Mr. Atleo, in particular, is a traditionalist who talks of reaching "acceptable consultation and accommodation standards" with the federal government, a tacit criticism of the current leadership for being too soft on Ottawa. But both Mr. Atleo and Mr. Beaucage talk of the need to encourage economic development to combat poverty and build self-sufficient communities (as, in fairness, does Mr. Bellegarde).

Any government initiative that doesn't result in the complete opposite of its intent should be considered a success. By this measure, Mr. Strahl's new strategy has every prospect of ushering in positive change. The chances of that happening will improve dramatically if the Minister finds a progressive partner in the AFN's new national chief.

DAN'S CORNER - Regaining our Birthright and Homeland

We can't get all of our land back but we can get our birthright back!! Some ideas on what we will agree to for the loss of our birthright and homeland.

- * the right to our land and its resources.
- * the right to travel and traverse our land anywhere, any time.
- * to have and enjoy all of those birthrights that The Ancestors enjoyed at contact in 1492.
- * right to have the treaties honored and respected.
- * requirement to be consulted and to have a say in how the land and resources are treated, looked after, preserved or developed.

- * right to be treated seriously, with respect and dignity and on level ground.
- * right to our own institutions of government, justice, religion, education, commerce, etc.
- * right to have the "final say" in areas of land and resources development where the land/resources involved are situated on either Indian land or disputed Indian land.
- * rights and accouterments of any of any other internationally recognized nation state.

In the words of a very wise elder "the last of our human freedoms is the ability to chose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances" As Indian people and as the rightful and true owners of Turtle Island, our homeland, what will our individual and collective attitude be in the loss of our birthright and homeland? Will it be the attitude of The Ancestors or the attitude of a more modern and contemporary state of the art, hi-tech Indian?

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead

All My Relations,

Dan Ennis

DEAN'S DEN - Man Without Borders

Man was born without borders
 All part of Creator's plan
 Borders are built to burden
 Done by the hands of man,
 Men were born to their freedom
 To pass thru the country at ease
 To run every river and climb every hill
 To ride and roam as they please,
 No latitudes nor longitudes
 No "influential spheres"
 No periphery's - perimeters
 No enframements or frontiers,
 Now it's binding limits and markers
 That separate, profile, and enwrap
 Now it's "thus far and no farther"
 Defined by lines on a map,
 Restrained, restricted, required
 Curtained, curbed, and curtailed
 Packaged, parceled, and cooped-up
 By artificial walls that have failed,
 For man was born without borders
 Boundary, division, or zone
 There are no borders in nature
 For "the land" was not meant "to own",
 It's time to take back the quarter
 For all of the daughters and sons
 Not bound by "political units"
 By "papers", by guards ... and by guns!
 ---- D.C. Butterfield

INFO MEETING ON BORDER CROSSING -FRIDAY JULY 17TH, 1- 4 pm (Tobique)

Pine Tree Legal Assistance Inc. of Maine will hold the 4th informational meeting on Border Crossing at the Tobique Entertainment Center on Friday, July 17th, starting at 1pm. Everyone interested in this subject is welcome to attend. Earlier meetings discussing the same topic were held in Maine in June and July, at Caribou, Houlton, and Sibayik.

Native border crossing is an constitutional right for native people guaranteed under the 1794 Jay Treaty. The treaty is now being impacted by the new WHTI regulations implemented at all border crossing points across the country, east to west. Be there for support and to express your concerns.

Have a nice day