

"Representing Anishinaabe, Cree and Dakota First Nations in Southern Manitoba"



South Wind

September 2007

"The official newspaper of the Manitoba Southern Chiefs' Organization, Inc."



**Southern Grand Chief
Morris J. Swan Shannacappo**

Boozhoo, Tansi, Wastay

This month I would like to offer special congratulations to a youth and our Elders. The youth I would like to congratulate is Cole Choken, (*Lake Manitoba First Nation*), the young man who ran from Calgary to Winnipeg to raise money and awareness to combat diabetes, which has created a tremendous problem for our First Nations people.

I would like to stress that I am very proud of Cole and grateful for the contributions made by him, his family, and the people who accompanied him on his run including his spiritual advisor, Kevin Bunn of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation.

I am happy for the people who will be receiving a payout in compensation for having attended residential school. The payout levels should have been higher, but at least something is being given in recognition of the unfairness our people were forced to endure. Every week, month or year that the issue dragged, more people went to their ...without being compensated. I wish good fortune and good health to all of the survivors.

Then, there are some people who are not being compensated because they attended Day School or there were "holes" in government records. SCO is working with a group of survivors who are addressing this issue. This group chose to withhold court action until after the compensation plan obtained final approval, because they did not want to jeopardize the payouts to other survivors. I thank them for being so considerate of other their fellow elders.

On a less pleasant note, SCO has been involved in some unresolved issues relating to missing youth and adults. Some of these issues were made public, but in other instances we worked behind the scenes. We will continue to do the best we can with the resources we have.

Meegwetch! Ekosi! Pidaamayepi do!



MINISTER STRAHL ON THE STALL?

Many people are still trying to figure out what to make of Chuck Strahl, the new minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada. The Chiefs and Grand Chiefs from Manitoba had an opportunity to hear from him in late August, just six days after he was shuffled into the portfolio.

The most encouraging statement he made was that there would be a strong emphasis on results. The government wouldn't just study things for the sake of studying them. I was glad to hear Mr. Strahl say that because too often INAC and the government have kept us in a state of "limbo" where they talked and tinkered with the system in small ways, giving a little here and chopping a little there, slowly killing us.

I can't say that I will agree with what Mr. Strahl has in mind for us. He hasn't shown his hand yet. But at least it seems that he won't settle doing a lot of nothing.

Of course, his approach will produce positive results only if he listens to the Indian people and their leaders. Our attitude should be that we are willing to give him a chance, but we should be ready to fight if the results are not what we want.

Strahl may be an improvement over what we had from 1993 to 2006 when the Liberals were in power, or he may be one of the worst attack dogs we have ever faced. We've got to be smart, strong, and if necessary, willing to give it our all in a fight. We must work together, because that is how we will build our strength. Each of you – the Chiefs, members of band councils, grassroots people – you all have a very important role in making us strong.

I was disappointed to see Canada vote against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Strahl's comment that the declaration would have run contrary to the Canadian Constitution was unfortunate.

Does this mean that it is constitutional – and proper – for Canada to continue to let many of our people live in poverty without adequate education, shelter, food and water, etc. Shame on Prime Minister Harper.

Your minister Strahl has it backwards when he argues Indigenous rights should conform with the Constitution. Our rights, both inherent and by Treaty, take priority the 1982 Constitution or any piece of paper Canada adopts in the future. Some of our SCO chiefs have posted statements under the "News" listing on our website at <http://www.scoinc.mb.ca>. Check our site for regular news updates.



l-r: SCO Grand Chief Morris J. Swan Shannacappo; Chief Ken Whitecloud, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, and Chief Wallace Moar Sr., O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation gather for the Grand Entry at the AMC Chiefs Assembly on August 20, 2007.



l-r: Chief Betsy Kennedy, War Lake First Nation, Chief Viola Eastman, Canupawakpa Dakota Nation, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Chuck Strahl, Chief Deborah Chief, Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation, and Chief Bernice Thorassie, Sayisi Dene First Nation at the AMC Chiefs Assembly.



l-r: Grand Chief Morris J. Swan Shannacappo with the new Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Chuck Strahl at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Assembly.

WORD 'INDIAN' HAS NOBLE ROOTS, LINKED TO TREATIES

"He said,"

Chief Swan Shannacappo,

To call me and my people "Indians" is like calling an African a nigger, a Jewish person a kyke, a Chinese person a chink, Japanese japs, etc. You know that neither this country nor this continent is in India, and that our people are not Indians, but rather they are Odjibwe and Cree. You know that this designation that was imposed upon us, is based on an error and is derogatory to each individual nation.

Yet, in South Wind, you identify us as Indians, and our territories as Indian country. Do you not care about pride in our true identity? Brainwashing the people into believing that we are Indians does nothing for pride in Odjibwe heritage or Cree heritage. You must stop referring to our people as Indians. This is not a request; this is an order from a descendant of the Sturgeon clan. If you do not stop publicly referring to our people as "Indians", then The Free Odjibwe will make it known publicly that SCO is an enemy of the Odjibwe.

Chiefs cry non-stop for more money to solve our problems, but more money will not solve anything. Real change must begin in the hearts and minds of the people. Real change must begin with people realizing that they are not Indians, but that they are sons and daughters of Turtle Island, and the Creator (not a Spaniard) has given them a name. That name is Odjibwe or Cree.

I will continue to read South Wind to monitor the terminology you use to address and identify the people. If you do not do your part to restore the collective dignity of the people, I can guarantee that your term in office will not be remembered by anything you did, but by whether or not you supported the goals, methods, and ideals of The Free Odjibwe. When you read this, you may feel insulted by how I present my perspective, but remember, you insult me every time you call me an Indian.

Sincerely,

Payzhannakut

Servant of The Free
Odjibwe

"I will continue to read South Wind to monitor the terminology you use to address and identify the people."



"I say,"

My use of the word "Indian" to describe myself and our people offended one of our readers, a person who goes by the name of Payzhannakut. The letter he sent to me by e-mail last month is provided for your perusal.

I have put a lot of thought into whether I should use the word *Indian*. And I have spoken at rallies and other events saying that we must get back to calling ourselves *Indians*. I did not use the word carelessly or out of ignorance of the term's history.

Quite the opposite. Our most precious documents – the Treaties – are between representatives of the English Crown and "Indian" leaders. The treaties are not with First Nations, or the Ojibway, they are with Indians, and that is primarily why I call myself an *Indian*. I also go by Anishinabe, which is both my language and tribal identification. In the English language we are referred to as *Saulteaux*, or *Ojibway*, or *Ojibwaa*, or *Odjibwe*.

I will not help the perpetrators undermine the Treaty Indian Nations by assuming the First Nations moniker to steer away from treaty obligations that we negotiated between two Great Nations under the witness of the Creator. I will also not undermine our Nation by accepting tripartite agreements or any documents that lesser than our treaties.

I understand why some people do not like the word *Indian*. Part of it has to do with the tale of Columbus getting lost at sea and thinking he had been to India. Actually, some academics doubt whether all of us can trace our name to that fateful day when Columbus and his boat of starving sailors, who were looking for "wealth untold," first bumped into a Caribbean island.

I was at a conference in Mexico where it was stated the term had Spanish and Latin origins; that it came from "Indios," which meant "God's free-spirited people." I like that description. That is who we were – and should still be.

I strongly disagree with Payzhannakut when he equates *Indian* with the other ethnic slurs he lists. Those words are derogatory in every sense. "*Indian*" is not slang and it is a word I use with pride. Like almost everyone from our background, I have heard "*Indian*" used in a derogatory way by racists, but we shouldn't run from the term for that reason. Why let the racists win? Why let them determine how we feel about ourselves?

I have lived as an Indian for decades. And as Grand Chief I will continue to travel to pow-wows, working as an announcer and educator. I also attend all kinds of ceremonies and functions. People at podiums sometimes use other words to describe ourselves, but when talking in a relaxed way the people almost always refer to themselves as *Indian*. We dance, we laugh, we enjoy being *Indians*.

The Creator, God, Almighty One, Great Spirit, Allah, Lord – whatever name you are comfortable with – gave us these free spirits. I, we (SCO), are not your enemy. Your enemy lies in foreign governments that continue their assimilation process and cultural genocide. It's time we stood in unity with all our leaders and "helped" ourselves. The Good Book says "the Lord helps those who help themselves." It is time we (Treaty Indians) help ourselves before there is nothing left.

That is how I see it. Others may see it differently.

SOUTHERN GRAND CHIEF
MORRIS J. SWAN SHANNACAPPO

