

Important Stories on Aboriginal Affairs produced via the ATIA

(From the ATIA News Story Index, Category 32. Items marked {**})

Back UN on native rights, Ottawa urged. By Gloria Galloway. Globe and Mail. June 8, 2007

Bureaucrats recommended that Ottawa champion the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - a declaration that Canada is now lobbying the UN to revisit and revise. Amnesty International has obtained documents through the ATIA that show officials within the departments of Indian Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence have all recommended that the government back the UN statement of aboriginal rights. Although Canada helped write the document, the Conservative government has withdrawn its support, arguing that the declaration is unconstitutional, could prevent military activities on aboriginal land and could harm existing land deals. In July, as it became apparent that Canada's position was changing, officials wrote to the minister: "Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Foreign Affairs Canada initially advised DND/CF that they were recommending that Canada support the adoption of draft declaration."

Internal memo braces RCMP for deluge of abuse claims. By Tonda MacCharles. Toronto Star. July 10, 2008.

More than 3,000 people have applied to Ottawa's program to settle outstanding sexual or physical abuse claims arising from the Indian residential schools era. An internal RCMP memo, obtained by the Star through the ATIA, said discussions had already been held with various levels of government and aboriginal communities about how the RCMP should respond. Most of the abuse disclosures made through the compensation process "will not be pursued criminally," it says. Many complainants will not want to go through the criminal justice system, and are guaranteed anonymity under the compensation program. The documents flag another significant issue for the RCMP - allegations of "missing children" from Indian residential schools and suggestions that some deaths were "criminal in nature."

MP blasts Tories over cash for natives; Memos suggest schools in opposition ridings had money withheld. By Richard Brennan. Toronto Star. Feb. 26, 2009.

The Conservatives withheld funds for badly needed native school construction because the communities were located in opposition ridings, documents obtained by NDP MP Charlie Angus via the ATIA suggest. An internal memo advising Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl of the situation caused a furor in the Commons. "No real issue (about the school project), just sitting in an opposition riding," states a 2008 memo from a senior Indian Affairs Canada official in Toronto, released to the media by Angus. "The Ontario region (of INAC) had identified three key priorities - Wabaseemoong, North Spirit Lake and Attawapiskat - all because of serious health and safety concerns, and in the case of Attawapiskat overcrowding and badly deteriorated portables," Angus told MPs.

***Nunavut suicides a "public health emergency".* By Laura Eggertson. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. Nov. 3, 2015.**

Nunavut's government "shall immediately declare suicide a public health emergency," and appoint a cabinet minister responsible for suicide prevention, recommended a coroner's jury in Iqaluit at the close of the inquest into a record 45 suicides in Nunavut in 2013. Calling the inquest was Nunavut coroner Padma Suramala's after the government had ignored her previous request for urgent help. The territory's suicide rate is 9.8 times greater than elsewhere in Canada. She pleaded with the Nunavut health and justice ministers for the emergency declaration, which could have resulted in additional federal funding or expertise. "We have reached a breaking point and our community is under crisis," Suramala said in an email, obtained through an ATI request.

***Feds provide inadequate mental health care for First Nations: internal memo.* Joan Bryden, *Canadian Press*. Dec. 23, 2016**

Even as Ottawa pressures provinces and territories to take up its offer of billions to improve mental health services for Canadians, an internal memo suggests it's failing in its own responsibility to provide adequate care for mentally ill children in First Nations communities. In extreme cases, it says, desperate parents are giving up their children to child welfare agencies as the only way to ensure their kids get treatment for mental illnesses. The memo prepared for the Health Minister was uncovered through the ATIA by NDP MP Charlie Angus. Compared to provincially funded services, it says, some First Nations and Inuit Health Branch services are "less accessible and/or not funded to similar levels." Where mental health services are available, "they are provided by paraprofessionals or generalists."

***Ottawa took years to warn First Nations about fraud: Man charged with misappropriating money from children's fund had contracts with six other nations.* By Gloria Galloway. *Globe and Mail*, Feb. 10, 2017.**

The Auditor-General alerted the department of Indigenous Affairs in 2011 that a man hired to co-manage a First Nation's finances may have been engaged in fraud - the year before the RCMP alleges Joe Crupi pocketed of hundreds of thousands of dollars misappropriated from a breakfast program for children on the impoverished Kashechewan reserve. But six other First Nations that employed the Crupi Consulting Group were not told by the department until 2016 that "some anomalies" had been detected in work done by their third-party manager. Documents obtained under the ATIA by NDP MP Charlie Angus say "in 2011, the Office of the Auditor-General informed the department [of Indigenous Affairs] of possible fraudulent practices... of Crupi Consulting." The department ordered a forensic audit by KPMG and then turned the results of that investigation over the RCMP in 2012.

Ottawa initially fought St. Anne's residential school electric chair compensation claims; Lawyer says federal government still fighting paying compensation for electric chair abuse.
By Jorge Barrera, CBC. Dec. 2, 2017

Ottawa's lawyers initially fought claims from survivors seeking compensation for suffering caused by a homemade electric chair used for punishment and sport at St. Anne's Indian residential school, CBC News has learned. Federal lawyers argued shocks from the chair did not qualify as physical harm. Ottawa also fought compensation claims for instances when St. Anne's survivors were forced to eat their own vomit.... The Information Commissioner is investigating a complaint from NDP MP Charlie Angus who has been trying for more than three years to find an explanation through the ATIA as to why Ottawa kept the Ontario Provincial Police documents suppressed. Justice Canada has released thousands of documents almost completely redacted, except for a few scattered sentences, in response to Angus's ATIA requests

Some Additional Stories on Aboriginal Affairs produced via the ATIA

(From the ATIA News Story Index, Category 32. Items marked{*})

- * \$100-million fund for Indian youths mishandled: lawyer. By Kirk La Pointe. Ottawa Citizen. Jan. 6, 1988
- * Ottawa hushes up pollution on reserves: Report cites threats to some of B.C.'s most sensitive areas
- * Reserves suffer woeful water conditions. By Jack Aubry. Ottawa Citizen. Oct. 25, 1994
- * High levels of radiation found in northern natives. By Jim Bronskill. Canadian Press. July 29, 1996
- * 'Vital' study was withheld: Quebec Cree: Natives say report supports their request to amend clarity bill. By Jack Aubry. Ottawa Citizen. June 22, 2000
- * Epidemic feared if SARS spreads to native reserves. By Brian Laghi. Globe and Mail, June 16, 2003
- * Thousands could lose medical benefits. By Bill Curry, Ottawa Citizen, Jan. 26, 2004.
- * Anger tonight following a CBC news investigation into residential schools, and how the federal government is handling 12,000 abuse lawsuits. By David Common. CBC's The National. Feb. 23, 2004

- * Report challenges perceptions of natives: 'Misconceptions' affecting policies. By Paul Samyn. Ottawa Citizen. March 10, 2007
- * Canada slammed over UN declaration. By Sue Bailey. Globe and Mail. Sept. 7, 2007
- * Mounties tout 'Marshall Plan' to solve aboriginal woes. By Jim Bronskill. Canadian Press, Aug. 20, 2008
- * Residential schools apology deeply moved Harper, changed his views. By Bill Curry. Globe and Mail, Jan. 6, 2009
- * Aboriginal health concerns hinder oilsands growth. By Mike De Souza, Postmedia News, Apr. 28, 2011
- * Ottawa asked to ignore native 'spirituality' in mine review. Peter O'Neil, Vancouver Sun, May 1, 2012
- * Demands for inquiry follow report of 1,000 murdered, missing aboriginal women. By Steve Rennie, Canadian Press, May 1, 2014
- * Aboriginal women, girls targets for human trafficking, says new report. By Steve Rennie, Canadian Press, Sept. 18, 2014
- * Aboriginal Affairs spending shortfall amounts to \$1B, internal document says. By Dean Beeby CBC, June 5, 2015
- * Nearly half of slain aboriginal women didn't know, or barely knew, their killers, Star analysis shows. By David Bruser, Jim Rankin, et.al. Toronto Star, Dec. 4, 2015
- * Tardy bureaucrats causing First Nations' cost overruns, report finds. By Dean Beeby, CBC, Sept, 28, 2016
- * Obtained RCMP documents show more than 300 Indigenous-rights activists investigated, 89 put on watch list. By Marilyn Robak. CBC, Nov. 20, 2016
- * Counsellor overbills \$360K for care of First Nations patients in Ontario. By Dean Beeby. Nov. 25, 2016
- * Ottawa still failing to provide health care on reserves: report. By Gloria Galloway, Globe and Mail. Jan. 25, 2017
- * Ottawa spent more than \$110K fighting Indigenous girl's braces claim. By Margo McDiarmid, CBC, Sept. 29, 2017
- * Aging Aboriginals pose new fiscal, social challenge for government: census. By Jordan Press, CBC, Oct. 25, 2017

* N.B. police shooting of Indigenous woman sparks outrage across Canada. By Greg Weston, Willow Fiddler, Marieke Walsh. Globe and Mail. June 5, 2020

Some Stories on Aboriginal Affairs produced via the B.C. FOIPP Act

(Summaries found in the B.C. FOI News Story Index)

* Groups alleging racial profiling demand probe into Vancouver police street checks. Disproportionate rate of Indigenous people being stopped and asked for ID 'staggering'. By Staff, Canadian Press. June 14, 2018.

* B.C. Indians will have to obey gaming laws, minister insists. By Staff, Vancouver Sun, May 11, 1995

* Premier snubs Treaty 8; Visit to Peace Region likely won't include meet with tribal chief about LNG concerns. By Jonny Wakefield. Alaska Highway News, June 9, 2014

* Ministry shortcomings cited in native boy's death. Lindsay Kines, Vancouver Sun, Jan. 14, 2006

* Aboriginal adviser's child-welfare report may be too late to be of use. By Bob Mackin, The Province, June 20, 2016

* Wild-horse cull unjustified, aboriginal leader says; Tsilhqot'in leader says he doesn't share province's belief that the animals affect cattle grazing. By Larry Pynn, Vancouver Sun, Jan. 27, 2009

* Power project plan puts Kokish on endangered list. By Larry Pynn, Vancouver Sun, March 12, 2012

* Who hitchhikes in northern B.C. and why? Professor seeks answers to tough questions. By Wendy Stueck, Globe and Mail, Jan. 20, 2015

* Aboriginal people overrepresented in B.C.'s massive number of inmates denied bail. By Travis Lupick, Georgia Straight, Feb. 24, 2016

* B.C. Indians will have to obey gaming laws, minister insists. By Staff, Vancouver Sun, May 11, 1995

* Trans Mountain pipeline: Did the Crown act 'honourably' toward First Nations? By Jason Procter, CBC TV, May 30, 2018

* B.C. aboriginal leaders meet to talk strategy over historic land-claim ruling. By Dene Moore, Canadian Press, Aug. 15, 2014