

Press Conference Speech

**Press Conference for Attawapiskat School Fight Parliament Buildings,
Ottawa May 28, 2008**

Students: Chris Kataaquapit, Shannon Koostachin, Solomon Rae

CHRIS:

Wacheeyeh

My name is Chris Kataaquapit. We are grade 8 students from JR Nakogee School in Attawapiskat, Ontario. I am a member of the Cree Attawapiskat First Nation.

We would like to thank everyone for joining us here today. We thank you for your on-going support of our community, and of our fight for a new school.

We have been called the Forgotten Children of Attawapiskat. But we are forgotten no longer. Thanks to the efforts of thousands of students across Canada, the children have a voice.

We would like to thank each student, teacher, school and organization that took the time to write a letter, or to pass our message on to others. We would also like to thank all of the people who will come to Ottawa to support us here at the Day of Action tomorrow.

We, the Grade 8 students, are the generation of students who have never seen a real school. That is why we made the decision to come to Ottawa. We have been planning our Graduation Trip since September, and have been fundraising all year.

In March, we decided to cancel our trip to Niagara Falls, and instead, come to Ottawa. We felt it was important to speak with Chuck Strahl and to express why we think that our community deserves a school. We sent a letter to Chuck Strahl, asking him to meet with us.

Our message to Mr. Strahl is that we have waited long enough. We want what every other student in Canada has - a good school.

SHANNEN:

Three years ago, my sister, Serena Koostachin, here on this spot, pleaded for a new school for our community. She sat in on a meeting where Andy Scott, Minister of INAC, promised us a school. But I ask, why do I have to come back and do the same thing once again?

As young people, we have been told to stand up for our promises. But our

own government cannot keep a promise that they have made 3 times. Chuck Strahl needs to keep his word.

How can he tell us that we don't have the right to a new school? All students in Canada deserve a learning environment that they are proud to attend, and that gives them hope. We want the same hope as every other Canadian student.

SOLOMON:

I am here on behalf of my younger sisters and brothers who don't know what a real school looks like

I am here on behalf of the Kindergarten students who have to walk 10 minutes just to go to gym class in -40 weather.

I am here on behalf of our disabled students who have to wheel their wheelchairs through snow and ice

I am here on behalf of the students who have already lost hope and dropped out because they have no hope, even before grade 5

I am here on behalf of a community who has been let down one too many times

Our message is simple. We want what every other kid in Canada takes for granted - we want a school. A safe school. A clean school. A school that will give our young people hope.