



Judge approves \$50M residential school settlement

'It's over. We don't have to live this nightmare anymore'

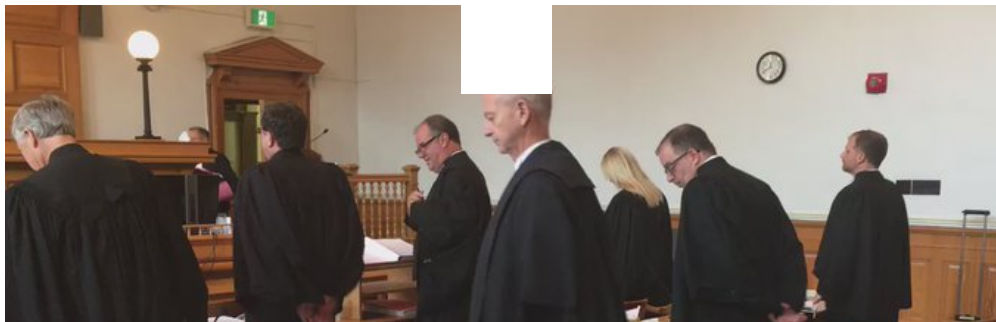
CBC News · Posted: Sep 28, 2016 12:02 PM NT | Last Updated: September 28, 2016



The \$50-million settlement for Newfoundland and Labrador residential school survivors has been approved. (Mark Quinn/CBC)

Justice Robert Stack has approved the \$50-million class-action settlement for survivors of residential schools.

The settlement, nine years in the making, was given the green light in Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court on Wednesday.



Mark Quinn

@CBCMarkQuinn

Judge Stack has approved the \$50M NL Res. School class action. After 9 years, it's officially done. [#cbcnl](#)

9:24 AM - Sep 28, 2016

15 23 people are talking about this

The settlement was reached in May, but required Stack's approval before any money can be paid to more than 800 survivors in the province.

With the approval, cheques are expected to start going out to the class-action's members this year.

Amounts will vary

Those who boarded at a residential school for less than five years will receive \$15,000, while those who spent more than five years will get \$20,000.

There is also a provision to apply for more for members who believe they suffered more abuse than others.

There's also the matter of compensation for the lawyers, who will get about one-third of the settlement, \$16.6 million, to cover their fees.

Survivors in court today welcomed the decision.

"It's over. We don't have to live this nightmare anymore, you know?" said Danny Pottle, who is from Rigolet but lives in St. John's. "We don't have to keep living this experience."

Survivor Emma Reelis, originally of Nain, lamented the students who didn't live to see this day.

"There's a lot of people that have gone with no closure to their lives," she said, "and a lot of people who ... couldn't cope with what happened to them, and they probably committed suicide. That's what hurts me the most."

Reelis was sent to a residential school in Northwest River for a few years when she was 10, after her father died.

"We never had a chance to grow up as children," she said.

"We were put in there to do chores as an adult would. You weren't allowed to speak your language. Not that I did speak, but a lot of people couldn't speak their language. You were just told that you were nothing, you were here because nobody wanted you."

Reelis praised the work done on the class-action suit by the legal team that receives a third or \$16-million of the \$50-million settlement.

"Whatever the lawyers get, they're worth that and more, because this would never have happened, only for (lawyer) Steve (Cooper) and his team," she said.

For his part Cooper said the settlement that was formally approved today is historically significant.

"Canada trumpeted in 2005 that the settlement reached then was the end of the residential school legacy, one of the worse, most troubling results of colonial history in Canada. And what this does, it actually does that which we heard was done in 2005. It does finally close that chapter in Canadian history. There are lots of other things that need check marks beside them in terms of reconciliation and righting historical wrongs but in terms of the residential school legacy in Canada, this is it," he said.