

Aboriginal Bands Reach Land Settlement in Saskatchewan

Three First Nations in Saskatchewan have received land settlements amounting to approximately \$80 million. The Cote, Keeseekose, and Key bands in Saskatchewan will receive \$80 million from the federal government in exchange for lands taken from them by the government at the turn of the 19th century. 6 percent of the settlement deal will go towards negotiation and research costs. Each of the bands' collective 5,000 off- and on-reserve members will receive approximately \$1,500. The bulk of the settlement, however, will go to land purchases and other investments. Band leaders will travel among Aboriginal communities to gain ideas on how to invest the bulk of the settlement, including purchasing some of the original land taken from them.

The lands taken from the bands total 12,800 acres and are located in eastern Saskatchewan. The lands, known as the Pelly Haylands, were originally set aside by the federal government to be used as a reserve in 1893. However, they were taken from the bands in 1898 and 1905. In reaching the settlement, the federal government has admitted it breached a lawful obligation in taking away the lands. The payout would have likely occurred earlier, had there not been a recently dismissed lawsuit on the settlement. Currently, there are 70 outstanding First Nations land claims in Saskatchewan.

Sources

Jason Warick, "\$80 million Saskatchewan land settlement goes to 3 native bands" Edmonton Journal (3 November 2008).

Canadian Press, "Three Sask. reserves celebrate land claim settlement worth \$80 million" (6 November 2008).

"Fort Pelly Agency (Cote, Keeseekoosie and Key First Nations) [Pelly Haylands]" Indian Claims Commission(11 October 2006).