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**WEEKLY**

## NEWS CANADA & WORLD

### Damaged school symbol of protest

Fri, May 30, 2008

#### Pupils from remote James Bay coast push the minister for a replacement for their school

By THE CANADIAN PRESS

OTTAWA -- As thousands of Canadians marked the native Day of Action with peaceful rallies yesterday, 13-year-old Shannen Koostachin gazed around an ornate parliamentary office.

"I wish my class looked like this," she told Chuck Strahl as they met to discuss a long-awaited new elementary school for the Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario.

"You could tell he was nervous," she later said.

But Koostachin and several other pupils who'd travelled from the remote James Bay coast left empty-handed and without even a timeline for when they might anticipate a permanent building.

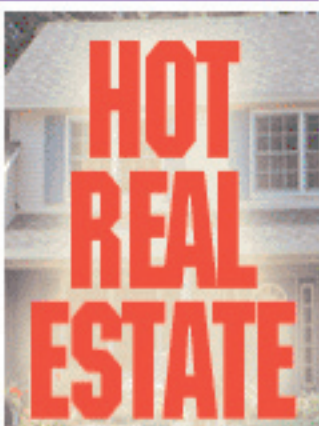
About 400 kids have been taught in eight aging portables since their school was closed in 2000 because of a massive diesel leak in the

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heating system.

Strahl says the situation isn't "ideal," but it doesn't constitute a health and safety crisis.

Cries of "Shame!" rang out from a placard-waving crowd of about 1,000 people on Parliament Hill as Koostachin recounted her meeting, showing poise beyond her years.

"Today, I feel down because Minister Chuck Strahl said he didn't have the money to build our new school. I didn't believe it. It's not right."

Native leaders say yesterday's events were the first of a sustained protest campaign that will extend into the summer and for months, possibly years, to come.

At Stoney Point, the former Canadian Armed Forces camp occupied by natives since 1993, Brian Moon George held a placard and waved at passing traffic on Highway 21. Many waved back and honked their horns in support.

George said he wants Canadians to be educated about land claims and the treaties that were signed so there is a better understanding of native issues.

"We all have to live here. We all have to travel down the same road," George said.



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At Kettle Point reserve a group of natives handed out pamphlets to drivers turning on to Highway 21.

One of the organizers, Summer Bressette, said a top priority is to educate people about the plight of child poverty on reserves.

"There needs to be better health care, more job creation," she said, adding that native children are one of the fastest growing segments of the population.

"That is Canada's future workforce," she said.

## APPEAL DENIED

HAMILTON -- The Ontario government has been denied an appeal in its bid to block a potential class-action suit being filed in Caledonia. Justice David Crane dismissed the Ontario government's application to kill the lawsuit in December and has now ruled the province cannot appeal his decision. But the lawsuit being pursued by four Caledonia businesses and 14 residents still needs to be certified before it can be fought in court. The applicants are seeking compensation for damages related to the aboriginal occupation in Caledonia, which has dragged on since February 2006.