

NEWS

Deadline: Wednesday at 12:00 noon Newsdesk 453-4983

Meech Lake represented broken promises - Harper

Elijah Harper discusses the Meech Lake Accord and the Oka Crisis

by Gail Anthony

Last Thursday in the Ted Daigle Auditorium on the STU campus Elijah Harper, a Manitoba MLA, discussed his role in ending the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord, and the consequences of his actions.

"At Meech Lake we were saying no to many things. It became a symbol for many things. We (aboriginal people) were saying no because it represented many broken promises. We were also saying no to present policies, although we were saying yes to a new relationship between the people and the Canadian government. Meech Lake did not represent the rights of the aboriginal people of the country," he explains.

According to Harper the Canadian constitution does not recognize aboriginal people for the role they have played in this country.

"We as aboriginal people have never made people accept our ways, but the federal government has made us accept theirs ... The government and people should respect other people and cultures. We as aboriginal people have not asked for any kind of apology," he says.

"Although we are not always recognized for our contribution we will still exist for generations to come ... What makes you a great person and people is what you are willing to give and share with other people," Harper adds.

He acknowledges the pressure of the events of last summer, but says there comes

a time when one has to stand up for what they believe in.

Harper says he travels around the country so people will have some awareness about aboriginal people and aboriginal issues. He discusses native land claims and the issue of self government.

"The best way I can describe self government or self determination is we as a population want to take control of our future and determine our destiny. That is all we want ... people should not fear aboriginal people taking control over their own affairs ... We are reasonable people. We have demonstrated that," he notes.

"During Meech Lake Aboriginal people stayed fast and didn't buckle like other leaders in this country, because we believed in what we were doing. We said enough is enough. We have been promised so much and the government has done nothing," Harper adds.

He discusses the government offering a Royal Commission on Indian Affairs.

"Why did they offer this during a constitution crisis? They have the power to do it anytime. It was to sway us to pass the accord," he claims.

"Saying no to the accord was difficult, but I know I made the right decision and I will never regret that ... Right now there is aboriginal solidarity that exists across this country. We as aboriginal people can be very powerful, and we indeed proved that," he states.

According to Harper the

situation at Oka should have never happened. He says there is a real story to be told about the real situation: the government's unwillingness to deal with aboriginal land claims. The aboriginal people at Oka were simply defending their ancestral burial grounds.

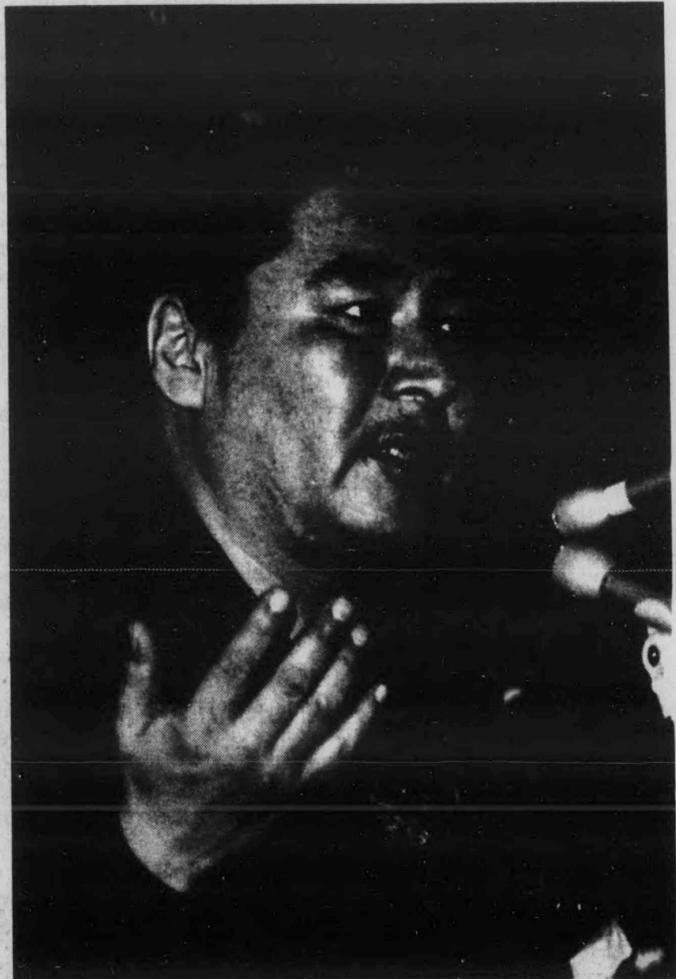
"What would you think if the government wanted to build a golf course in your ancestors' cemetery ... I'm sure people would be upset," he notes.

"The Prime Minister said these issues would be addressed, but nothing has happened up till now. We are still treated as second class citizens. The government set up a commission but I don't know what more can be said. To me it is just a delaying tactic," Harper says.

"Once again we've been betrayed by the Canadian government. Promises don't mean anything. We do not need more studies or more commissions. I don't know what it takes for the government to react," he adds.

Harper says the Canadian government has failed miserably.

"We as aboriginal people can walk alone, but we would rather have allies. The time is right. Aboriginal people have to take control, we cannot let government set the agenda for us. We have aboriginal solidarity across the country ... we cannot let this opportunity pass us by. We have to be more aggressive and put more pressure on the government to settle those issues."



Elijah Harper: Last Thursday Elijah Harper was at STU to discuss his role in ending the Meech Lake Accord.

Photo by Randy Goodleaf

Student advisory committee created

by Randy Goodleaf

The Social Club BOG affirmed the creation of the student advisory committee on Monday, which will provide ex-officio (non-voting advisory) status to the STU Student Union, Graduate Students Association, the UNB Student Union, and the Dean of Students.

The structure of the board and management will remain unchanged.

Mark Lockwood, vice-president external of the UNB Student Union, was very pleased with the meeting held Wednesday. Lockwood said they were looking to set up and established a full time advisory committee, recognized within the confines of the CHSC constitution.

The CHSC responded that they had already discussed this idea. "At that point, I just about fell off my chair", says Lockwood.

The advisory committee will provide input to the CHSC BOG in the form of comments from these groups.

As far as Lockwood is concerned, this is a dead issue,

flag

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Cooper feels that the "university would have taken it down on January 15 (the UN's deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait) if the students had asked.

"At that point, I just about fell off my chair."

-Lockwood

with the achievement of the goal. Because there was no Student Union council meeting on Wednesday, Lockwood was unable to present his findings to council, but will do so at the next meeting.

And Cuthbertson believes that the whole issue became "a different ballgame" after war erupted.

According to Garland, the flags are usually donated to the university by embassies or governments. The Iraqi flag was donated by the Iraqi government.

Press Release

Although it seemed to take a little longer to arrive this year, winter has finally hit Fredericton. While all this snow and recent cold temperatures are not considered ideal by everyone, the Men of Bridges House couldn't be happier.

It's Polar Dip time, and freezing temperatures mean freezing water! So, on Saturday, January 26 at 2:00 p.m., approximately 30 individuals from Bridges will be taking a dip in the cold waters of the Saint John River, during the third annual Bridges House Polar Dip.

In the past, the event has seen the House raise funds for charity organizations throughout the city and it is hoped that this year's dip will be as successful as the previous

ones.

The Polar Dip takes place behind the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel in downtown Fredericton and would not be possible without the help of this facility.

Each year, the Lord Beaverbrook has been generous enough to support the event by allowing the individuals participating in the icy plunge to warm themselves at the "Oasis", The Hotel's Spa, which includes pool and hot tub facilities.

Bridges would like to take this opportunity to thank the Lord Beaverbrook for their continued support.

The Men of Bridges House would like to invite all students, as well as the Fredericton community in general, to come and watch the dip on Saturday.

Bridges to hold Polar Dip on Saturday