

PARLIAMENTARY MEETING – BEAUVAL, SASKATCHEWAN

SUBMISSION BY SASK CHAPTER-NAVA

MAY 30, 2018

SUPPORT OFFERED TO INDIGENOUS VETERANS BY THEIR COMMUNITIES DURING THE TRANSITION PROCESS:

In the case of support services offered by Northwestern Saskatchewan there is none. The infrastructure to support returning veterans into Northwestern Saskatchewan do not exist. There is 1 psych nurse serving the entire population of Northwestern Saskatchewan, and the aspect of PTSD has simply not been adequately addressed for returning indigenous veterans.

Back to work programming and reintegration services do not exist. The available financial resources are oriented towards the demographics of Northwestern Saskatchewan, and thus returning indigenous veterans must search for available programming out of their own limited financial resources.

There is very limited employment opportunity as well, and most returning indigenous veterans must seek out programming out of their own financial resources. At this time, the limited employment opportunities were available through cameco corporation. However, this mining company has 3 uranium mines in care and maintenance mode, and over 1000 people were laid off in the spring of 2018.

Forestry is another available employment opportunity but the majority of these employers reside out of Northwestern Saskatchewan, and any returning indigenous veterans would have to relocate from their home community(ies).

The available post secondary institutions in Northwestern Saskatchewan is Northlands College. There are university classes available on line but the returning indigenous veterans must seek out these courses out of their own limited financial resources.

Gabriel Dumont Institute is a metis specific post secondary institution but its programming is very limited and always experiences a shortage of available funding for its participants. The programming is oriented towards minimal wage employment in the service industry(ies) such as waitressing, house keeping, hospital support staff, and secretarial work.

Saskatchewan Institute of Technology offers educational programming but this institution is oriented towards first nations only, and they too, have limited financial assistance.

In short, the support services that are offered for returning indigenous veterans into Northwestern Saskatchewan is very limited from housing, employment, re-integration, educational, health and out reach programming, specialized medical needs, medical specialists and family programming is simply non-existent.

QUALITY OF SERVICES OFFERED TO INDIGENOUS VETERANS BY VETERANS CANADA:

The quality of services offered to indigenous veterans in Northwestern Saskatchewan are very limited and too officious. The support personnel out of the veterans affairs Canada offices either in PEI, Northern Ontario, BC, Manitoba, and the Prairies simply have NO IDEA about geographic Northwestern Saskatchewan.

The quality of services is drastically affected by the professionalism or lack of professionalism and professional courtesy by these support personnel.

There is a high level of inconsistency and misinformation as well.

One office will tell you "Yes, we received your Doctor's report and we're reviewing it"!

Another office will call you and they'll say "Where's your report from the Doctor? We can't find it"!

The major affect is the lack of paper mail. The assumptions by Veterans Affairs Canada is everyone is on a computer. This is not true in Northwestern Saskatchewan and in fact the majority of older indigenous veterans have no knowledge of how the computer world works.

Therefore, these assumptions create a "black hole" in terms of a complete lack of information between Veterans Affairs Canada and those indigenous veterans that have no access or knowledge of the computer world.

The inequality of services and/or the lack of consistent information from Veterans Affairs Canada is the primary complaint from this writer.

This writer has no idea what to believe any more so the quality of services to my hearing aid problem and my back injury and treatment programs are affected. This writer doesn't know from week to week when the chiropractic treatments will not be covered. Or when the hearing aid will eventually get repaired by ex cell hearing. But it is up to Veterans Affairs Canada to apply some research into the lack of hearing aid centres in Northern Saskatchewan. The Provincial government also closed the doors to most hearing aid centres last year as a part of their debt reduction plans.

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS VETERANS LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS:

The most specific need is for Veterans Affairs Canada to understand that we have no specialists in Northwestern Saskatchewan and the majority of our specialist appointments are in Southern Saskatchewan.

The reluctance for Veterans Affairs Canada to fully comprehend this problem is the primary issue.

Our hearing aids and repairs of these hearing aids must be performed in Saskatoon in the majority of cases, and Veterans Affairs Canada policy prohibit travel allowance into Saskatoon from Northwestern Saskatchewan.

This causes a problem as a large number of indigenous veterans live on a fixed income.

In Northwestern Saskatchewan we have health centres and 1 large hospital that serves over 25,000 people.

The closest large urban hospital is 3 and a half hours one way from Northwestern Saskatchewan.

The majority of the hearing, throat, heart, lung and other specialists are in Saskatoon which is 5 plus hours from Beauval, Saskatchewan.

Veterans Affairs Canada is too stringent with their policies and this results in appointments not being followed up on or neglected.

The average price of gas in Northwestern Saskatchewan is \$1.35 per litre.

SPECIFIC ISSUES AFFECTING:

First Nations Veterans (on and off reserve);

This writer is not treaty or first nation and I cannot disrespect the concerns of those indigenous veterans by commenting out of my comfort zone.

Metis Veterans;

Metis veterans are affected by all the problems listed above.

The distances to fulfill specialist's appointments, the reluctance of Veterans Affairs Canada to not accept the fact we have NO specialists in Northwestern Saskatchewan.

Our need for repair work on our hearing aids, and other health related equipment. This equipment and/or hearing aids must be returned or repaired by the specialists that fit this equipment to your specific ears.

The rejection of our travel invoices by Veterans Affairs Canada for travel NOT PRE-APPROVED by someone from PEI, ONT., MAN., B.C., or some other god forsaken office in Canada.

In the case of this writer. I hurt my back in 1974 and it is in my medical files from the military but it took Veterans Affairs Canada 40 years to accept these claims I injured my back in the military. One office recommended some form of monetary compensation and another office rejected this recommendation.

This writer paid out of pocket for decades for chiropractic treatments, massages and other forms of treatment for a back that was injured in the military and which Veterans Affairs Canada would not accept.

Dr McKee, the chiropractor now treating my back "You're back is wrecked and it's now affecting your hip. That's why your hip is sore'!

Inuit Veterans;

This writer cannot responsibly comment.

Modern-day indigenous veterans; and

Indigenous reservists;

This writer cannot comment on the modern day or indigenous reservist as he served during 1974-1981.

If this is classified as modern day then the treatment towards WWII, Korean Veterans, Peacekeepers has remained the same by Veterans Affairs Canada.

Keep them all ignorant and don't provide any information for education, housing, land, economic development and other assistance to indigenous in remote areas of our country.

In fact, when I left the military I didn't know I had tinnitus and it wasn't until I visited Dr Maber in Saskatoon that I knew there was such a disease.

When I injured my left ear with a heavy tank weapon gun blast the medical personnel in Gagetown, New Brunswick gave me anti biotics to treat the ringing in my ear.

To this day I still suffer from Tinnitus and my vertigo is now affected as well. But Veterans Affairs Canada will NOT reimburse me to get my hearing aid repaired and they won't accept my vertigo as a sub claim of this injury to my left ear.

My back was sore while serving and I was provided with 2 heat pad treatments and I was NEVER medically cleared for my back.

Thus, my back is now wrecked as is my left hip.

Thanks to Veterans Affairs Canada.

Dr McKee stated that if my back had been medically repaired and professional treatment had been provided when I injured it in 1974 my back wouldn't be wrecked now.

But after my 2 injuries to my back in 1974. I kept running in combat boots, rappelling, jumping out of planes, and this was doing irreparable harm to my back. But as a young soldier, you soldier on through the pain!

TREATMENT OF INDIGENOUS VETERANS WHO SERVED IN WWII AND THE KOREAN WAR:

These warriors were disrespected beyond any form of explanation.

These warriors literally walked out or hitched rides to go and join the military, and upon discharge they were released in Prince Albert, Regina or Saskatoon and they walked or hitched |

They NEVER once received any communication from Veterans Affairs Canada that their non-indigenous comrades in arms were receiving educational monetary assistance, housing assistance, land acquisition assistance and economic development opportunity assistance.

The majority of these warriors lived off the land NEVER knowing that they could have applied for the same assistance.

But Veterans Affairs Canada lived by the Motto "Keep them in the dark. They're living on reserves anyway"!

I got this information from a Veterans Affairs Personnel out of Winnipeg.

Victor Scarlett's comments "We're told to reject claims 4 times. And we're told to NEVER pass on anything to indigenous veterans as they already live on reserves with free housing"!

ISSUES CONCERNING VETERANS WHO SERVED WITH THE CANADIAN RANGERS; AND

This writer cannot comment on the Ranger Program.

This writer did observe the Rangers in Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan and they provide an invaluable assistance to emergency situations.

These Rangers know their lands and they're expert navigators in all weather conditions.

They have rescued many people during all seasons.

They continually receive training in antique weapons.

SERVICES OFFERED TO INDIGENOUS VETERANS WHO SERVED WITH THE RCMPOLICE BY VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA:

This writer cannot comment on this as he has no idea what services are offered to ex RCMPolice members.

OVERVIEW:

This parliamentary committee is travelling for the first time and this is great for modern day indigenous veterans.

The past can be corrected for those indigenous veterans that still remain with us on mother earth. Perhaps their last days can be better with more assistance from and by Veterans Affairs Canada.

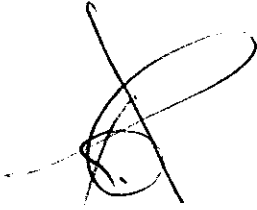
Those indigenous veterans that are no longer with us CANNOT BE FORGOTTEN and we must remember their legacy through some form of compensation for Metis Veterans.

Metis Veterans have been excluded for compensation as received by First Nations, Newfoundland Loggers, Merchant Marine and Asian WWII internees.

The Saskatchewan Chapter-National Aboriginal Veterans Association Inc. has put forward a proposal for compensation to the office of Ministers O'Regan and Minister Bennett.

It is our hope that we can at least provide some form of communication to the surviving veterans and their families that their military service was not in vain.

If the Newfoundland loggers, Merchant Marine, First Nations, and Asian Internees are deemed more important than our metis veterans then that is the ultimate insult to ALL METIS VETERANS.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex L. Maurice'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop that crosses over itself.

Alex L. Maurice

President

Saskatchewan Chapter-National Aboriginal Veterans Association Inc.