

FSIN should be through with Ahenakew

IN MOST CASES, IF A PERSON IS FIRED FROM their job for publicly blaming World War II on the Jews, they couldn't expect to ever get that job back. However, this wasn't the case for David Ahenakew.

Astonishingly, the Aboriginal leader was reinstated to the senate of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) by a landslide 43-3 vote on Monday—barely five years after he made statements to the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* claiming that “the Second World War was created by the Jews,” resulting in his removal.

In December 2002, Ahenakew called Jews “a disease” that was going to “take over” Europe, and said, “The Jews damn near owned all of Germany prior to the war. [...] That's how Hitler came in. He was going to make damn sure that the Jews didn't take Germany or Europe. That's why he fried 6 million of those guys, you know. Jews would have owned the goddamned world.”

The public reacted with outrage to Ahenakew's comments, which were made in front of an FSIN group. Politicians and Aboriginal leaders—including FSIN President Perry Bellegarde and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chief Matthew Coon Come—were quick to condemn Ahenakew's beliefs, and he was expelled from the Federation shortly afterwards. In 2005, he was stripped of his membership in the Order of Canada and found guilty of spreading hate speech. He appealed the verdict, which was overturned in 2006, and a new trial will begin in November of this year.

It's Ahenakew's refusal to display any remorse for his comments or willingness to change his views that makes his reinstatement to the FSIN so problematic. Though he apologized for his remarks soon after they were made, he recanted that apology during his first trial.

According to other FSIN senators, the resolution reinstating Ahenakew to his position on the senate referred to his history as an advocate and leader for Aboriginal people in Canada. He was president of the Federation in 1968, and was influential in the founding of several higher-education programs for Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. He has also worked with the United Nations and served as Chief of both the FSIN and the AFN.

One of the FSIN senators who voted in favour of the resolution, Chief Irvin Starblanket of the Starblanket Cree Nation, defended Ahenakew to the *StarPhoenix*, saying, “I think he paid his dues. He apologized. He won in the courts. And besides, he did more good for us as Indian people than he did wrongs.”

But Starblanket, as well as the other senators who supported Ahenakew's reinstatement, are missing the point and doing a disservice to the people Ahenakew will be representing. Whatever good he had done in the past for the First Nations people of Saskatchewan and Canada will forever be overshadowed by his hateful comments.

Because he has never fully apologized, or demonstrated a change in view, it's impossible to separate him from his racist statements. Because the FSIN have so readily accepted an outspoken racist back into their midst, they will lose credibility and respect as a result. And no matter how much good Ahenakew might have done in the past, it won't make up for the harm that his reinstatement will do to the FSIN's cause.

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

Seal slaughter unsexy

Apparently, the environmentalist celebrities from around the world are too busy to protest the slaughter of seals these days. That's right, Canada's annual seal hunt is now underway, and aside from some deaths of would-be hunters, there hasn't been so much as a peep of protest—from famous people that is; I'm sure those worthless hippies are protesting. I guess poor, adorably defenceless baby seals just aren't as sexy as poor, adorably defenceless Tibetans.

CONAL PIERSE
Opinion Editor



CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Dare to check your facts

Sean Steels seems to be rather up in arms about Dare to Deceive (re: “Protest campaign too daring,” 27 March). It may be a little “guerilla-style,” but I don't see the problem with students actually being active for once. If he's so insulted by it, don't go to the rallies. The posters aren't that rampant either; I see a few around, but nothing close to the signs everywhere for “Earn \$15.93 an hour!” etc. I also don't see Mr Steels providing a single concrete suggestion for how students that want to cause some change in the administration should do so.

Great for you for joining the Facebook group called “Return Credit Card Payment Option to the U of A Finances,” Sean, but you still have a problem with the “Dare to Deceive Group?” Well, if you look at the administrators for both groups, you will shockingly find that two of them, Andrea Michaud and Basil Bansal, are admins for both. Andrea created the credit card group to raise awareness, and Dare to Deceive branched from this larger group to become a smaller, more active group of students.

So before you go insulting Dare to Deceive and their ideology, maybe Mr Steels should realize that the credit card group is the progenitor of Dare to Deceive.

CHRISTINA WILLIAMSON
Arts II

Van Kampen's facts weren't fudged, Warwick

Derek Warwick's 27 March article, “Misinforming people on birth control ends up doing more harm than good,” accused Peter van Kampen of

intentionally relating inaccurate information to the audience of “Sexual Revolution in an Age of Controversy.” I spoke with Mr van Kampen a couple days after the talk, and he informed me that he had, unfortunately, not double-checked some of his sources as carefully as he could have. He asked that the error be made clear, and was genuinely sorry about his misunderstanding—Warwick is sorely mistaken in accusing him of maliciously misleading students.

The inaccuracies in some of the data do not render van Kampen incompetent, nor his intentions malign, as Warwick suggests. Van Kampen's goal was to affirm sex as being good and deserving respect, and he maintained that chastity involves treating sex with the respect it deserves by acknowledging two of its primary purposes, babies and bonding: a very valid thought.

Additionally, I'm honestly unable to recall any racist or sexist comment that van Kampen made during his presentation. He called for women to dress modestly because he felt that, considering the prevalence of pornography in our society, many men wrongfully objectify women. As to van Kampen being homophobic, Warwick himself noted during the Q & A period that he didn't believe he was homophobic, which renders his opinion article a trifle inconsistent. In fact, van Kampen made it clear several times that he's not homophobic and has friends who are homosexual.

Finally, the Planned Parenthood website indicates that every year, two out of every 100 women will become pregnant when their partner's condom is always used correctly (ie laboratory trials). However, they go on to note that every year, 15 out of 100 women will become pregnant when their partner's condom is not used correctly. And, as I think that Warwick would agree, condoms are

not always used correctly—which means that van Kampen was not actually that far off in his 20 per cent condom failure rate estimate.

NICOLE SEVERIN
Science II

Body Worlds has merit

(Re: “Body Worlds: Disrespectful disgrace or educational tool?” 20 March). Firstly, Ms Vail needs to understand that donors who willingly sign up for the donor program do so with the explicit intention of being plastinated and posed in typical Body Worlds style.

The bodies aren't bartered for, as Ms Vail's comparison to aristocratic families selling their pregnant daughters suggests, but, rather, they're obtained by individuals who sought out the donation program.

Comparing the exhibit to statutory rape is childish and out of place. Suggesting that a fully grown adult is no more competent at making personal choices than a naive and coerced seven-year-old [is ludicrous]. I trust the personal choices of an adult more than those of a child, and I think the choice they made regarding the use of their remains deserves more respect than Ms Vail gives them.

And although a profit is made by Body Worlds, the exhibit isn't a “freak show” rolling into town to showcase people with abnormalities trying to make a buck. Profits are required to maintain the existence of the exhibits. Profits allow for the fulfillment of their primary purpose: education.

Ms Vail willingly acknowledges the validity of using cadavers for medical students, donated, no doubt, by willing and consenting individuals. She supports the education of those privileged enough to have access to such educational tools, yet she is overtly opposed to the education of the general public. The human body, in my

mind, is a relevant and valid object for study; we all have one, and everyone deserves to know more about themselves.

What's most disappointing is Ms Vail's disrespectful attitude that neglects the donors themselves. She posits that human remains need to be properly disposed of out of respect for the individual who has died. She ignores the fact that a public boycott of the celebration for these people's bodies is a direct insult to the wishes and intentions of the donors themselves. Having desired for their bodies to be a part of this exhibit, denouncing their choice is a blow towards them as people. Ms Vail has no authority in passing moral judgements on the validity of the personal decision made by a deceased individual.

Ms Vail is obviously not involved in any sort of health science, and understandably doesn't hold the same appreciation for learning about the human physical form as myself and many others. I concede that the exhibit isn't for everyone, but I'm strongly opposed to her public condescension of a tool that so many may benefit from, as well as her blatant disregard for the desires and emotions of the deceased.

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