

Land claim settled for \$9 million

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TORONTO (CP) — A \$9-million land claim signed Wednesday by the Ontario government and five chiefs from Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron could prove a model for other settlements in the province, said Native Affairs Minister Bud Wildman.

"This is the first time that we've settled an agreement without the government of Canada," Wildman told a news conference at the Ontario legislature.

"There are a number of other bands in the province that have claims . . . where they were not paid for lands that they surrendered and have now come under the control of the province of Ontario and we think that this could serve as a model for settling those."

The settlement, which includes \$7.2 million for economic development and land acquisition and \$1.6 million in land, compensates the first nations for about 32,800 hectares they gave

the Crown in 1862 to sell for them. They never received any money for the land.

"We're looking forward to taking this settlement and developing our community," said Chief Patrick Madahbee of the Ojibwas of Sucker Creek. "I for one am glad to see this day arrive."

The chiefs received cheques in a signing ceremony that had originally been scheduled for Monday before a winter storm prevented their plane from taking off.

About 2,500 members of the five bands will benefit from the settlement.

Negotiations to settle the claim have lasted for 10 years, in part because the federal government said it was not responsible for compensating the bands.

An agreement-in-principle was reached in July between Ontario, under the previous Liberal government, and six first nations. But at the last minute one

of the bands decided not to sign.

A \$500,000 trust fund has been established in case the Wikwemikong First Nation should decide to negotiate a separate agreement on behalf of the South Bay West band, Wildman said.

The first nations are suing the federal government for its re-

fusal to compensate them

"When a land is being shared by all, it should mean by all. Economics should be shared by all," said Chief Norma Fox Wagosh of the Cockburn Island First Nation.

"After all, we were the ones who gave up quite a bit. We gave up our lives."