

## ***Message to Canadians***

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Last week, I discovered a flyer in my mailbox sent from the Government of Canada, brandishing the headline, “The Canada We Want”. The flyer was an “update” of “developments of interest to Aboriginal people”, which was composed of many articles that desperately attempt to demonstrate the willingness of “Aboriginal Canadians” to join Canadian mainstream. The flyer provided various articles on progress in Reserves, veteran’s information, and finally ending with a pleasant reminder of the impending virtuous First Nations Governance Act. Nowhere in the flyer was anything negative.

I instantly identified the literature as propaganda in my mind, but later on in the day I began to contemplate the effectiveness of this type of campaign, not only upon indigenous people throughout Canada, but upon the predominant non-native population. The flyer, I’m sure, serves two purposes. The first tactic is obvious, which targets native people with a constant barrage of subliminal information that is designed to erode their resistance towards assimilating into Canadian society.

The second objective of such propaganda is to paint a pleasant picture to both native, and particularly non-native, that the “Indian” situation in Canada is going just great and that based upon this suggestive literature; indigenous want nothing more than to take their rightful place in Canadian mainstream. After many discussions with non-natives who have been raised to adopt this false image of indigenous integration, I have found that such people truly have no idea what native people desire. Therefore, throughout the remainder of this article I shall attempt to articulate to the people of Canada, one person’s view of the objectives and worldview of indigenous peoples in North America.

I am not Canadian, nor do I seek to be; is a statement that adequately defines my political worldview. I am a citizen of a country that has existed long before the conception of the Canadian state. While many non-native people in Canada believe that despite the plight of native people, they still desire to be integrated into Canada; which is simply not true. There are others who understand the truth of the matter, but are somewhat confused as to why a native person wouldn’t want to be assimilated since Canada supposedly has a universal reputation of cultural freedom and humanitarianism.

What then, do indigenous people want? Like most, civilizations in the world, indigenous people desire great things such as freedom, liberty, and justice. However, history and logic will ultimately prove that these great concepts cannot be achieved within the political fabric of the Canadian state. In fact, the Haudenosaunee constitution, which has undisputedly inspired the United States constitution, contains a more direct and efficient method of democracy than that of Canada. Why should we settle for less if we are entitled to so much more? This is why people such as the Kanien’kehá:ka (People of the Mohawk Nation) choose to remain faithful to the sovereign sphere of their ancient and democratic government and fight to maintain it. Ours is a better way, in terms of realistically attaining freedom, liberty, and equality for our citizens. By this token,

indigenous nationalism and resistance against assimilation into Canadian society is the only way for native people to acquire true freedom and liberty.

One may notice that justice is not included among the elements described in the above equation. Indeed, the restoration of justice is the responsibility of those who commit the injustice. While indigenous people themselves are perfectly capable of administering domestic justice, it is the Government of Canada (and the United States) who are inherently responsible for the countless injustices committed against indigenous people here in North America. Murder, robbery, and degradation are as much a part of Canadian history as the Maple Leaf. What can Canada do to make right of the wrongs they have committed and continue to commit to indigenous people?

There are so many reparations that the Government of Canada must cede to indigenous people in order to correct the long list of injustices, however due to space requirements I will outline only some of the more predominant of these reparations. Certainly, a substantial portion of these reparations include the continuation of Canada's fiduciary responsibility to indigenous peoples who continue to have their land and resources commandeered by the government. Also, international treaties and compacts must be honored, respected, and its legal interpretations must be subject to nation-to-nation dialogue in an international arena; as opposed to the subjectivity of Canada's bias domestic judicial system which has yet to demonstrate anything but injustice towards native issues.

Furthermore, the Government of Canada must formally recognize the right of statehood and sovereignty inherent to indigenous nations here in North America. The definition of such sovereignty would be subject to international standards as opposed to mere self-government powers, which seems to be Canada's perception indigenous nationhood. International sovereignty includes political autonomy, economic independence, with exclusive jurisdiction over every domain within their homeland. Following such, unpopulated traditional homelands should be surrendered by the Canadian Government and repatriated by the appropriate indigenous nation, while those areas that are inhabited by non-natives should repatriated in title leaving that nation with a taxable constituency of non-natives.

If such reparations are made, what then should Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples be if not a ward of Canada? Kahswénhtha, or the Two Row Wampum treaty is the first international compact between the Haudenosaunee and the first European colonists of North America. It is a foreign policy that establishes a code of non-interference and a mutual respect for the independence and sovereignty of both parties, which includes among others, all social, political, and economic activities of that party and its constituents. As it is portrayed in the Kahswéntha, each nation will travel side by side, the river of life in their own vessels. Never shall one cross into the path of the other; thus establishing a code of non-interference. Furthermore, each vessel shall contain within it, their various institutions, customs, and beliefs etc. Never shall one vessel impose such items upon the other; thus establishing a policy of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and independence. The Two Row Wampum treaty demonstrates

the simplicity of what we view Canada's relationship should be with indigenous people; ensuring peace, stability, and mutual co-existence.

Many Canadians defensively argue that the plight of indigenous people is not their responsibility since they were not directly involved in the genocidal and assimilative activities that were so prevalent and obvious in past. I've also heard mention of how native people should "get over it". I think these types of comments are made out of fear by some who are worried that eventually some natives will come and violently evict non-natives from their homes, while other are simply jealous of a native's tax exemption.

In any case, it should be made clear that our fight is with the government and not individual citizens of Canada; despite the racism that continues to exist within Canada. It should be noted that throughout this article, it is only the Government of Canada who receives reprimand and not the individual citizen of Canada. However, if any Canadian believes in what George W Bush calls "infinite justice", then these people should lobby their public officials to do the right thing.

Ever onward towards the good tidings of peace and power!