

*Reverberations of the Historic Culture Clash  
Between Incoming European Nations  
and Resident First Nations Continue to Linger*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper will argue that the root cause for many contemporary misunderstandings between Canada's First Nations and dominant society originated at the time of First Contact with incoming Europeans-French and English. Subsequent government inaction and lack of concern on the part of the public have allowed these misunderstandings to prevail. The result is that Canada's Aboriginal peoples have fallen behind and continued to experience a lower socioeconomic standard of living. A summary and analysis of what Aboriginal leaders and writers are saying about the injustices their people have suffered is discussed. These writers offer hope to rectify the situation through education.

**RESUME:** Ici, la cause de nombreux malentendus aujourd'hui qui se produisent entre les Premières nations canadiennes et la société dominante, vient de l'époque où les Européens arrivant ; Français et Anglais, les ont rencontrés pour la première fois. Le manque ultérieur d'initiatives de la part du gouvernement et l'indifférence de la part du public, ont fait que ces malentendus sont devenus prépondérants. Les peuples autochtones canadiens ont pris du retard et leur niveau de vie socio-économique reste défavorisé. Ce que les dirigeants autochtones et les écrivains révèlent sur les injustices que les leurs subissent, y est résumé et analysé. Grâce aux études, ces écrivains laissent espérer un changement de situation.

## *Introduction*

And so I say to you, the EuroCanadians, you have discovered our land and its resources, but you have not yet discovered my people nor our teachings, nor the spiritual bases of our teachings.

—Chief John Snow, Nakoda Sioux First Nation (Friesen, 1998, p. 60).

We have been fighting for so long now that the original misunderstandings and differences [that] created this conflict have been forgotten.

—Harold Cardinal, president, Indian Association of Alberta (1977, p. 7).

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, First Nations are back where they started at the centre of Canadian consciousness and memory. They have come back to the central role only over the past 60 years, emerging from an era in which non-Natives did not recognize their worth and importance to Canada's strategic and economic well-being.

—J.R. Miller (2001, p. 52).

For centuries now, Aboriginals and nonAboriginals in Canada have been intermittently struggling to understand one another, and much of the blame for this unfortunate reality may be traced to the time of first contact. This paper will outline some of the differences in worldviews that contributed to fundamental misunderstandings which occurred at that time. Sadly, many of them still persist. In recent years the reaction of Indigenous writers to this unfortunate evolution of history has come to the fore, but even their protestations have largely been ignored—particularly by the press. As Anderson and Robertson (2011, p. 267) explain:

Indeed our study shows a different outcome. The colonial stereotypes have endured in the press, even flourished. That the prose may have become less “blatant”, however, suggests that the audience has become more familiar with the genre of the discourse.

### *Initial Contacts*

Initial interactions between resident Indigenous peoples and European explorers, traders, and settlers moved quickly to a rough start in Canada, and the reverberations of this unfortunate cultural clash are still being felt across the land (Clark 1971, p. 21; Dickason, 2010, p. 317f). At first the fur trade delivered benefits to both parties; local Aboriginals brought furs to the bargaining table in exchange for valued European goods—axes, tools, needles, traps, spearheads, harpoons, knives, scissors, and steel by which to strike fire, and for a time this form of exchange worked to the satisfaction of both parties. As the European presence intensified, their imports replaced the old materials and became necessities in newly altered Indigenous lifestyles (Lower, 1983, p. 12). Although they were probably unaware of it, European influence on other aspects of their lifestyle was even more pronounced.

There were four major groups of newcomers that emigrated to 16<sup>th</sup> century North America, and none of them came with a particularly strong orientation to learning about resident cultural life (Barman, Hébert, and McCaskill, 1986, p. 3). Fur traders were most highly motivated towards seeking financial gain, but not far removed from their counterparts who were intent on building permanent centers of European civilizations in the New World, first French, and then English. Jacques Cartier set sail for New France and landed at the Bay of Chaleurs in 1534 in an area that separates the Province of New Brunswick from the southwestern tongue of the Province of Quebec. He landed, planted a cross, and claimed the territory in the name of his king (Tracy, 1908). Official European settlement of the area did not occur until 1608 when Samuel de Champlain founded the City of Quebec. Within 23 years the cities of Trois Rivières and Montreal were also established.

The first Indigenous people Cartier met were the Iroquois who apparently made signals to him that it was safe for his crew to come ashore. From that point on, events transpired rather quickly; by 1588, two of Cartier's nephews had obtained a monopoly over the fur trade via a grant from King Henry III. The contract was later cancelled due to pressure from other interest groups, making it possible to widen the range of investors and traders (Goldstein, 1969, p. 20). By 1629 the imperialist designs of the English became evident with their demand for the surrender of Quebec City.

The third group of European arrivals were missionaries whose stated intentions were not primarily to achieve economic gain in what became Canada; they came to “Christianize, educate, and civilize” the Indigenous people. Initially they required the cooperation of local First Nations in order to establish missions among them. Without a healthy relationship between locals and newcomers, both missionaries and representatives of the French crown who promoted their efforts, would be frustrated in their efforts to makeover the First Nations (Miller, 2001, p. 40). Through their subsequent actions it was soon evident that the missionaries became perhaps somewhat inadvertently, the principal agents of educational assimilation. While concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of their new charges, the missionaries also prepared the ground for institutional takeover by their imperial-minded political superiors.

There is some evidence that the missionaries tried to protect the locals from imported evils such as liquor and unfair trading practices, but their tutelary techniques were originated in their homeland and could only be representative of that orientation (Snow, 2005, p. 30). During French reign in eastern Canada there were religious leaders who fought courageously on behalf of the rights of First Nations, though they denied the Natives the right to practice their traditional ceremonies and rituals. In 1867, when Canada officially became a nation, political leaders, either because they were unprepared or unwilling to take responsibility for their educational responsibilities towards the Indigenous people, soon turned that task over to the missionaries. The result was that local tribes were offered a new literacy in which they were condemned for their cultural practices.

The immigrants who migrated to Canada comprised of the fourth group of arrivals, were inspired by Champlain’s discovery of New France, as it soon came to be named. These were French peasants who simply wanted to grow crops and engage in trade while establishing their own religious, political, and judicial institutions. As Roman Catholics, they excluded Protestants from their communities, kept their societies socially tightly-knit, and passed on their faith to succeeding generations. Unlike their imperialist counterparts who continued to push west for an ever-expanding fur trade market, the settlers remained tied to the land, and interacted with local Natives on a selective basis. Many of their feudal-like cultural practices, presided over by the church, remained virtually intact until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when English influence became increasingly evident.

The English took over from France with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, and were handed over responsibility for relations with resident First Nations. Most French possessions were signed over to the British although it was later discovered that many Aboriginal lands had *not* been legally ceded to the French. The English only assumed that these negotiations had taken place. Lands not negotiated include about one-third of British Columbia and more than seventy-five percent of Quebec. French trust, however, was broken, and both First Nations and local settlers developed a strong spirit of distrust in their captors (Lower, 1973, p. 38). A split among local First Nations had already occurred when Samuel de Champlain first encountered the Iroquois nation; he is said to have made a serious miscalculation in interpreting their welcome by firing on them. That act brought the full force of Six Nations antagonism against the French. As a result the Iroquois sided with English interests and effectively blocked French efforts to navigate the Ohio River. The confrontation consisted of severe negative tactics, such as burning Iroquois crops; such practices continued until the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

When the English gained victory over the French, it was inevitable that conflict would erupt between incoming settlers and resident First Nations. The English victory drove French immigrants to the north and they were replaced by other nationalities. In the meantime a variety of First Nations cultures were unprepared for the cultural onslaught they were to endure. It was an all around malaise of misinformation, broken trust, suspicion, and miscalculation, accompanied by preconceived ideas, cultural insensitivity, and imperialistic motivations.

In hindsight, it is easy to place blame on the first Europeans who migrated to Canadian territory and took resident First Nations for granted, ignoring the cultural differences that they exhibited, and targeting them for cultural makeover (Harrison and Friesen, 2010, p. 188). But they were people of their time; England, France, and Spain were all anxious to expand their kingdoms and they proceeded to do so in accordance with the international perspectives of the time-winner takes all. Unbeknownst to them, and because of their openness, resident First Nations were ideally oriented to be manipulated, although they did not expect to be subdued. The philosophy by which they lived included welcoming visitors who came in peace, listening to their stories, and sharing resources with them. As Stoney Chief John Snow (2005, pp. 8,21) put it:

Human kindness was imprinted in our hearts, and the law of the Great Spirit, the Creator, was the only law that we observed....My people were hospitable and generous and shared what we had with the newcomers. We were quite prepared to share the land as well. But the newcomers were not satisfied with just sharing it. Despite the fact that many of them arrived preaching the Christian values of brotherhood and understanding, their actions proved that what they wanted was to own and control the land and to control the minds and actions of my people as well. At least this is the way we Indians have experienced the history of the last centuries.

The stage was set, highlighted with a continuing mind-set to exploit Canada's First Nations by laying claim to their lands and resources, manipulating their economies, and influencing their worldviews, often under the guise of caring and protection. As the generations have passed, Indigenous leaders have gradually educated themselves in the ways of EuroCanadian politics and economics, and have begun to demand compensation and justice for past mistreatment.

### *Divergent Perspectives*

Although both French and English explorers arrived in Canada from the same continent, there were significant differences in the world-views of their compatriots who settled here. French settlers were essentially interested in maintaining their language and religion, and saw education as the primary vehicle by which to perpetuate these. Their particular form of organized religion provided the basis of all conscious living, and was expected to form the soul of all thinking. Accordingly, secular education was scorned, and pedagogical activities were aimed at producing Christian character by studying the workings and mandates of God (Saint-Denis, 1940, p. 25).

French historians relating the events pertaining to the British takeover placed varying degrees of emphasis on the role of the church, but glorified the past when the French were free of British rule. They emphasized Catholicism, conservatism, order, stability, and agrarianism. They seemed convinced that if the French could maintain those values they could effectively resist the press of British-inspired materialism. Ironically, a form of tiered stratification developed in New France that included a higher rank of landowners and a lesser status consisting of rural tenants who worked for a landlord (Francis, Jones, and Smith, 1988, p. 13). Townspeople in New France also imported

slaves from Africa to serve as domestics, but slavery never did become essential in the way it did in southern American plantations (Moore, 2002, pp. 158-159).

In contrast to French ways, British-influenced values in the New World were founded on nation building. Implicit in the Treaty of Paris was the assumption that large-scale immigration would occur, and the fur trade would continue. A measure of stability was assured through British rule, but the French peasants felt abandoned. Financial assistance and guidance from France, their mother country, was gone, so they turned to the church. That appeal was soon frustrated by British infiltrators who had their own ideas about governance, economy, educational structures, and pedagogical objectives (Giles and Proudfoot, 1990, p. 10). Soon a national campaign was launched for the purposes of cultural takeover, and the primary vehicle selected for the task was schooling. French peasants, First Nations, and ethnic minorities were equally included in the swath of British educational imperialism. In the meanwhile the French language prevailed, not by law, but by common sense, and simply because it was not feasible immediately to replace the parent language of some 70,000 new British subjects (Leacock, 1951, p. 103).

### *With or Without Prejudice?*

Although the British and the French shared fairly common geographic origins, their roles in the New World brought out significant differences in the way they regarded intercultural contact. Like their Spanish counterparts on the southeastern coast of the United States, the French believed in colonization with a minimum of interruption to local customs. It was their belief that by tolerating local practices to some extent, the assimilation of conquered nations would occur faster. The British took another tack; armed with an extraordinary dose of ethnocentrism, they approached intercultural interaction from the perspective that divergent cultural lifestyles were inferior to theirs, and in need of reform. Native traders, for example, were not allowed to enter British trading posts on business, nor were employees of the Hudson's Bay Company permitted to wed Aboriginal woman. It was a policy backed by a mindset of limited flexibility.

Although many encounters between incoming nations and Canada's First Nations were initially quite pleasant, the gloom of cultural genocide soon hung in the air. Cross cultural marriages did occur, but



the children who resulted from these unions were not readily welcomed, eventually giving birth to a new nation, the Métis of Canada. For generations, these people suffered discrimination, working at menial tasks and often living on road allowances because they were not welcomed in developed centers (Adams, 1995). It took until September of 2003 for the Supreme Court of Canada to recognize the Métis as an Aboriginal people. The legal, social, and educational implications of that ruling are still to be determined (Friesen and Friesen, 2004, p. 8).

A brief survey of core First Nations values that philosophically set the First Peoples apart from their new neighbors accentuates a number of unique emphases. In practical terms, at the time of first contact some Native values were diametrically opposed to those of French and English immigrants.

To begin with, it is useful to bear in mind that there is no physical evidence that Canada's First Peoples originated anywhere other than in North America, even though some historians have speculated that this might have been the case (Berry, 1981, pp. 214f). Widely known as the Bering Strait theory, those who persist in advancing the theory claim that about 30 000 years ago an 80 kilometer wide bridge, that stretched to 1 500 kilometers, may have formed between Siberia and what became Alaska. This allowed safe passage to those who eventually became North America's First Nations. Lakota historian, the late Vine Deloria, Jr. (1995, pp. 88-89) meticulously debunked this notion by suggesting that an ocean drop of 60 meters would have been necessary for the First Nations of Siberia to cross the Bering Strait. At that time Siberia would have been locked in huge glaciers and its population would have been minute in numbers. Deloria summed up his arguments by suggesting that the Bering Strait theory came into being when some pseudo-scientist stated; "I don't know, but it sounds good, and no one will check" (Deloria, 1995, p. 81).

To the casual observer it may not make much difference whether the Indigenous people originated here or elsewhere—they were still here first, and the legal and psychological implications of the right of first occupancy can be significant. Those who arrived in the New World intended to establish themselves in new territory with plans to develop, change, build, and grow. By contrast, resident First Nations were content to reap the available benefits that nature provided without significantly altering anything.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the two communities



—Native and nonNative, had to do with their perceptions of the workings of the universe. Local Natives practiced a deep respect for nature, virtually to the point of doing obeisance to its various seasons and maneuvers. The universe was perceived as a phenomenon of reverence, albeit veiled in mystery. Coupled with this presupposition was the concept that all forces in nature were viewed as being functional in some way, although no one could fully explain their purpose. By contrast, the European newcomers perceived nature as something to be conquered and perhaps even controlled. As increased scientific information became available, the latter even took action to realign natural geographic conditions through such inventions as diverting running waters by building canals, using fertilizer, and employing rain making techniques. Aborigines saw some of these European-originated approaches as spiritual sacrilege.

The concept of Aboriginal spirituality is closely related to the above in that Canada's First Peoples have always perceived the universe as a spiritual phenomenon, that is, its makeup is essentially spiritual. Spirituality applies to people and animals and animate as well as inanimate objects, and all are connected and interconnected (Highwater, 1981, p. 55). Individual spiritual messages or visions can be received by individuals without the necessity of reading a book or listening to the advice of a spiritual leader, although the latter might be called upon to verify the vision. This perception was greatly misunderstood and unappreciated by European dwellers who conveniently relegated spiritual activities to set times during the week. The two minds rarely coalesced because immigrant newcomers were convinced that, in addition to being aware of the Creator's existence, local Aborigines were also worshipping evil spirits. In the final analysis, Native spirituality was found to have very little in common with imported forms of religion, both of which tended to reflect their respective worldviews. The Bible that the Europeans brought with them clearly instructed them to "Be fruitful in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28b NIV). This, to local Aborigines directly contradicted their concept of connectedness; interpreted it means that we—all living things—are related. Thus the saying at the end of a Sioux Indian prayer, "all my relations."

Reliance on the oral tradition aided Canada's First Nations in maintaining valuable cultural knowledge, traditions, and customs for thousands of years. Much of this knowledge was stored in legends that

were passed on to succeeding generations through perpetual telling and retelling. When this form of First Nations knowledge came up against the written word of their new neighbors, the latter quickly relegated it to second class status. Formal treaty negotiations (the big ten), which began in Canada in 1871, were not deemed valid unless the transaction was accompanied by a signed document. It bears mentioning that some 500 informal treaties were transacted prior to the "big ten" of 1871 and onwards, many of them simply consummated by a handshake. No wonder the local Aborigines were confused!

The Industrial Revolution that originated in England around 1760 had repercussions around the world. The movement spurred new ways to do things faster and more efficiently. Coupled with the Protestant work ethic that co-hosted slogans like, "the idle mind is the devil's workshop," made doing more important than being. When this form of mind bent impacted on Native communities, they were confused. Why was it so important to be doing something? When would there be time to contemplate one's divine calling or to determine what the next best course would be to fulfill one's destiny? It was expected that the European newcomers would label the locals lazy because they were not primarily concerned about building up vast storehouses of goods or accumulating title to land. Local Aborigines preferred to follow the unwritten edict, "When it's time, it'll happen."

The penchant for accumulating goods has a side effect, namely hoarding, which was an unheard of practice in traditional First Nations societies. An ideal form of behavior in Indigenous societies would be to share resources with those who had none; in fact, it was the practice among some Plains First Nations that if some one lacked for anything, he or she could literally take what was needed from individuals who had the resource and the latter should consider themselves blessed for being able to render a kindness. This virtue was sometimes symbolized in the give-a-way dance (Dion, 1996, p. 52). One would have to extend pity to incoming Europeans who tried to wrap their heads around such a concept; they considered the practice an anathema to their notions of private ownership.

The concept of individuality, so much revered in traditional Indigenous societies, is a complex phenomenon. To outsiders it usually makes little sense. Individuality has always been highly respected among First Nations, particularly individual gifts like wisdom, generosity, bravery, and hunting skills, so long as any benefits gained by the exercise of these gifts accrues to the "maintenance of Indianness"

(McFee, 1972, p. 99). The traditional Aboriginal perspective was a live-and-let-live philosophy that reflected an attitude of non-interference. Group goals were basically attained through community channels with minimal individual interference. Aboriginal child-raising practices often left European observers perplexed because discipline, other than group ridicule or chiding by a relative, was minimal. No one wanted to interfere with the child's search for his or her place in the scheme of things. The contemporary EuroCanadian child raising philosophy, which still has a lot to learn from the era of progressive education, largely derives from centuries of negative education, strict discipline, and physical punishment, still baffles Indigenous parents. Indian children traditionally learned cultural ways through imitation, emulation, and storytelling with the end hope that their individuality would emerge, and any revealed gifts or skills would benefit the community, not the individual.

Finally, the differences between forms of governance between incoming Europeans and settled Indian tribes manifested themselves in significant ways. Europeans could not understand why it took so long for First Nations to make up their minds on pertinent issues. Sometimes council meetings would last until the wee hours of the morning. The end hope, of course, was that group consensus would be achieved. If council members could not agree, the elders would question what the possible benefit might be of having a split society. Why not talk the matter through until everyone agreed? Obviously, Robert's Rule-of-Order would not survive at a traditionally oriented First Nations council meeting. Even today when negotiations between a First Nation and government representatives becomes necessary, Native elders first opt to engage in a pipe ceremony, both to assure spiritual guidance as well as to give time to participants to consider all options. Following the ceremony, it is more likely that consensus will be achieved.

The above sketch of the Aboriginal form of governance is not intended to suggest that conflict did not arise among traditional First Nations communities, for it sometimes did. For example, when conflict occurred in Plains Indian cultures, a subdivision of the nation (band) might originate under the leadership of a recognized leader and the new band would map out their own territorial area and social format. Sometimes wandering bands would meet during the summer months to renew acquaintances and celebrate the Sundance. Nevertheless, this practice did little to endear Native ways to incoming Europeans who were used to their own forms of representative democracy.

### *Altering One's Mind-Set*

As the twenty-first century unfolds, new opportunities arise by which to learn about, understand, and perhaps appreciate the mysteries of Indigenous ways. Literature produced by Indigenous writers is burgeoning, and although media descriptions of socioeconomic conditions in Native communities continue to be mostly negative, the situation is slowly changing. Indian communities are still the poorest in the country. Violence (particularly against women), alcohol abuse, and fallout from residential school experiences continue to plague Canada's First Nations. There is still a significant gap in the First Nations standard of living compared with the rest of Canada in terms of economic development, housing, education, and health care. Looking back a few decades, however, will show that things are gradually improving.

Many Aboriginals are simply angry with what they see as the slow pace towards attaining equality and justice (Monture-Angus, 2003, p. 280), some have opted for a strong political stance (Alfred, 2005), and others have adopted a protective attitude towards Indigenous knowledge (Battiste and Henderson, 2000). On the positive side, there are also a few Aboriginal leaders who prefer to offer a warm welcome to those who would like to learn more about First Nations ways. Chief John Snow phrased the latter invitation in these words: "Now we must go out and share our Sacred Message with all the races of people in the Global Village" (Snow, 2005, p. 245). Blackfoot leader, Leroy Little Bear (2005, p. 10) echoes this approach:

The ideal personality in Native American cultures is a person who shows kindness to all, who puts the group ahead of individual wants and desires, who is a generalist, who is steeped in spiritual and ritual knowledge—a person who goes about daily life and approaches "all his or her relations" in a sea of friendship, easygoing-ness, humor, and good feelings.... That is the way it used to be! That is the way it should be!

Proposals by which to break down barriers, promote understanding, and bring about justice and equality for Canada's First Nations, concocted by Aboriginal writers are ample, but generally polemic in nature. Alfred (2005, p. 268), for example, believes that First Nations should pursue economic gain because property logically begets political power. Henlin (2006) is on the same page; he challenges Aboriginal leaders to direct their people towards self-reliance through full economic

integration as a way of throwing off the yoke of EuroCanadian colonialism. On the softer side, Battiste (2000, p. xx) makes note that Aboriginal knowledge is increasingly being injected into all levels of academic scholarship, its validity backed by a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. Bocking (2005, p. 235) concurs, and suggests that scientists' perceptions of Indigenous knowledge have also been influenced by wider developments. Thus First Nations in Canada seem to be gaining support for their contention that Indigenous knowledge is both substantial and valid.

One of the concerns voiced by Aboriginal writers is the necessity for their people to return to the land and its closely related traditions (Alfred, 2009, p. 5; Battiste and Henderson, 2000, p. 12; Dickason, 2005, pp. 136-137; Laroque, 2001, p. 389). NonAboriginal writers concur, sometimes tying land to the right of first occupancy and respect for the environment (Fleras and Elliott, 2007, p. 187; Steckley and Cummins, 2008, p. 17f; Warry, 2007, p. 22). Of related concern is the need to strengthen Indigenous identity which again implies a return to the land and the traditions (Yazzie, 2000, p. 47; Schouls, 2003, p. 65). Purporting to represent the voice of Aboriginal women in Canada, Monture-Angus (2003, p. 298) offers no specific proposals for improving the lot of her people, but is convinced that improved conditions for First Nations communities cannot result from constitutional reform. Solutions to alleviating Native ills, if there are any, are located within the memories of individual First Nations, and Aboriginal women have special responsibility within that creativity.

Schooling is still viewed by Indigenous leaders as an avenue for positive change because it creates awareness of the inconsistencies between the way the world is and the way it should be (Alfred, 2009, p. 168). Battiste and Henderson (2000, p. 95) emphasize that schooling does not have to continue its assimilationist bent, but adopt a more helpful perspective. Educators should seek to integrate traditional Aboriginal knowledge and heritage into the curriculum. For this to be an effective move, nonAboriginal educators need to be helped to understand Indigenous ways, and this can be done by creating teacher training centers controlled by Native elders and educators. That way, for example, nonAboriginal educators could learn to understand the relationship between human capacities and freedom of consciousness. Ward and Bouvier (2001, p. 93) urge educators to keep in mind that when First Nations families relocate to urban centers they often suffer from ethno-stress. This condition translates to experiencing a disruption

in cultural life and belief system which in turn impacts negatively on their traditional values and ways of learning. A more welcoming school atmosphere would do a great deal to alleviate this kind of stress and encourage more effective Aboriginal and nonAboriginal relationships. Children should be educated in a safe environment so they can grow in self-confidence, feel comfortable, and learn to give back to the community (Ward and Bouvier, 2001, p. 8).

### *Conclusion*

It is often thought, and that wrongly, if injustices exist in society, they should in the first instance be addressed by government. Such attempts have often been enacted, often with little success. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is such an attempt, as well as the best-known government production pertaining to righting the wrongs done to the First Peoples, namely the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People of 1996. Its framers made an effort to incorporate Indigenous opinion, and together the team of consultants concocted hundreds of recommendations. Several of these proposals were targeted at improving Aboriginal and nonAboriginal relations, but few of them have been honored. Key recommendations of the report pertain to improving Aboriginal and nonAboriginal relations, encouraging self-determination through self-government, economic self-sufficiency, and healing for Aboriginal individuals and communities (Dickason, 2009, pp. 416-417). In 2007, the federal government did make an attempt to promote the healing process emanating from unfortunate residential school experiences by compensating some 80,000 recognized survivors with stipulated amounts of financial reimbursement based on years of attendance. Nothing was said about providing counseling services for these individuals (Dickason, 2010, p. 325).

The question now before us is this: will Canada's First Nations be able to experience equality of opportunity and attain justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The answer to that question will involve a complexity of factors and influences including government enactments, proposals put forth by Aboriginal leaders and writers, the role of schooling, and the public will to do right.

Regenerating the public will requires concern, education, motivation, and a change in mind-set. The time to act is now, especially for the sake of the next generation of both Aboriginals and nonAboriginals. In the words of Lakota Chief Sitting Bull; "Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can make for our children" (Cannon and Sunseri,



2011, p. 272).

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