



# Reconciliation in Canada: A Cross-cultural Perspective

Submission to the House of  
Commons Standing Committee  
on Indigenous and Northern  
Affairs (INAN)

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April 8, 2021

## **INTRODUCTION**

I have used the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) to promote reconciliation in Canada since 2007 by combining the wisdom of the Elders with compatible western concepts. I have grounded this work through a number of case studies that are anchored to the energy of Indigenous sacred sites, specifically Manitou Mountain near Missanabi, Ontario and Purple Mountain of the Bear at Otter Lake, Quebec. This has allowed me to make a number of cross-cultural observations including the fact that Canada's reconciliation agenda is flawed given that the Crown does not understand the underlying epistemology of the traditional Indigenous worldview and therefore has no choice but to interpret these values from a western perspective. Because of this the Canadian establishment cannot fulfill its trust-based fiduciary obligations towards Indigenous peoples and cannot recognize the prevalence of systemic racism, let alone its root causes. The good news however is that Canada's constitutional principles are compatible with traditional Indigenous constructs and therefore have the ability to support UNDRIP as well as true reconciliation.

## **CANADA'S FLAWED APPROACH TO RECONCILIATION**

### **The Challenge**

Systemic racism is so deeply entrenched in Canada that not even the most sacred Indigenous spiritual sites can be properly protected. With no recognition of sanctum sanctorum, cultural genocide is inevitable. This racism has contributed directly to Canada's failure to meet its Section 35 constitutional commitments in spite of more than 200 supporting Supreme Court of Canada rulings, leaving non-status Indians particularly vulnerable. This is merely symptomatic of a much deeper issue given that other races - including less fortunate White people - continue to be deprived of their basic human rights as a consequence of the unfulfilled constitutional commitments to participatory democracy, egalitarianism and multiculturalism. Unchecked male dominated logic-based thinking grounded in the Protestant Work Ethic is one of a number of root causes. This has led to a fixation on wealth generation that comes at the expense of environmental sustainability, social well-being and cultural diversity; as well as moral and ethical decrepitude perpetuated by secularism.

People and organizations with an Article 8 UNDRIP responsibility to prevent forced assimilation and cultural destruction need to understand the underlying attributes that define the people in their care. Indigenous traditionalists are the keepers of their cultural knowledge and can only share it if asked to do so in an appropriate way. Offering tobacco, going into ceremony, respecting oral traditions and following the social constructs of storytelling are but a few determining factors. The public engagement approach taken by the House Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) regarding the advancement of Bill C-15 in support of legislating UNDRIP requirements in Canada is at odds with these cultural constructs and therefore discriminates against those who can make the greatest contributions to a meaningful solution. Canada cannot claim to be an enlightened society until it makes peace with Indigenous peoples and this cannot occur in the absence of a full understanding of the underlying cultural value system that it is obligated to safeguard.

The counterpoint to the aforementioned observation is that a number of Indigenous people have studied western societal constructs from a traditional perspective and have observed that mainstream society is out of balance in a number of ways. As evidenced by recent responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, our society places more emphasis on personal rights than on related responsibilities; more on personal freedoms than on collective duties; more on the contributions of wage earners than those of caretakers; more on man-made laws than Natural Laws and more on the needs of men than those of women, youth and the aged. In essence, we are a logic-based testosterone led society that uses entrenched and unfettered command-and-control; divide-and-conquer; and decide, announce and defend approaches to decision-making that serve to perpetuate elitism, sexism and racism. A healthy dose of emotional intelligence is required to restore balance through a renewal of the feminine spirit as prescribed by Indigenous prophecy. Time is of the essence given that Mother Earth is under siege and is poised to leave our children with an empty and poisoned pantry as well as a monumental amount of karmic debt.

## **The Opportunity**

The traditional Indigenous worldview is much more complex than what is currently understood by mainstream society. The Medicine Wheel Model, the Sacred Tree of Life Model, the Clan System Model and the Seven Fire Prophecies provide only a cursory overview of cultural constructs that have evolved over many centuries of adaptive management planning and spiritual grounding. This worldview is reinforced with rich customs, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, songs, tales, dreams, visions and stories that provide movement and flexibility to the aforementioned graphical representations. For example, although often depicted from a cartesian perspective, the Medicine Wheel also recognizes directional forces that influence balance from above, below and within. The Clan System Model is supported by a rich tapestry of rules and codes of conduct that maintains a balance between the rights and responsibilities of both men and women at the individual as well as community level in a manner that is not inconsistent with Plato's concepts of epistocracy and noology. The Sacred Tree of Life depicts a universally recognized approach for good living based on moral and ethical prescriptions that have been used all over the world in almost every ancient tribal society and by most religions including Christianity. All of these concepts are grounded in prophecy and are guided by spirit.

We are now in the time of the Seventh Fire, a time when people with new attitudes are called to look back seven generations, pick up knowledge that has been left behind and rally together in support of changing our collective destiny. This wisdom is tied to the renewal of the feminine spirit as well as spiritual rediscovery. The new world order that accompanies the Seventh Fire Prophecy calls for a melding of western and traditional Indigenous perspectives in equal measure in support of reaching the Eighth and final Fire. The prescribed Indigenous contribution to this partnership is vision, the western contribution action. The two sides need each other because vision without action gets you nowhere and action without vision gets you lost. The Natural Law based term for this symbiotic approach to peaceful co-existence is called "convergence". Guided by the energy of Manitou Mountain I identified the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada as a potential convergence champion for the Government of Canada in 2019. I am currently working on a similar project with the Quebec Bureau du Protecteur du Citoyen that is tied to the energy of Purple Mountain of the Bear.

## BUILDING ON CANADA'S CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Western societal values possess legal and religious constructs that are compatible with the underpinnings of a traditional Indigenous worldview. In principle, Canada's constitutional framework fosters reconciliation given that the underlying tenets of egalitarianism, participatory democracy and multiculturalism are consistent with traditional Indigenous perspectives. Furthermore, if Canada's constitutional framework can accommodate both French and British rule of law it also has room for traditional Indigenous constructs. With respect to the need for reconciliation from a spiritual perspective, there are a number of biblical values that are entirely consistent with traditional Indigenous beliefs, starting with the foundational points that all humans have a soul, prayer works and there is life after death. Regarding the controversial issue of traditional Indigenous constructs that recognize humans as being a part of nature versus a western based anthropocentric approach that places humans above nature, the Book of Genesis references that humankind was originally placed in the Garden of Eden in a role of land stewardship and Revelation 7:3 advocates that we do no harm to the land.

If true reconciliation is unfolding as prophesized, there should be signs that societal shifts are occurring from both sides of the relationship. The Eighth Fire Prophecy accommodates this need from a traditional Indigenous perspective given that it predicts that after seven stages of conflict, non-natives and natives will come together to build a harmonious relationship. On the western side, the signs are present but are cleverly disguised by the limitations of logic-based thinking. Adaptive management planning, triple-bottom line planning, emotional intelligence, social responsibility, complexity theory and new age spirituality are obvious examples. In his best-selling book *Megatrends* published in 1984, John Naisbitt identifies a number of other examples including a shift from short-term towards long-term planning, institutional help towards self-help; centralization towards decentralization of power; competition towards cooperation and hierarchical towards networking approaches. Of paramount importance is improved balance between masculine and feminine energy, a trend that can be witnessed in matters of church, state, business and elsewhere. While the reconciliation based progress is real, the pace is currently too slow to prevent assimilation. Consequently, any legislation designed to enact core UNDRIP principles in Canada must be accompanied by both timely as well as sweeping social and institutional changes and must include, at a minimum, key recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC). This includes the need for a new Royal Proclamation, an Aboriginal Nations Recognition and Governance Act, an independent administrative tribunal for lands and treaties, an Aboriginal Language Act, the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, funding for Indigenous law institutes and the need to re-write Canada's history books. One of the benefits to taking such a transformative approach to C-15 development is that, in keeping with the power of the feminine spirit, the new regime will embrace the spirit and intent of First Nation consent through ongoing collaboration and co-creation rather than through brinkmanship and fear.

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

INAN is faced with the daunting task of overseeing the development of legislation in support of recognizing Indigenous peoples as equal partners within Canada's constitutional framework while working within a systemically racist regime. Fortunately, much of the movement required to overcome this core impediment can be addressed by Canada embracing its egalitarianism, participatory democracy and multiculturalism commitments. If the Canadian establishment is looking for a source of inspiration and vision in support of moving forward in this regard, a look into the beauty and complexity of the traditional Indigenous worldview offers great potential.

Perhaps it is time for the Canadian establishment to look back seven generations by revisiting Plato's writings on democracy, Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* and *Social Contract*, the notion of Christian humanism explored by Desiderius Erasmus, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and Lord Acton's thoughts on multiculturalism. It is particularly noteworthy that Lord Acton contends that a nation comprised of only one overarching cultural group is likely to lose its moral compass, a nation comprised of two main cultural groups is likely to favour slavery, and a nation comprised of at least three distinct cultural groups is likely to prosper given that associated tensions will keep society in a perpetual state of dynamic equilibrium. This is to suggest that a comprehensive approach to legislating UNDRIP in Canada will not only address a major historical injustice committed against Canada's original inhabitants but will also save our nation through enlightenment.

A return to gender balance through an increased use of emotional intelligence lies at the heart of true reconciliation because it promotes compassion, understanding and spiritual renewal. Increased compassion serves to overcome societal indifference that drives systemic racism, understanding leads to informed decision-making, and spiritual renewal moves our society away from fear and towards love. These desired transformative shifts synergistically move us towards enlightenment by allowing us to look back seven generations in order to rediscover the wisdom left behind - namely the forgotten ethical, moral, metaphysical and epistemological underpinnings of the great works of Plato, Rousseau and other noted male scholars, not to mention the works of various feminists including Susan B. Anthony who in the 1890's coined the motto "men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less."

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