

THE TRUTH IS HARD BUT RECONCILIATION WILL BE HARDER

SENATOR MURRAY SINCLAIR

What kind of relationship did we have?

Relationships between people vs

Relationship between peoples

Indigenous self-reliance was the norm

Mutual dependence and support was part of
the early relationship

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764 gave assurances

Land rights and Indigenous self-determination were assured

Pre and Post Confederation Treaties followed that pattern

Canadian legislation did not

What kind of relationship do we have?

Colonization and Domination

Imposed Poverty with resulting consequences:

Recent high incarceration
60s scoop and ongoing child removals

Health problems

Housing needs

Damaged water supplies

Poor historical education for everybody

Lack of Indigenous self-respect Lack of respect by Non-Indigenous people Loss of mutual respect Individual and Systemic Racism

Racism is not just about hate.

Racism is primarily about the presumption of superiority and the assumption of supremacy

How did we get here?

Racist beliefs were the essence of the colonizing approach by European forces from the outset (e.g. Doctrine of Discovery) but like any bad relationship, the colonizers hid those beliefs until the advantage was gained.

Thomas King in "The Inconvenient Indian":

At the Lake Mohonk conference in October of 1886, one of the participants, Charles Cornelius Coffin Painter, who served as a lobbyist for the Indian Rights Association, pointed out the obvious, that the treaties made with Native people had been little more than expediencies.

In his talk, Painter quoted General William Tecumseh Sherman, who had said that treaties "were never made to be kept, but to serve a present purpose, to settle a present difficulty in the easiest manner possible, to acquire a desired good with the least possible compensation, and then to be disregarded as soon as this purpose was tainted and we were strong enough to enforce a new and more profitable arrangement."

This is the same General Sherman who philosophized that "The more Indians we kill this year, the fewer we will need to kill the next."

Canada waged war through the use of law from the time of Confederation to colonize, assimilate and educate.

Pre 1867 laws vs post 1867 laws

"When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian.

He is simply a savage who can read and write."

"It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence,

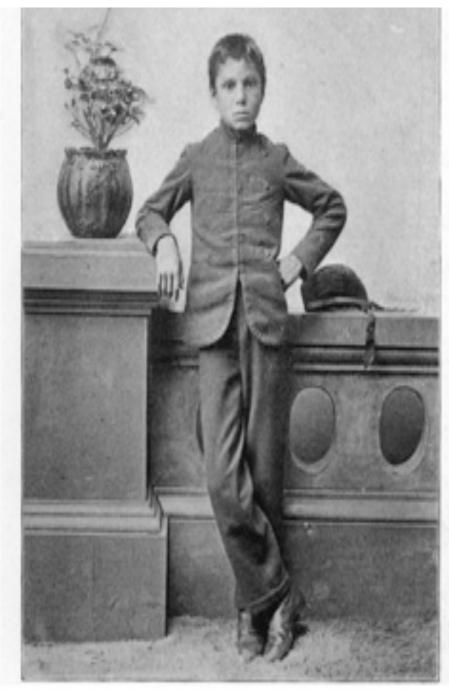
and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men."

Prime Minister John A. MacDonald House of Commons May 14, 1883

"I want to get rid of the Indian problem.... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill."

DM Duncan Campbell Scott - 1920





Thomas Moore before and after his entrance into the Degine Indian Decidential School

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical,

racial or religious group, as such:

UN Convention on Genocide (1949)

Article 2

- (a) Killing members of the group;(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to the serious bodily or mental harm to be serious bodily or mental
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
 - (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

What kind of relationship do we want?

Canada seems to want a relationship of equality, justice, peace and friendship.

- Better programs and services
- Recognition of "compatible" rights
- Addressing racism and discriminatory practices
- Education of Canadians

There is a feeling among some that Indian Residential Schools were a good idea done badly and that Indigenous people still should assimilate.

Others resent Indigenous people making costly demands.

"You can have your rights, but not on my dime."

Indigenous people want immediate needs addressed using their own customs and traditions

Ultimately want their right to self government and self determination entrenched beyond the reach of the Federal Government and the Provinces

They also want the resources for their ongoing existence to be shared from the resources of the country as other levels of government do.

There is a very clear disparity in the views of each side.

Reconciliation will not be achieved so long as one side sees it as a question of rights... and the other side sees it as a question of benevolence.

Reconciliation and renewing the relationship; what will it take?

Understanding

Commitment

Leadership

Planning

What are the hurdles?

Understanding
Commitment
Leadership
Planning

The TRC Final Report has 94 Calls to Action which together constitute a plan for Reconciliation

There will need to be a willingness to change the way we do things, both for Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous people and institutions

It will take time It will take change There will be a cost.

But the cost of doing nothing, or of continuing to do the same thing, will be even greater.

We have failed at what we have tried.

We need to move on.



"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

(attributed to Albert Einstein)