

Canadians will tire of disruptions, and Indigenous people will suffer

Opinion in this country is tiring of this endless and grating campaign of abuse and provocations being conducted by some fringe leaders

by Conrad Black



The saga of Sen. Lynn Beyak is a distressing exposé of the tyrannical abuses of the Indigenous victimhood industry. I am respectful of Indigenous people; I believe the Indigenous community has many legitimate grievances that Canada must work very diligently to resolve satisfactorily and to redress. The historical fact of the conquest of North America by technologically more advanced European countries was in many ways a disaster for those already here. No one contests this.

But our sorrow does not mean we must accept the claim by some Native leaders that the government of Canada has no right to set foot on designated territory. Indigenous Canadians have the same rights against trespass as any other Canadians, but the government of Canada can deploy federal police and where appropriate, the armed forces, everywhere in the country as necessary to enforce federal laws and rights. This has been an issue during the current blockading controversy. The entire concept of a "nation-to-nation" basis the present federal government has enunciated for its relations with First Nations is nonsense. Canada is a sovereign state and the native tribes and bands are Canadians – with defined rights and special status, but still Canadians. By enabling the Native leaders to press on an open door in the profession of their historic grievances, we have descended at an accelerated pace down the slippery slope of implicitly legitimizing some version of the radical tenet that the Europeans invaded and occupied the country of the Natives, in a manner legally indistinguishable from modern acts of inter-state aggression, such as the German and Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939. This is nonsense.

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The management of these issues by Canadian officials began with the attainment of responsible government, sovereignty in domestic affairs for elected Canadian governments, in 1848. Since that time there has never been an official policy of subjugation or mistreatment, much less of "cultural genocide," a malignant historical fiction lent undeserved credibility by, among others, the former chief justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin.

The residential schools, mainly operated by Christian churches for much of the 19th and part of the 20th century, have been represented by many Native leaders, to the credulity of the Canadian state and media, as virtual concentration camps

designed to break up Native families, extirpate Native culture and sadistically torment and exploit the Native children. There were undoubtedly a great many injustices and excesses, but many of these students went on to lead happy and successful lives, as was the intention. Among those in this category were native author Harold Cardinal, honorary Inuvik band chief Cece Hodgson-McCauley, former Serpent River First Nation chief Basil Johnston, and Prof. Cecil King.



Sen. Lynn Beyak waits for the Throne Speech in the Senate chamber in Ottawa on Dec. 5, 2019. Chris Wattie/The Canadian Press

Canadian society, and in particular its Parliament, has blindly accepted that Canada as a country deliberately and sordidly mistreated practically all of the scores of thousands of students in these schools. This is a partially self-inflicted blood libel on the founding English and French peoples of Canada, and on the Christian churches. Horrible crimes occurred, and the entire affair would not be attempted today, but the goal was to help. Intentions matter, or should. All Canadians are frustrated by the fact that in the 50 years since Pierre Trudeau set out to abolish the relevant government department and to integrate Natives entirely into Canadian life, many billions of dollars have been spent without, so far as is observable, materially improving the lives of many Indigenous people; and the chief founder of the Canadian confederation (John A. Macdonald) has been widely defamed as a Hitlerian monster.

This brings us to the outrageous treatment of Sen. Lynn Beyak, from Dryden, Ont., an area with a large native population; she has had extensive experience with Natives all her life. She spoke out against the air-tight group-think of the Canadian official, media, academic and Native victim industry communities, in early 2017, when she publicly dissented from the rigid, self-hating Canadian orthodoxy that denounced the Native residential schools as centres for the pursuit of

cultural or even physical genocide. The so-called Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which published many untruths and was not in the least conciliatory) encapsulated this view in the statement that "For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the treaties ... and cause Aboriginal people to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada." The residential schools were specifically identified as "a central element of this policy of ... cultural genocide." Sen. Beyak was correct to dissent from this view and did so with explicit respect and compassion for the Native peoples and while acknowledging that there had been many mistakes and that the Natives had many just grievances.



Cree students are photographed at their desks with their teacher in a classroom at All Saints Indian Residential School, La Ronge Lake, Sask., in March 1945. Postmedia News She uttered the heresy that some good came of the residential schools and was almost universally denounced in the media and Parliament. In late 2017, she posted on her Senate website some unexceptionable supportive messages she had received, but among them were a couple that were gratuitously hostile to Natives and were offensive, and she mistakenly declined to remove any of these letters, but protested her positive intentions. She was ejected from the Conservative Senate caucus and then abruptly suspended from the Senate, physically conducted from the chamber, and locked out of her office and required to take "Indigenous Cultural Competency Training." This was a Maoist concept of coercive official brainwashing and included the order to follow the internet course of Indigenous Awareness Canada, and then to attend courses at the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres in Toronto. Staff there rejected her participation, saying that she was "not open to learning" and her presence made the environment "unsafe."

The training co-ordinator of the course eventually wrote to the Senate ethics officer, Pierre Legault. This week, with no due process, by voice vote, the Senate suspended Sen. Beyak again for the balance of this session, to allow her to complete the program she already tried to attend. Sen. Beyak has apologized profusely for any offence she conveyed. This entire process is a disgrace. There has been no adjudication; there has been no identifiable offence; Sen. Beyak, no enemy of Indigenous peoples, has been singled out for exemplary humiliation, in the manner of totalitarian states.

This entire process is a disgrace

Moderate Indigenous leaders understand that cowardly and controversy-averse though most of our public officials are, opinion in this country is tiring of this endless and grating campaign of abuse and provocations being conducted by some fringe leaders. There is an overwhelming consensus to change our Native policies, work with the constructive and representative Indigenous leadership, and do the country's best to make amends for past errors, including some official malice. But Canada will not indefinitely tolerate state-sponsored agitprop representing Canadians and their antecedents as venomous racists and despoilers who have conducted an officially criminal society on these shores for more than 400 years. Those who have disrupted the national rail system for two weeks, illegally and for spurious reasons, will find that when opinion moves (and polls indicate we are there now), our politicians will be just as energetic in serving that new public spirit as they have been slavish in their self-abasement to native peddlers of the fraud of Canada's attempted cultural genocide.

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