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# First Nations Business Communications Lecture The UBC Sauder School of Business



Prepared by: Dr. Amie Wolf  
[amie.wolf@sauder.ubc.ca](mailto:amie.wolf@sauder.ubc.ca)

## **Learning Objectives**

The goal of this lecture is threefold.

First, to support students to develop the cultural sensitivity necessary to communicate effectively with potential First Nations business partners.

Second, to provide students with a thumbnail sketch of the history of First Nations in British Columbia, including an introduction to Aboriginal Title and Constitutional Rights, the Duty to Consult and Land Management issues.

Finally, this lecture introduces students to a variety of Aboriginal perspectives through a synthesis of First Nations voices and case studies, featuring the thoughts and views of diverse Aboriginal Chiefs, business leaders, philosophers and artists.

## **Contents**

### **Part One: Worldview**

Chief Dan George	p. 5
First Nations Business Ideals	p. 6
Worldview and Economic Development	p. 7
Vine Deloria	p. 8
Developing Cultural Sensitivity	p. 9
The Wampum Treaty Belt	p. 10
The Traditional First Nations Worldview	p. 11
The European Worldview	p. 15
Jagged Worldviews Colliding	p. 16
Avoiding the Racism Trap	p. 18
Where Do We Go From Here?	p. 19
Economic Development and Resistance	p. 20
Case Study: The T'sou'ke First Nation	p. 21
Business Communication in the Living Language of the Holistic Worldview	p. 23

### **Part Two: Aboriginal Title**

Pre-Contact	p. 25
The Royal Proclamation of 1763	p. 26
The Indian Act and Reserve Land	p. 27
A Lack of Education	p. 28
This Is Today	p. 29
Unique Stories of Dispossession, Resistance and Stages of Recovery	p. 30
A Nation's Fight for Title - The History of the Tsilhqot'in	p. 31
A Mind Boggling Gap of Misunderstanding	p. 33
Calder and Delgamuukw	p. 34
Duty to Consult	p. 35
No Consent	p. 36
Case Study: John Zwickel	p. 37
The Future of Aboriginal Economic Development Is In Our Hands	p. 38

<b>Terms</b>	p. 39
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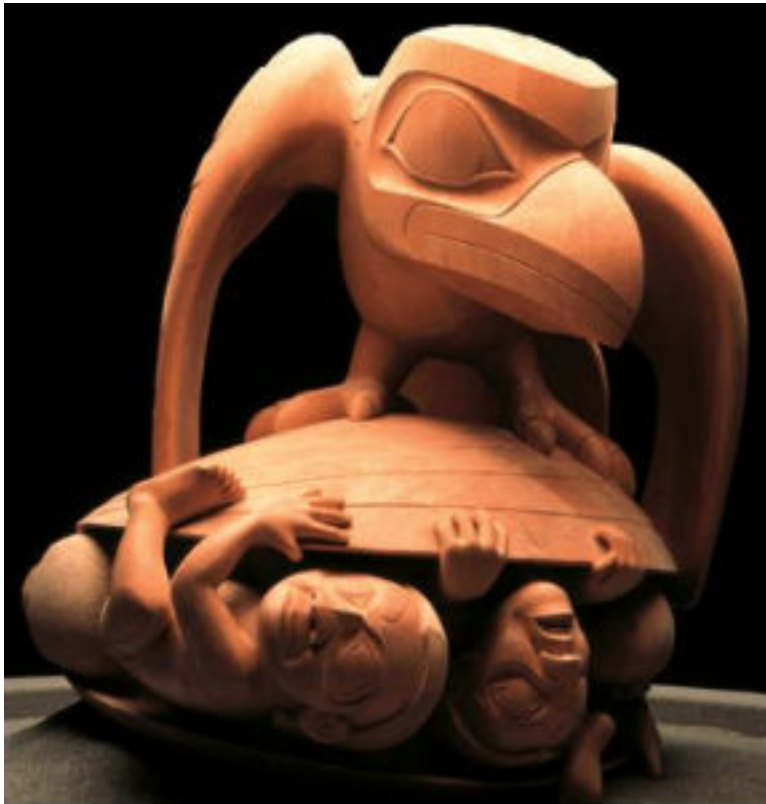
<b>References</b>	p. 43
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<b>Appendix</b>	p. 46
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## Part One: Worldview

"In Haida culture, wealth is a different thing than money, which is a currency for doing business in the modern economy. Wealth flows from the well being of the land, and from having the opportunity, knowledge and capacity to support our families, raise healthy children and organize the individual collective efforts of our clans and society. Wealth is to be shared and distributed - prestige is gained through the ability to do so."

- Ian Gill, *All That We Say Is Ours*



*The Raven and the First Men*, yellow cedar sculpture by Bill Reid



Chief Dan George, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Burrard Inlet, North Vancouver, speaking at Canada's Centennial celebration in Vancouver, 1967:



But in the long hundred years since the white man came, I have seen my freedom disappear like the salmon going mysteriously out to sea. The white man's strange customs, which I could not understand, pressed down upon me until I could no longer breathe.

Oh, God! Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man's success - his education, his skills - and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society. I shall see our young braves and our chiefs sitting in the houses of law and government, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedom of our great land. So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation. So shall the next hundred years be the greatest and proudest in the proud history of our tribes and nations.

## First Nations' Business Ideals

Today, Lori Simcox is a Project Manager with the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation (TWFN), formerly lead by Chief Dan George. The Band Council is currently advertising for businesses to partner on projects with.



The TWFN Aboriginal administrative team, while reviewing proposals, takes great care to determine the companies with whom they share common values. The importance of realizing cultural ideals through business is a central theme for most First Nations. Therefore, understanding and respecting the traditional Aboriginal worldview is critical for private sector companies competing to engage.



Historic Tsleil-Waututh Territory

The TWFN is currently taking court action against the Kinder Morgan Pipeline, who they say did not consult adequately with the Nation before proceeding with development on their land.

## Worldview and Economic Development

The choices people make regarding the formation of economies are a direct reflection of their worldview. Our beliefs about what is important to achieve through and even factual about business practices, such as acceptable business communication and outcomes, are all rooted in the particular picture of reality we hold as a construct in our minds. The traditional First Nations and European worldviews are different, resulting naturally in different business values and even opposing ideas of desirable economic processes.



When Alan Watts writes in *The Way of Zen*, "the eye that sees clearly does not see itself," he is referring to the possibilities that are available to us when we are aware that we have a worldview in the first place. Sometimes the picture of the universe we have been conditioned to adopt through the language we speak, the religion we practice and the education we received about what is right, true and valuable from our families, our society and our teachers, can seem to comprise an ultimate, unchanging and even superior reality.

When we gain clarity regarding the subjective nature of how our minds construct our worldview, we are then in a position to begin to fathom the legitimacy of different perspectives about what is worthwhile. This is called detachment.

## Vine Deloria

"The very essence of Western European identity involves the assumption that time proceeds in a linear fashion. American Indians hold their lands - places - as having the highest possible meaning. When one group is concerned with space and the other with time, then the statements of either group don't make much sense when transferred from one context to the other without proper consideration of what is taking place...

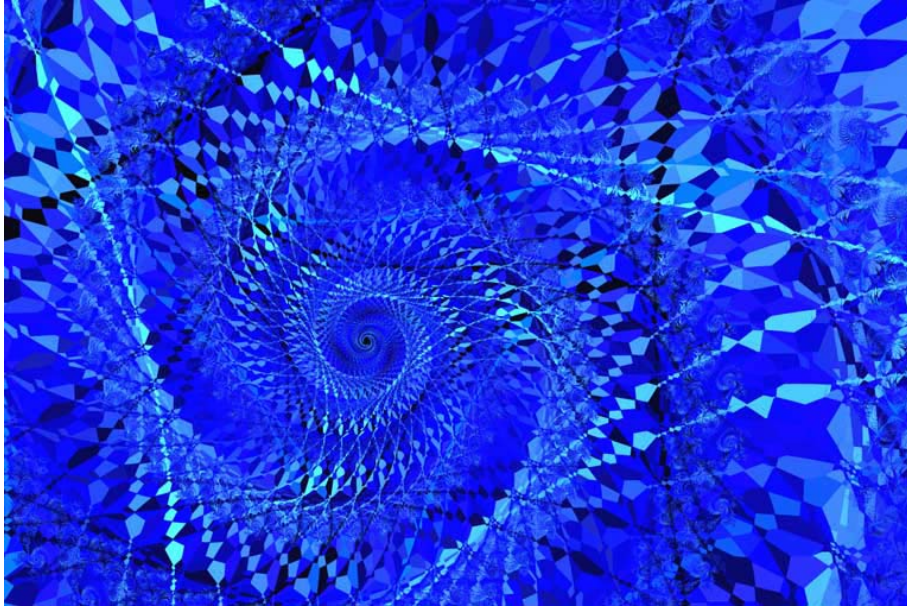


...Western European peoples have never learned to consider the nature of the world discerned from a spatial point of view."

-Vine Deloria, *God Is Red*

## Developing Cultural Sensitivity

The key to developing cultural sensitivity is to be open-minded and willing to learn to consider the world from a different perspective. This is to transcend a Eurocentric thought world, where a person feels their picture of the universe is static and the only true way of seeing. When we're willing to place our worldview in parallel importance to the legitimacy of other worldviews, we transcend ethnocentrism - expecting another group of people to behave in ways that are not aligned with their own cultural values.



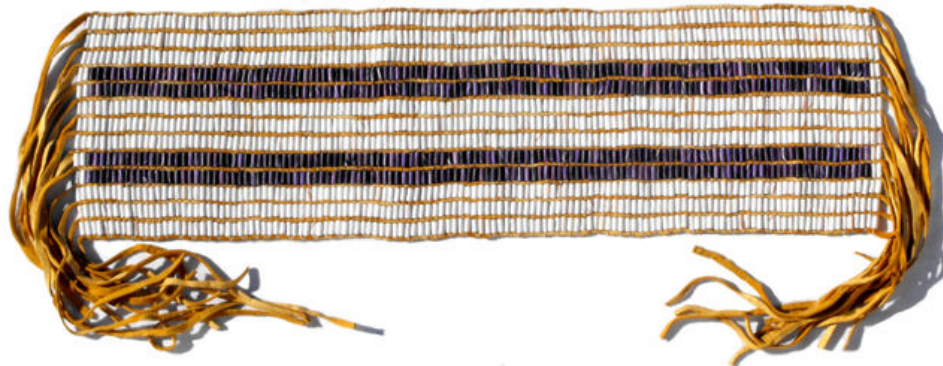
"Just as it is possible to have any number of geometries other than the Euclidean which give an equally perfect account of space configurations, so it is possible to have descriptions of the universe, all equally valid, that do not contain our familiar contrasts of time and space."

- Benjamin Lee Whorf, *An American Indian Model of the Universe*



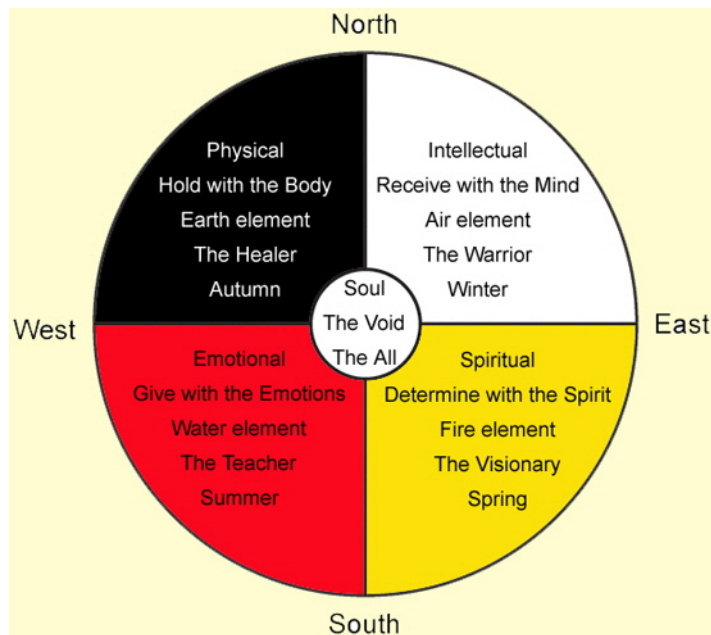
### **Haudenosaunee Two Row Wampum Treaty Belt, 1612**

Being open minded and willing to respect the existence of another thought world, however different from our own or difficult to understand, is the symbolic meaning of the Two Row Treaty Wampum belt. The two, horizontal stripes on the belt declare the principle of non-interference between the First Nations and the emerging settler state, symbolizing the philosophy of cultural relativity: travelling down the river together, parallel, but never touching. The belt denotes peace and friendship while conveying the ideal that neither party will pass laws that interfere with the other's ability to live on their own terms.



## The Traditional First Nations Worldview

Traditional First Nations people see themselves as a small part of a vast, interconnected web of life. This is called the holistic worldview. The importance of the group over the individual is paramount and responsibility is the key, cultural value. That is the meaning of 'all my relations'. This includes a responsibility to future generations, a responsibility to our ancestors and a responsibility to preserve the well being of the land. In this way, the traditional First Nations worldview is not time oriented but views all time - past and future - as ever present and unmoving. This is symbolized by the Medicine Wheel.



The holistic worldview is also animistic. All life forms in traditional First Nations culture are considered to be sentient - imbued with a consciousness of equal importance to our own, human intelligence. Undeveloped natural areas are not seen as empty, or of possible 'use', but as already occupied by the living environment. In First Nations language dichotomies such as right or wrong are not articulated but there is an extensive vocabulary for describing relationships with animals, nature and the elements.

Sustaining and caring for one's context is the basis for individual action in the holistic worldview. People are motivated primarily not for the purpose of individual gain or wealth accrual but for the purpose of taking care of others and the environment. This attitude of care is called stewardship.

## **Giving Is Wealth**

Adopting the holistic perspective we can start to understand the traditional First Nations economic ideal that giving is wealth and the belief that land could not be bought or sold by individuals. If we see ourselves as part of an interconnected web of relations then our strength is best directed toward giving what we have away for the benefit of others we rely upon. First Nations people before contact likely could not even conceptualize that 'giving is wealth' was not a universal concept.

"When Columbus first arrived and he and his sailors came ashore in the Bahamas, the Arawak Natives greeted them with food, water and gifts. Columbus was shocked and noted in his log that the Natives were willing to trade practically all of their possessions, as if the accumulation of material goods had no bearing whatsoever on the goodness of a person's character. Such traits were not common in Europe, which was dominated by religion, royalty and an insatiable desire for money."

-Darrell Dennis, *Peace Pipe Dreams: The Truth About Lies About Indians*





## The Potlatch

The central economic means of traditional Aboriginal people was the potlatch. A culturally rich, artistically based celebration of feasting and giving as a demonstration of wealth, a potlatch might go on for an extended duration of time and involve a multitude of ceremonies. In the book, *All That We Say Is Ours*, Ian Gill describes a Haida potlatch vividly, illustrating how distinct business protocol can be when viewed from the traditional First Nations perspective of holism.

"But if a satellite could send them a picture of what just happened here, surely many would blink twice at what they saw. They would see that, in this country they call Canada, there is another country called Haida Gwaii. To the people who live here, the Haida, theirs is not just another country: it is another culture, another cosmology, another reality, another history - another world."

- Ian Gill, *All That We Say Is Ours*



Watercolor by [James G. Swan](#) depicting the [Klallam](#) people of chief [Chetzemoka](#) at [Port Townsend](#), with one of Chetzemoka's wives distributing potlatch.

## **Traditional First Nations Government and Education**

From a holistic worldview, it follows that First Nations traditional governments would make decisions on the basis of consensus. If we are part of a web of relations that cannot be separated or divided then all points of view must be accommodated, somehow. Certain people or opinions cannot be ignored in the First Nations worldview of holism any more than a direction, like North, South, East or West, can be ignored.

Today, reserves may be governed by hereditary chiefs or by elected chiefs. Elected chiefs are sometimes viewed as false chiefs because democracy is alien to traditional Aboriginal governance and was imposed on reserves through the Indian Act. This is why, at the opening of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) in Vancouver, an Aboriginal elder called out over and over again to Sean Atleo, "You are not my chief! You are not my chief!"

Finally, education was also a collectively held responsibility in traditional First Nations societies. Children were viewed as precious gifts from the Creator and allowed to live, at different times, with various extended family members. Children learned through storytelling and through doing. Acceptance and a respect for the intelligence and knowledge of others, at any age and including children, is still a very important cultural value. This can be seen in non-interference with others, expressed by listening without interrupting when another person is speaking and a non-forcing approach to teaching.

## **The European Worldview**

In contrast to the holistic worldview, the European worldview emphasizes the importance of the individual and actualizing one's freedom is the key value. This is the objective worldview and the basis of Western science: truth is measurable and only that which can be visibly calculated really exists. Other life forms, such as nature and the elements, are generally not considered to be animate entities.

Adopting the objective perspective, where time moves in a linear fashion toward the ideal of progress, we can start to understand the basis for the mainstream business value of personal wealth accrual. Individuality is fulfilled through the force of personal acquisition and impact. Influencing and changing other people is also seen as strong leadership and developed intelligence.

The basis for colonial policies and the seizure of land, even at the expense and inconvenience of First Nations peoples, was an acceptable initiative demonstrating fortitude and willfulness. These are positive qualities according to the values of an objective worldview. The following paragraph illustrates the common practice of acquiring land in the mid 1800's.

"In August, 1860, a young businessman, Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, and some fifty hired men sailed up a long, steep-sided fjord on the west coast of Vancouver Island with the intention of establishing a logging camp and sawmill. Sproat had purchased land from the Crown at the head of the fjord, but encountered a summer settlement there of a people whom he called the Aht (the Nuu-chah-nulth). When the chief of the Aht said that the land Sproat intended for his camp and mill belonged to him and his people, Sproat purchased it again, in good worth some twenty pounds, on the condition that the Aht move the next day. However, they did not move, and their behavior soon convinced Sproat that they intended to fight. Only, he said, when he brought up his ships, armed with cannon, and the Aht "saw the resistance would be inexpedient," did they begin to remove themselves. Three days later, they were re-established at another location nearby."

- Cole Harris, *Making Native Space*

## Jagged Word Views Colliding

As a result of colonialism, First Nations worldviews are often on a continuum of traditional Western and Aboriginal ways of seeing. Recently, former elected chief of the Tswassen First Nation, Kim Baird, turned her people's reserve into a municipality. The land became fee simple property that can be bought and sold. She has stated that, despite opposition to this decision, there was no time to make a decision based on consensus given the necessity to 'develop the land to the max'. Chief Kim Baird is an Aboriginal leader who seems to have adopted the values of an objective worldview. Below, Glen Coulthard sheds light on this issue of assimilation.

"For an indigenous person the problem of assimilation is always close at hand. The anxiety generated by moving between intellectual cultures is real, and many indigenous intellectuals (and business people) find it easier to become part of mainstream culture. This kind of assimilation will always exist, and it may not always be a bad thing for indigenous peoples as a whole. It becomes dangerous when indigenous intellectuals become subsumed or appropriated by the dominant culture yet continue to act as if they were word warriors." Dale Turner as quoted by:

- Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*



Theo Assau graduated from the UBC Sauder School of Business in 2012. As a First Nations businessperson currently employed at Deloitte, he says that he constantly must work between two conflicting thought worlds. For him, the struggle to reconcile values is ongoing. Today, very few First Nations people graduate from post secondary business programs. Likely, this is in no small part due to the fact that mainstream, objectifying values undermine, and can even be hostile toward, the holistic worldview.

Being aware of mixed worldviews is very important in terms of communicating persuasively. It is vital to keep an open mind so as to accurately identify and appeal to what a particular First Nation's administrative council may be looking for in a business partnership. This also allows us to align our own, personal values, as well as the values of the company we may be working for, with First Nations who are suitable partners.

"Everyone attempts to understand these different ways of viewing the world and to make choices about how to live his or her life. No one has a pure worldview that is 100 percent Indigenous or Eurocentric; rather, everyone has an integrated mind, a fluxing and ambidextrous consciousness, a pre-colonized consciousness that flows into a colonized consciousness and back again. It is this clash of worldviews that is at the heart of many current difficulties... It is also this clash that suppresses diversity in choices and denies Aboriginal people harmony in their daily lives."

-Leroy Littlebear, *Jagged Worldviews Colliding*



## **Avoiding the Racism Trap**

It is important to be vigilant and avoid making assumptions about a person's worldview based on race, which is a mistake called racism. Most of us like to believe we are not racist, but it is actually a very common and easy intellectual error to make. Because racism reduces complexity, making issues seem simpler than they are, it can be seductive.

In the June, 2015 Globe and Mail article, *Put First Nations In Charge of Pipeline Safety*, Roger McDonnell (anthropologist) suggests that Native people would like to patrol pipelines because protecting the environment is a priority for Indians. He goes on to conclude this is the perfect solution to Aboriginal unemployment. Can you imagine an article written by a Native person suggesting that all unemployed white people should patrol pipelines for safety because all white people value the environment?

When we reverse our racism about another group by speaking about our own racial group in the same manner, the absurdity of simplistic, racist thinking becomes more visible. Of course, people of any race are individuals, with varying goals, political orientations and views. Complex social issues, such as high unemployment rates on reserves, also require complex social responses.

## Where Do We Go From Here?

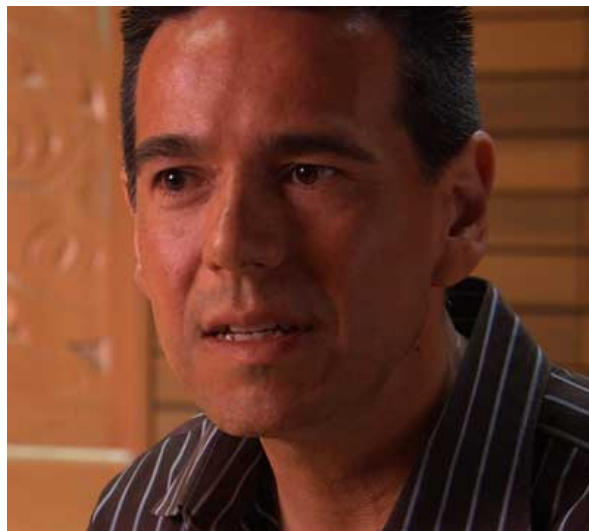
Although the traditional First Nations worldview has been undermined and mashed up with other ways of seeing, a desire to live according to the Aboriginal values of non-interference, sharing, consensus and a respect for nature through stewardship of the land is on the rise. We see this clearly in the remarkable efforts to revitalize Indigenous languages. It is language that contains the cultural worldview in the vocabulary necessary for animistic thought processes.

In the 2014 book, *The Comeback*, John Ralston Saul points out that, "for the last hundred years, Aboriginal peoples have been making a comeback - a remarkable comeback from a terrifyingly low point of population, of legal respect, of civilizational stability. A comeback to a position of power, influence and civilizational creativity." Many, if not most, Aboriginal economic development plans place this cultural comeback, described by Saul, as the central purpose of their business initiatives.

Influential Aboriginal philosopher and scholar, Gerard Taiaiake Alfred, also advocates a return to 'deep traditionalism' as a means of overcoming the fracturing effect of colliding worldviews. He advocates in his book, *Peace, Power and Righteousness - An Indigenous Manifesto*, that First Nations people need to create their own institutions (including economies) based on traditional beliefs and values, for a full comeback to occur.

"We need to realize that ways of thinking that perpetuate European values can do nothing to ease the pain of colonization and return us to the harmony, balance and peaceful coexistence that were, and are, the ideals envisioned by all traditional Indigenous philosophies. In fact, it isn't possible to reach those goals in the context of Western institutions at all, because those institutions were designed within the framework of a very different belief system, to achieve very different objectives."

- Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power and Righteousness*



## **Economic Development and Resistance**

Perhaps what is most needed when it comes to communicating with Aboriginal business partners is support for their refusal to assimilate combined with an open mind - a willingness to see that there are many ways to define wealth and many paths to prosperity. With an awareness of the First Nations traditional worldview, we can begin to explore how we approach First Nations in terms of holding a non-imposing space for culturally authentic choices concerning business decisions. In the words of Dr. Wanda Wuttunee, a professor at the Asper School of Business:

"As Aboriginal peoples, we may not want to completely mirror mainstream business choices. We may choose to bring emotion, spirit, and caring in addition to strong business skills. We may choose a package of strategies that in the end provides balance in ways that vary across Aboriginal nations but maintains an integrity that is not often seen in the business world."

- Wuttunee, *Living Rhythms: Lessons in Aboriginal Economic Resilience and Vision*





## Case Study: The T'sou'ke First Nation

The T'Sou-ke on Vancouver Island provide an excellent, local case study of a First Nations making business decisions that are culturally authentic and choice based. In 2008, the nation engaged in a comprehensive community planning process that included everyone's opinion about directions for economic development on the reserve. Even children were consulted. This is the traditional practice of governing by consensus, an inclusive process of engagement Chief Gordon Planes has chosen to govern according to.



The community economic plan incorporated seven generation thinking as well. As a result, the decision to become a sustainable solar community was made. "We are setting the table for future generations," explains Chief Planes. Embracing the values of stewardship, solar power allows the T'Sou-ke people to respect Mother Earth by making use of resources provided by the Creator. This reflects the traditional First Nations value of non-ownership of the land and resources - to live from the gifts provided by nature as it is, without altering or polluting the environment.

With over half the houses on the reserve now equipped with solar panels, the little but mighty T'Sou-ke First Nation currently generates more electricity than the community needs. They are able to sell this surplus, putting the profits toward efforts such as language revitalization in the community, among other things. The T'sou-ke have also partnered with Pacific Coast Wasabi, building four solar powered greenhouses on the reserve to produce and export wasabi internationally.



Finally, an eco-tourism program has evolved on the T'sou-ke solar powered reserve. This year, the First Nation hosted 32 schools, 54 municipalities as well as numerous tourists from all around the world. Sharing their knowledge and success is the traditional First Nations value of generosity: giving as wealth. The eco-tourism program is culturally rich and celebratory as well, like a potlatch.



For Chief Planes, achieving the paradox of economic success as a way of making a cultural comeback is what it means to be a modern warrior. Indeed, the T'Sou-ke First Nation seems to have achieved Saul's notion of civilizational stability. By refusing assimilation and instead animating an uncompromising return to the holistic worldview as a means of modern economic viability, this First Nation has renewed its integrity and set an inspiring standard for what is possible to achieve in First Nations business today.

## **Business Communication in the Living Language of the Holistic World View**

In our approach to First Nations communication, we can be more innovative, persuasive and relevant, too, by adopting the language of living traditional First Nations values as a way of generating economic development through consensus, sharing as a form of wealth and values such as land stewardship and seven generation planning. This would be perhaps part of fulfilling the vision Chief Dan George provided in his centennial speech fifty years ago: that "this century will be greatest and proudest in the history of First Nations people by shattering the barriers of our isolation, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedom of our great land."



*Indian World My Home and Native Land*, acrylic painting by Lawrence Yuxwelupt'en



## Part Two - Aboriginal Title

"The criticism that Indian people make is that, even if the federal and provincial parliaments do serve the wishes of the great majority of Canadian people, they can never fully serve the needs of our people. We do not doubt that these institutions might serve the purposes for which they were intended. We are saying that our own needs can be fully served only through the development of our own institutions."

- George Manuel, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*



*We Had Lots of Fun*, a painting by Jerry Whitehead

## **Pre-Contact - The Time Before Colonialism**

Can you think back to an earlier time in our world? Can you think back far enough to imagine the lushness of the land, uninterrupted by highways and buildings? Can you imagine the silence that was possible? Do you think for a minute that the Indigenous people of Canada could imagine how different their values would be from the values of the newcomers arriving from overseas?

For thousands and thousands of years, First Nations people robustly populated this place. In British Columbia alone, there were over thirty distinct tribes, each with their own linguistic and cultural traditions. Indigenous peoples thrived abundantly, hunting, gathering and fishing. Inland, Native people lived according to seasonal rounds, moving out to different areas of the land throughout the year to take advantage of diverse resources on their traditional territory. Sometimes, areas of land would be shared, resulting in overlapping traditional territories.

Developed trade routes existed. Indigenous people would exchange goods like dried halibut, dried seaweed, herring roe and canoes for oolichan grease, dried berries, goat wool and horns. Below, two First Nations men handle oolichan fish, which are processed and made into oolichan grease, a traditional staple for Aboriginal people living on the West Coast.



## **The Royal Proclamation of 1763**

*"You say that you are our Father and I am your Son. We say, "We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers." This wampum belt confirms our words. Neither of us will make compulsory laws or interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel. As long as the Sun shines upon this Earth, that is how long our agreement will stand; Second, as long as the Water still flows; and Third, as long as the Grass Grows Green at a certain time of the year. Now we have Symbolized this Agreement and it shall be binding forever as long as Mother Earth is still in motion."*

- Haudenosaunee Two Row Wampum Treaty Belt, 1612

In the 1850's, before the first gold rush, relatively few white people had settled in British Columbia. In the Queen Charlotte Islands, approximately only thirty white people occupied the traditional territory of the Haida Indians. In these early days of contact, newcomers depended on the Indigenous people, who were hospitable and generous, to learn the ways of survival in a new land.

A relationship of cooperation and mutual respect existed between the settlers and Indigenous people. A nation-to-nation acknowledgement, guaranteeing non-interference and promising Indigenous people ongoing, exclusive use of their traditional territory, was endorsed by the King of England. This document was called the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which read in part:

"We do hereby strictly forbid, on Pain of Our Displeasure, all Our loving Subjects from making any Purchases or Settlements whatsoever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands above reserved, without Our especial Leave and Licence for that Purpose first obtained. And We do further strictly enjoin and require all Persons whatever, who have either willfully or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands within the Countries above describe, or upon any other Lands, which, not having been ceded to, or purchased by Us, are still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements."

## **The Indian Act and Reserves**

When gold was discovered in the 1860's in British Columbia, the colonial state's recognition of Aboriginal autonomy began to change to one of complete domination over all aspects of First Nations life for the purpose of acquisition of Native land. Through the legislation of the Indian Act in 1876, the federal and provincial governments enacted a policy of assimilation that has been called a cultural genocide. The impacts of the Indian Act, which is still law today, are far-reaching and complex.

Aboriginals were corralled onto small, inferior areas of land called reserves. All reserve land is held by the Crown and not owned, but collectively occupied, by an Indian Band or Bands from the same geographical location. As a result, a vast amount of land was occupied without First Nations either ceding their territory to the Crown or being compensated for the loss. Today, the problems that persist due to the settler state's unilateral departure from the principles of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 is called the Indian Land Question of British Columbia.

Reserves were originally created supposedly as a gift from the Queen, who suddenly claimed to own all the land. First Nations people were encouraged to enfranchise themselves as Canadians, leaving the poverty and economic barriers inherent to life on reserves to join settler society. Enfranchisement meant relinquishing one's identity as an Aboriginal person in order to become a land owning farmer with the right to vote.

Traditional forms of trade, such as the potlatch, were made a criminal offense and traditional governance by hereditary chiefs also outlawed. Instead, democratic elections were imposed. An Indian Agent inhabited every reserve, enforcing the pass system. Native people had to apply for permission to leave their reserve or to travel between reserves. Selling goods or services off reserve was prohibited. Aboriginal people were also refused the right to plant crops, cut down trees or build houses.

At the same time, provincial and federal governments did not develop infrastructure on reserves. Many reserves today remain without basic infrastructure, such as running water, roads, electricity, housing and schools. People on reserves in Canada are often living in third world conditions.

The myth of Terra Nullis (Latin for nobody's land) falsely advanced that Native people were not originally present at the time of contact. The racist belief that Indigenous persons were uncivilized savages, not really human beings, was also widely held and advanced in the media, especially in the movies. Perhaps most significantly, the omission of curriculum about the rights of Aboriginal people from the mainstream, public education system allowed an unjust society to fester.

## **A Lack of Education**

*"Our alliance (Interior Nations Alliance) is not looking to sign treaties with the federal and provincial governments. It leads to the extinguishment of Aboriginal rights and title, even though Delgamuukw affirmed that Aboriginal Title exists and cannot be extinguished. Instead, we want to pursue a different approach based on the relationship model - developing relationships for co-managing and sharing resources. That process of decolonization will be painful and difficult for both sides, but it is a very important step for Canada to take. Both sides will have to make a deep, moral commitment."*

- Chief Arthur Manuel, author of *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*



It has largely been through a lack of education, omitted from the public education system, that the internationally acknowledged abuses of First Nations' constitutional rights and dispossession of land have been allowed to continue in Canada. This is why the Truth and Reconciliation's Final Report of 94 recommendations stressed that the inclusion of mandatory, First Nations education, in all levels and all areas of study, is essential to reclaiming our dignity as a nation. We are all *directly* part of the system of colonialism if we reside in Canada, whether we are aware of this or not. To not know is to participate in the status quo.



## **This Is Today**

In almost every Native community, there are still elders who, as children, were taught by parents or grandparents who had grown to adulthood in self-governing communities free of control by whites. For example, local Vancouver artist, Jerry Whitehead, was raised in a small cabin by his grandmother, who had a pre-contact upbringing herself.



Many living, Aboriginal people have this direct connection to their original culture and were raised by family members unaffected by the impacts of colonial imposition. In the words of Toghestiy, leader of a blockade in Wetsuwet'en territory, "We are not extinct!" In this picture of artist Jerry Whitehead, he is with his three sons and grandson, whom he has raised himself. The cultural traditions and worldview of First Nations peoples, despite colonization, remain a living way of life.

There is a notion that persisting issues of colonialism are in the past, or irrelevant to contemporary society. However, unresolved Aboriginal issues and First Nations poverty is very much a current Canadian reality of social injustice. Native people are not a conquered people, but a people continuing to defend their rights. There is nothing for us to 'get over'. We are living our lives.

Census data from a five-year study, published this August, 2015, reveals that First Nations peoples living in Canada are still shockingly disadvantaged as a direct result of existing colonial policies and ongoing segregation. For example, Aboriginal people are more than twice as likely to die of injuries, preventable disease like tuberculosis, pneumonia and substance abuse than any other group. These deaths could be entirely averted, the census concludes, if the education and economic advantages that are enjoyed by other Canadian citizens were also accessible to First Nations.

## **Unique Stories of First Nations Dispossession, Resistance and Stages of Recovery**

*"The land belonged to our forefathers. It is like a long purse full of money, it never fails, and that is why we want to keep it. It belongs to us now, so we don't want any strangers to get our food away from us, our own land; it has never been done before, any strangers claiming our land. We take great care of the whole of the river and we don't want any one to come on it."*

- AmClammon, Nisga'a Chief, speaking to the Government in 1864

*"When the whites first came among you, you were little better than the wild beasts of the field. The land all belongs to the Queen. A reserve is given to each tribe, and they are not required to pay for it. It is the Queen's land just the same, but the Queen gives it to her Indian children because they do not know so well how to make their own living the same as the white man. It is the hope of everybody that in a little while the Indians will be so far advanced as to be the same as a white man in every respect."*

- Smithe, Government Official, responding to the Nisga'a Chiefs in 1864

Every First Nation in Canada has its own, unique story of dispossession and colonial mistreatment. Accordingly, Aboriginal communities are at very different stages of recovery, capacity, economic/infrastructure development and self-governance. Just like cities and towns across Canada, reserves may be managed very well or very poorly, depending on their leaders.

As is true for any government, some First Nations Chiefs are corrupt and others govern in the best interests of their people. Some Nations have settled issues of self-governance (Nisga'a), some are economically self-reliant (Osyoos) and one, the Tswassen First Nation, ceded their reserve to the Crown, making it into a municipality and claiming to extinguish their Aboriginal title. Many reserves remain socially divided, isolated, poverty-stricken, with under-developed infrastructure and high rates of unemployment.

Regardless of a particular First Nations' story of dispossession, rebuilding and condition of resistance, central themes repeat in each case. Since the respectful relationship decreed in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was overturned for colonial rule enforced in the Indian Act of 1876, Native people in Canada have been engaged in a fight for their economic livelihood and culture. Sometimes this struggle comes through the courts and sometimes it is waged through blockades. Sometimes, as a last resort, the Aboriginal battle for Indian land is fought through armed warfare with the state.

The following historical struggle of the Tsilhqot'in provides a timely example of how important it is to know about a particular First Nation's own story of dispossession, resistance and reclamation before attempting business communication.

## **A Nation's Fight for Aboriginal Title - The History of the Tsilhqot'in**

The Tsilhqot'in people had had little contact with Europeans before the gold rush. They pursued their traditional lifestyle of hunting and fishing, moving throughout their lands between the Coast Mountains and the Fraser River. When more Europeans started entering their territory in the 1860's, they traded with the newcomers and worked for them packing and guiding. In 1862, the colonial government gave a businessman named Alfred Waddington a license to build a wagon road, but the Tsilhqot'in people were not consulted or compensated for this obstructed use of their traditional territory.

At the same time, the Tsilhqot'in's population was decimated by small pox. Businessmen took discarded blankets that had wrapped the sick and dying and sold them, unwashed, to other Tsilhqot'in, intentionally kindling the spread of disease. Newcomers continued to enter Tsilhqot'in land without paying any compensation while starting epidemics that threatened to wipe out the people completely. Between 1862 and 1863, half to two thirds of the Tsilhqot'in population had died of disease and starvation.

In April, 1864, a powerful Tsilhqot'in war chief, Lhatsas'in, along with twelve of his warriors, defended themselves against the invasion of their land. This is an example of one of the relatively few occasions that an Aboriginal community resisted settler encroachment through violence. In addition to the Tsilhqot'in War of 1864, two of the most well known and more recent standoffs between the Canadian Military and First Nations are the Oka Crisis (1990) and Gustafsen Lake. Below is a picture of Wolverine, who was sentenced to years in prison for violently defending a breach of his constitutional right to use and manage his own land.



In the case of the Tsilhqot'in War of 1864, after three attacks, eighteen British were dead. A few months later, the colonial government located and hung six Tsilhqot'in chiefs they believed to be responsible for murder. Their names were Lhatsas?in, Biyil, Tilaghed, Taged and Chayses. The chiefs have since been exonerated. In 1993, the British Columbia Provincial Government apologized for the hangings. A memorial plaque by the unmarked graves of the chiefs, thought to be buried underneath the hospital in Quesnel, has since been installed.



## **A Mind Boggling Gap Of Misunderstanding**

In 2014, the Tsilhqot'in won their long and expensive court battle for Aboriginal Title to their ancestral land. Title is defined as the exclusive right of a First Nation to own, use and autonomously manage its traditional territory. The Nation's management must preserve the land for the use of future generations, which is known as stewardship.

In this ruling, the state has the right to override Aboriginal Title should a case of economic necessity be made. This means that the Tsilhqot'in's recognition of Aboriginal Title may not necessarily be their final battle for authority over their traditional territory. In the words of Guujaaw of the Haida Nation, after winning the same, "This victory is only going to be real if we go out and get it."

Although the story of the Tsilhqot'in War of 1864 has been excluded from our history textbooks in Canada in the recent past, the event has always remained deeply embedded in the hearts, knowledge and understanding of this particular First Nation. Closing this mind-boggling gap in our segregated history of Canada, as Aboriginal, settler and newcomer populations, is critical to the creation of a just and post-colonial society. Education is the key to co-creating a shared, more inclusive and accurate understanding of who we are as Canadians.



The Wolf Totem - A Truer Understanding



## Calder and Delgamuukw

Since Canada became a confederation in 1871, all levels of courts in the land have denied the existence of Aboriginal Title. Aboriginal people were, at one time, not even legally permitted to have representation in a court of law, never mind to file a court claim. However, in 1973, matters began to shift when the Nisga'a appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada for title to their unceded territory in what is known as the Calder Case.

Although their land claim was ultimately denied, the Nisga'a succeeded in spurring the judges to at least acknowledge, in no uncertain terms, that Aboriginal Title does, in fact, exist. In 1996, the court case known as Delgamuukw granted and defined Aboriginal title as well as the duty to consult. These earlier court victories served to set the necessary precedent for the Tsilhqot'in's achievement.



Shortly after their 2014 court victory legally acknowledging title to their traditional territory, the Tsilhqot'in celebrated their creation of Dasiqox Tribal Park.

## Duty to Consult

“One of the big messages we’re trying to get out ... we’re not criminals, we’re not looking for violence. We’re out there to try to protect the water and our land and our food so future generations can enjoy it,” Dini Ze Toghestiy, Wetsuwet'en Hereditary Chief



The Tsilhqot'in War of 1864 was the outcome of the colonial state's departure from the Royal Proclamation. This war marked the beginning of the First Nation's battle for a return to the legal principles of Canada's original relationship of respect with its Aboriginal people. The settler state failed, and still fails, in its fiduciary duty to protect Aboriginal people from interference. For the Tsilhqot'in, such abuse originated during the gold rush, when the government did not compensate or consult regarding land management issues.

This failure generally defines the story of all First Nations in British Columbia, although each history is different in terms of the particular details. Today, many First Nations are still struggling to establish a respectful relationship with the government. A pronounced unwillingness of the state to ensure that industry acts within Aboriginal peoples' best interests persists.

Many First Nations are presently stalled in treaty talks with the government, living in poverty on small, inadequately portioned and insufficiently developed reserves, their traditional territory occupied and developed to their exclusion and disadvantage. Some First Nations opt out of expensive treaty negotiations because the government exerts pressure to extinguish Aboriginal title. This results in massive debt.

Not infrequently, the separately governed bands that comprise a First Nation will be deeply divided over development issues in their shared traditional territory, as the Wetsuwet'en are. One band, under the leadership of Chief Karen Ogden, accepted payment to build a pipeline through the territory, even as another band, under the leadership of Toghestiy (a descendant of Delgamuukw) currently occupies a blockade in resistance to this development.

## No Consent

In the August 19th, 2015 edition of the Vancouver Sun, an article titled, *First Nations Lawyer Slam Lack of Site C Consultation*, reported that the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations will suffer irreparable harm if thousands of acres of old-growth forest are cleared to build the dam. The Nations' lawyer, Gailus, reports in this article that "the Crown truncated their consultation and issued the permits to meet an arbitrary timeline imposed by BC Hydro, contrary to both its contractual obligations and its constitutional obligations." Yet, BC Hydro holds a gold rating for its Progressive Aboriginal Relations from Canadian Aboriginal Council for Business Relations.

Although government has the said duty to consult and protect Aboriginal people's best interests, they do not - while trying to make it look as if they do. In the recent case of the Lax Kw'alaam First Nation, who unanimously voted against a Liquefied Natural Gas development on their land, government and industry decided to proceed anyway. But they consulted, right? Without the funds and organization to mount court cases, many First Nations are unable to try to defend themselves from such skewed 'consultations'.



Understanding this situation helps us to comprehend how profoundly deep the issues of distrust and resentment can be in Aboriginal communities. Trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, as an outcome of such political violence, is a reality. Needless to say, avoiding a patriarchal tone of telling a First Nation what to do is imperative in business communications. Some Aboriginal people, such as Kanahus Manuel of the Shuswap First Nation, assert that they are not Canadian citizens because of the injustice and abuse generations of her family continue to endure.





## Case Study: Jon Zwickel

The refusal of the federal and provincial governments to protect Aboriginal people's best interests concerning industrial development and resource extraction illuminates the importance of education about the current condition of First Nations' ongoing struggle with the state. We must take matters into our own hands if there is to be a change. We must begin to hold our politicians accountable.

Most critical to such an education about business relations and communication with First Nations partners is that we engage both our minds and hearts. An example of a businessperson who took action based on a personal sense of social justice and heartfelt, compassionate commitment to change is Jon Zwickel.

### The Skwachays Lodge

Zwickel, a successful hotelier, observed a disproportionate number of homeless persons on the streets of Vancouver are Aboriginal. With knowledge of First Nations issues such as land dispossession that causes homelessness, Zwickel felt motivated to develop the Skwachays Lodge. Operated by the Vancouver Native Housing Society and located in Vancouver on West Pender Street, the lodge features guest suites decorated by Aboriginal artists. The lodge is also a boutique hotel, selling the work of First Nations artists at risk of homelessness, who live and work on site. Below is a picture of the smudge room on the upper floor, with a sweat lodge above it.



## **The Spirit Ridge Vineyard and Resort**

Jon Zwickel also partnered with the Osoyoos Indian Band, under the leadership and initiative of Chief Clarence Louis, to develop the Spirit Ridge Vineyard and Resort. Zwickel responded to an advertisement, extended by the reserve's band council, seeking business partners. This successful joint venture did not require the band to surrender Aboriginal title to their traditional territory, to cede reserve land or to sacrifice their traditional value of land stewardship. Instead, an application to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada for a 99-year lease allowed the team to create a profitable enterprise on the reserve. When the lease expires, it may be renewed again.



## **The Future of Aboriginal Business Relations Is In Our Hands**

One year after his apology for Residential Schools in 2008, Harper declared that there is no colonialism in Canada, neither presently nor historically. Our Prime Minister signed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2010, but only due to ongoing, extreme international pressure. (The UNDRIP articulates the same Aboriginal rights and title expressed in the Canadian Constitution Act.) Harper then said that signing the declaration was a symbolic gesture only, with no legal implications. As a result, Justice Murray Sinclair doubts that a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation, as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission this June, 2015, will be forthcoming at this time.



## **Terms**

Aboriginal Peoples - the different Indigenous peoples of Canada, including Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, Metis and Inuit.

Aboriginal Title - defined legally by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* as the right to exclusive use and occupation of land, including the right to choose what uses land can be put, subject to the ultimate limit that those uses cannot destroy the ability of the land to sustain future generations of Aboriginal Peoples (stewardship).

Animism - the belief that all things and forms of life, even objects, possess a sentient consciousness of equal importance to, although not exactly the same as, human intelligence.

Band or Tribal Council - a group of people living in community on an Indian reserve. The band or tribal council administers the affairs of the band, in a similar way that a city council operates the business of a city or town.

Cede - the act of surrendering reserve land, set aside for Aboriginal collective use, permanently to the Crown so that it becomes fee simple property.

Colonialism - the domination of one group of people over another group.

Consensus - the traditional First Nations form of government based on collectivistic decision-making. In contrast to the democratic policy of majority rule.

Constitution Act, 1982 - legislation that describes the basic principles upon which the government of Canada bases its laws. Originally the British North America Act of 1867, Canada repatriated the Constitution Act from Britain in 1982. Aboriginal peoples from coast to coast travelled by rail to gather in Ottawa to protest the omission of Aboriginal rights and title. Due to this resistance, Aboriginal Rights are in the Constitution Act of 1982, which stipulates in Section 25 the preservation of any rights or freedoms previously afforded in the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

Cultural Relativism - the belief that all cultures possess validity and that it is possible for different, even conflicting points of view, to be correct.

Detachment - the practice of observing one's own, subjective mental processes so as to become more open minded; a willingness to consider the values and beliefs of other worldviews as valid as one's own.

Direct Action - Aboriginal organized blockades and armed standoffs with the Canadian Military, such as the Tsilhqot'in War of 1864, the Oka Crisis of 1990 and Gustafsen Lake.

Duty to Consult - defined by the Supreme Court in *Delgamuukw*, the duty to consult is the government's obligation to accommodate Aboriginal Peoples' interests, in the Crown's honour. When the Crown has knowledge of the potential existence of Aboriginal rights or title, and contemplates conduct that might have an adverse impact, duty to consult is required.

Enfranchisement - the state's offer to Aboriginal people to relinquish their identity and become Canadian citizens with the right to vote.

Fee Simple - land that may be bought and sold, or held by individuals, in the modern capitalist economic system.

Fiduciary Responsibility - derived from the Latin word for trust, this term refers to the Crown's duty to act in the best interests of First Nations people and the necessity to justify government regulations or laws that interfere with Aboriginal rights.

First Nation - a group of Aboriginal communities or bands co-existing in the same geographical area. One First Nation may be comprised of several autonomously governing houses, or bands.

Hereditary Chief - a leader who has power passed down from one generation to the next along bloodlines, similar to European royalty.

Holism - understanding something as being more than just the sum of its parts.

Idle No More - a grassroots resistance movement for Aboriginal rights and title. A response to Bill C-45, the Jobs and Growth Act, and mitigation of the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

Impact Benefit Agreement - proposals that offer Aboriginal people benefits as a result of a certain development or project on their traditional territory. IBA's may include a provision to provide employment, training or management opportunities for the First Nation, revenue or equity sharing, and the hiring of Aboriginal businesses to maintain operations.

Indian Act - federal legislation that regulates Indians and reserves. Sets out certain federal government powers and responsibilities toward First Nations and their reserve lands. The first Indian Act was passed in 1876. Since then it has undergone numerous amendments.

Indian Agent - the on-reserve government officer and administrator of the Indian Act. Managed the pass system, which regulated the number of times a Native person could leave their reserve or go to another reserve, while ensuring no economic activity was carried out.

Indirect Action - Legal cases launched by First Nations to pursue and defend Aboriginal rights and title. Two of the most well known cases of indirect action are the Calder Case (1973), where Supreme Court judges determined that Aboriginal title is an existent right, and Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia (1996), which granted Aboriginal title, as well as duty to consult.

Eurocentric - the belief that European values, culture, language, religion and institutions are superior to the values, culture, language, religion and institutions of any other group.

Ethnocentric - the belief that one's cultural worldview is supreme and that other ways of seeing the world are fictional, or inferior.

Land Management - the regulations around reserve land as set out by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, such as a 99-year lease.

Medicine Wheel - the symbol of the holistic way of thinking in traditional First Nations culture, also known as the Four Directions. The Medicine Wheel teaches acceptance, respect, responsibility, non-interference, collectivism, stewardship and seven generation planning.

Objectivism - a way of seeing the natural world as inanimate, or without a sentient consciousness equal to the importance of human consciousness.

Patriarchal - an inappropriate, parent-child approach to an adult relationship. Patriarchal language speaks down to its subject. Infantilizing.

Potlatch - the traditional First Nations means of economic trade, cultural celebration and ceremony. The potlatch was illegal in the Indian Act.

Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) - offered through the Canadian Aboriginal Council for Business Relations, PAR is the evaluation of a participating business' ability to work effectively and fairly with Aboriginal communities.

Racism - attributing characteristics and traits to an entire group of people based on their common racial ancestry, eliminating the unique qualities of individuals. Dehumanizing.

Reserve - a tract of land, the legal title to which is vested in Her Majesty the Queen, that has been set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian Band. Reserve land cannot be privately owned by a Band or Band members but is considered Crown land in the Indian Act: land held by the government for the collective use of First Nations.

Royal Proclamation of 1763 - a document signed by the King of England that asserts a nation-to-nation relationship of respect for and guardianship of First Nations. The Constitution Act of Canada reads, in Section 25, that the legal provisions made in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to First Nations, in regard to rights and title, still stand.

Stewardship - the traditional First Nations commitment to caring for the land in a way that preserves it for the use of future generations. A condition to title.

Traditional Territory - the particular areas of land occupied for thousands of years by certain First Nations groups before contact.

Treaty - an agreement between government and a First Nation that defines the rights of Aboriginal Peoples with respect to lands and resources over a specified area.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) - lead by Justice Murray Sinclair, the TRC documented testimony from Residential School Survivors across Canada over a five-year period. In June, 2015, the TRC issued a Final Report comprised of 94 recommendations necessary for the state to reconcile with First Nations.

United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples - stipulates the requirement to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples prior to the approval of any project affecting their land or territories and other resources. Canada was one of the last of 147 countries to sign the UNDRIP in 2010.

Worldview - one's picture of the universe. Worldview determines our values, beliefs and ways of life, including the economic systems we create and ways we conduct business.

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## Appendix

*My Country 'Tis of Thy People You're Dying*, lyrics by Buffy St. Marie



Now that your big eyes have finally opened  
Now that you're wondering how must they feel  
Meaning them that you've chased across America's movie screens  
Now that you're wondering how can it be real  
That the ones you've called colorful, noble and proud  
In your school propaganda, they starve in their splendor  
You've asked for my comment, I simply will render  
My country 'tis of thy people you're dying  
Now that the long houses breed superstition  
You force us to send our toddlers away  
To your schools where they're taught  
To despise their traditions  
You forbid them their languages, then further say  
That American history really began

When Columbus set sail out of Europe  
Then stress that the nation of leeches that conquered this land  
Are the biggest and bravest and boldest and best  
And yet where in your history books is the tale  
Of the genocide basic to this country's birth  
Of the preachers who lied, how the Bill of Rights failed  
How a nation of patriots returned to their earth  
And where will it tell of the Liberty Bell  
As it rang with a thud o'er Kinzua mud  
And of brave Uncle Sam in Alaska this year  
My country 'tis of thy people you're dying  
Hear how the bargain was made for the West  
With her shivering children in zero degrees  
Blankets for your land, so the treaties attest  
Oh well, blankets for land is a bargain indeed  
And the blankets were those Uncle Sam had collected  
From smallpox-diseased dying soldiers that day  
And the tribes were wiped out and the history books censored  
A hundred years of your statesmen have felt It's better this way  
And yet a few of the conquered have somehow survived  
Their blood runs the redder though genes have paled  
From the Gran Canyon's caverns to craven sad hills

The wounded, the losers, the robbed sing their tale  
From Los Angeles County to upstate New York  
The white nation fattens while others grow lean  
Oh the tricked and evicted they know what I mean  
My country 'tis of thy people you're dying  
The past it just crumbled, the future just threatens  
Our lifeblood shut up in your chemical tanks  
And now here you come, bill of sale in your hands  
And surprise in your eyes that we're lacking in thanks  
For the blessings of civilization you've brought us  
The lessons you've taught us, the ruin you've wrought us  
Oh see what our trust in America's brought us  
My country 'tis of thy people you're dying  
Now that the pride of the sires receives charity  
Now that we're harmless and safe behind laws  
Now that my life's to be known as your 'Heritage'  
Now that even the graves have been robbed  
Now that our own chosen way is a novelty  
Hands on our hearts we salute you your victory  
Choke on your blue white and scarlet hypocrisy  
Pitying the blindness that you've never seen  
That the eagles of war whose wings lent you glory

They were never no more than carrion crows

Pushed the wrens from their nest  
Stole their eggs, changed their story

The mockingbird sings it, it's all that he knows

"Ah, what can I do?" say a powerless few

With a lump in your throat and a tear in your eye

Can't you see that their poverty's profiting you?

## **Census data reveals startling First Nations mortality stats**

Written by Manfred Joehnck

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A 15-year study into premature death finds the rate is more than twice as high in the First Nations community.

First Nations adults between the ages of 25 and 74 are more than twice as likely to die from avoidable causes compared to non-aboriginal adults.

The results were compiled by Statistics Canada using census data from 1991 to 2006.

The rate for men was twice as high while the rate for women was two and a half times higher.

Avoidable deaths refer to deaths that could have been prevented through prevention, screening and timely health care.

They include things like pneumonia, tuberculosis, diabetes and drug or alcohol abuse.

First Nations adults were more than five times more likely to die from alcohol, drug use, and injuries than non-aboriginals.

The study also found that education and poverty played a major role in the high premature death rate.

It found the rates could be reduced by 47 per cent for aboriginal men and 32 per cent for aboriginal women if economic and education factors were the same for First Nations and non-aboriginal adults.