

Why are First Nations 'Idle No More'? Wisdom from the Past

by **Koozma J. Tarasoff**, February 2013.

Former Senior Researcher with the Saskatchewan Government (Social Welfare Department) and the Government of Canada (Department of Regional Economic Expansion) 1964 to 1979.

Graphics and editing by Andrei Conovaloff. — Link: goo.gl/ivpX7L , [PDF](#).

Introduction

Many problems created by Europeans who colonized the 'New World' have never been resolved. The current [Idle No More](#) movement organized by Natives in Canada beginning in November 2012, and joined in at least [15 countries](#), addresses persistent and complex Native issues around the world.



254 protests ([Map of January 11th Idle No More Events](#), The Media Co-op, Jan. 9, 2013; listed at [#IdleNoMore Global Day of Action, Solidarity & Resurgence](#).)

While much reporting covered the sensational partial [hunger strike](#) by Attiwapiskat Chief [Theresa Spence](#) in Canada, few non-Natives get the rest of the story. The 265 events held by an estimated 6,000 people in 15 countries on January 11 were not uniformly reported. Most were out of sight, out of mind.

Why are Natives [Idle No More](#)? Because little has changed in 50 years since I worked in the Broadview Area of Saskatchewan on solving the same issues protested today. They remain marginalized since the so-called 'white-man', including my heritage family, settled on 'their lands'.

Though the [CBC](#) tells us these protests began in October 2012 by 4 women who were concerned about the omnibus Bill C-45, a [Facebook page](#) by [Jessica Gordon](#) intended for students, Natives know the phrase exploded their pent-up frustration of oppressed indigenous peoples around the world. The [international solidarity](#) and [demonstrations](#) has governments

worried it may blossom into an [Occupy movement](#) or an [Indian Spring](#). (See video: ['Idle No More' Movement Picking Up Steam](#) (Huff Post Live))



See [30 photos](#) I took of the freezing Monday, January 28, 2013, march from Victoria Island to Parliament Hill, in Ottawa, Canada. See [more photos](#).

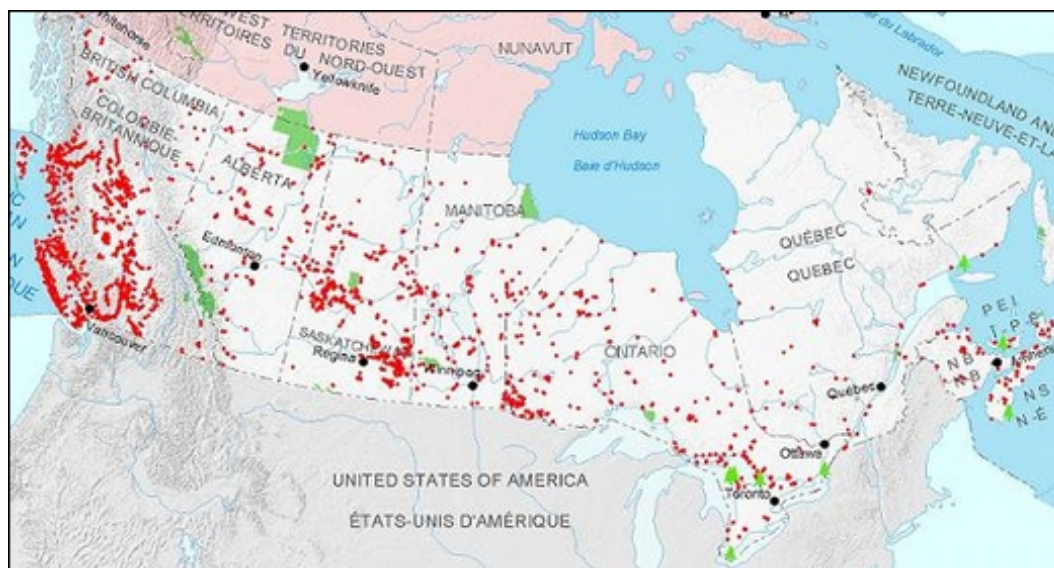
A good overview was written by a Native: [Have media helped or hurt most Canadians' understanding of Idle No More?](#), by Rick Harp, Media Indigena, January 24, 2013. As an insider, Harp tries to sort out the confusing news, with links to many sources. In short, though most Canadians support Native grievances, they do not like disruptive protest methods. Many see 633 bands of Natives '... thoughtlessly lumped together as one amorphous brown mass that speaks with one [bee] hive mind,' but really it's more like 'jello that won't be nailed to the wall ... lacking a central, single leader...' These are the main points:

- There are broad spectrums of emotions, opinions, and issues spread geographically across Canada about Natives and government accountability and democracy.
- 100-year-old unresolved Canadian court cases about stolen natural resources and racism are being appealed to the United Nations.
- More dialog and negotiation is needed, as done by Alberta Premier Alison Redford.
- There are 4 main issue areas:
 - Revenue sharing
 - Abolish Indian act
 - Modernize Treaties
 - Poverty (housing, health, education, etc.)

In 2010, the government met with Saskatchewan Native representatives to brainstorm problems and solutions. Of the 75 who attended, one summarized: 'The only consistency is the inconsistency of the process.' The report lists [9 proposed measurements of progress](#), but no progress since then is measured. See: [Renovating Programs in Support of Lands & Economic Development - Saskatchewan Region Engagement Session](#), November 22–23, 2010.

In 2006, [Statistics Canada](#) counted 1.2 million aboriginal Native peoples, about one in 25

Canadians (3.8%). Only [26% live on reserves](#), about 1 in 4. There are 633 registered Bands which own about [3,000 fragmented Reserve properties](#), totalling about [3 million hectares](#) or 0.33% of all land in Canada. Their reserves are less than 10% of their share of the population.

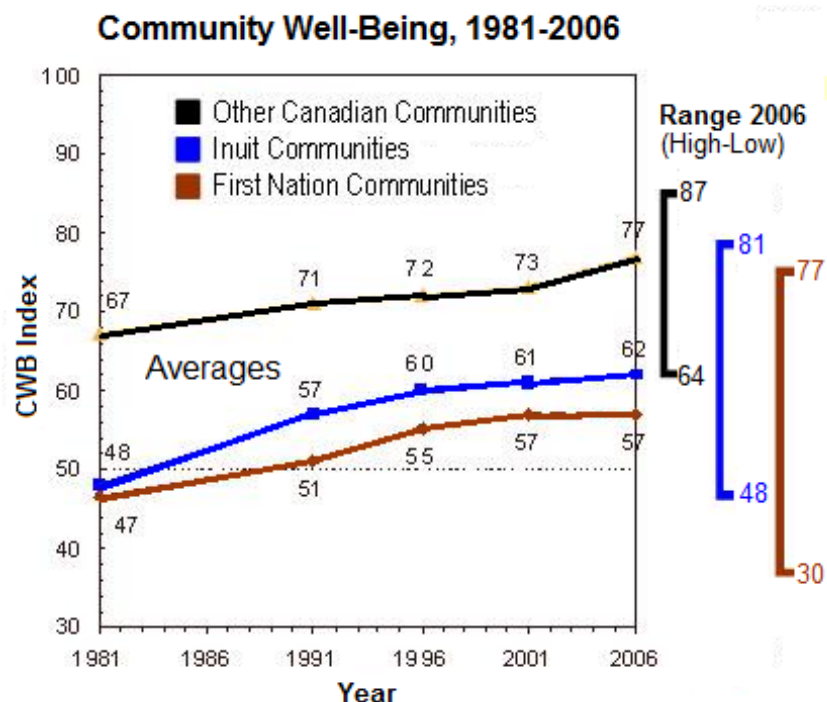


Map shows 'Indian Reserves' in Canada are more clustered in the west, far from Parliament.

On or off Reserve, many Natives in Canada remain isolated, as 633 third-world islands in an ocean of modern Canada. Some have prospered as described by these three articles:

- [For Aboriginals, Life Is Better Off-Reserve](#), by Mark Milke, Senior Fellow, The Fraser Institute, Huffington Post, 01/21/2013.
- [Life Is Better In The Cities: How Canada's Aboriginal and general populations fare on reserve and off reserve](#), by Mark Milke, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, November 2008.
- 'Preserving The Past by Strengthening Our Future. [Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation](#). Chief Clarence Louie is also Chief Executive Officer and is currently serving a second term as chair of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. The band owns a resort, a golf course, even a winery, and pumps \$40 million a year into the local economy.

But on the average, too many Natives remain far below the average non-Natives in education, employment, income, and housing. 30 years of measuring [Community Well Being](#) (below) shows that though some Natives have acquired economic parity with average non-Natives, the average Native remains at the bottom of the non-Native average score. [Nearly 1 in 5 lives in jail](#), [1 of 3 are youth](#) in their [new residential schools](#). The data shows that no significant progress occurred for a decade!

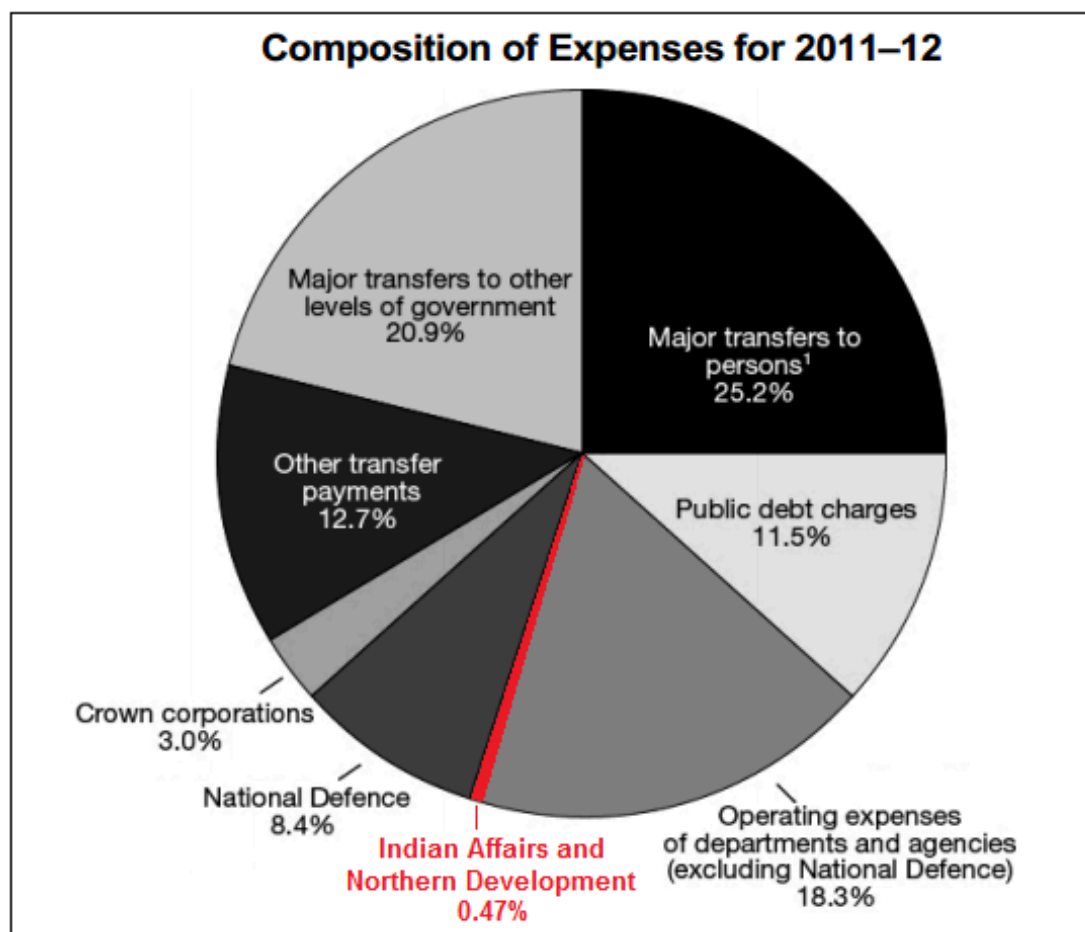


The chart is a combination of the first and last charts in [First Nation and Inuit Community Well-Being: Describing Historical Trends \(1981-2006\)](#), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010.

Historically, as buffalo herds were slaughtered and practically disappeared from the Canadian prairies in the late 1800s, there followed a slow migration of Europeans into the west. Britain and Canada worked together to purchase the charter and privileges of the Hudson's Bay Company, which until then had an early monopoly on fur trade, in order to establish sovereignty in the west. To do this, the Government of Canada negotiated a series of treaties with the Indians to take their land using British law.

The signing of [Treaty 4](#) at Qu'Appelle Lake on September 15, 1874 put an end to Natives' political independence. From then on, their affairs were to be administered by the federal government. Natives were registered by the Indian Affairs personnel. Chiefs and elders were still elected, but they were essentially messengers for the Department of Indian Affairs. This paternalistic attitude has continued to the present day, with billions of dollars being spent in 'keeping the Indians in their place.' I'm appalled that such a huge amount of money is wasted without much accounting.

In parallel, the money wasted by our Canadian Stephen Harper Government on the [F-35](#) stealth fighter plane scandal (\$45 billion) and [National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy](#) (\$33 billion) should be invested in our people. The entire 2011-12 Canada defence budget is less than \$23 billion! Who is threatening Canada today to justify the construction of such weapons of mass destruction? We should address housing, health, education, water, and development problems found on the 633 Canadian Native reserves — in partnership with other Canadians, as full citizen partners of Canada!



[Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada, Fiscal Year 2011-2012](#), page 19.

The government chart above shows how the last \$271.4 billion Canadian budget was allocated. The \$1.27 billion budget for Indian Affairs and Northern Development is added in red to show that this 4% of the population gets **less than a half percent of the total expenses** — ‘... a very small fraction of the value of the resources, and the government revenue, that comes out of their territories.’ ([What if Natives Stop Subsidizing Canada?](#), by Dru Oja Jay, Montreal, January 7, 2013.)

In this article I will summarize work that was done and solutions proposed — unfortunately dismissed — more than 50 years ago, which are relevant today. Little has changed.

As a Doukhobor, my immigrant Russian peasant ancestors experienced many of the same traumatic politics as Native Canadians. As a graduate anthropologist in the 1960s, I was assigned to research and report on slow economic growth areas including First Nations. I was part of a team of social scientists who studied native North Americans, from Mexico to Alaska. Solutions were proposed, but ignored because government and the Native cultural groups became divided and confused as promises were made and denied. I found that Natives were treated like Doukhobors who also protested. Once again, history is repeating itself as Idle No More.

Generally Natives are deliberately excluded from the normal services provided for their neighbours. My ancestral Doukhobors were in a similar situation, though much smaller in scale, 115 years ago when we arrived from Russia. Our communal land and lifestyle was robbed from us by a change in government, but we survived and integrated. During our turmoils, our people were divided into many groups by choice and leadership, then by geography, while most outsiders thought we were all one people. Today we maintain community centres in [3 provinces](#), and our diverse identities. Our transition was difficult, and mostly unavoidable.

I proposed a similar solution for the Natives, by removing the boundary between 'us' and 'them.' Dissolve the Indian Reserves so Natives become full members of the greater Canadian Community while preserving their heritage and retaining their equity (treaty rights, restitutions, land, resources).

Terminology

I prefer to use the term '[Native](#)' here which includes peoples in North America also called North American Indians, [First Nations](#), [Aboriginals](#), Metis, and Inuit.

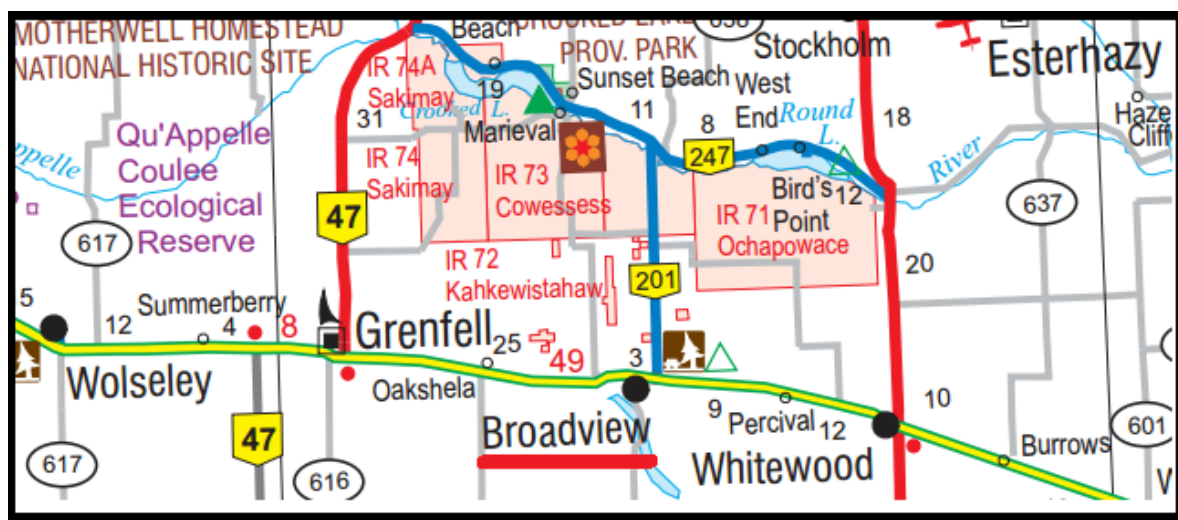
In 1966, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was created from earlier titles of Indian Affairs. In 2011, its name was [changed](#) to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada ([AANDC](#)). Below I mostly use 'Indian Affairs Department' as the title common when I worked for government.

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1. Stepping into the Shoes of the Other

My first real job as a young anthropologist in Western Canada 1964 to 1966 was to study the Native population of 2,000 in the southeast corner of Saskatchewan, near the town of [Broadview](#), 140 km (90 miles) due east of Regina on Trans-Canada Highway 1.



The [map](#) shows the four Indian Reserves (IR, pink shaded) we studied: IR 71 - Ochapowace, IR72 - Kakhewistahaw, IR73 Cowessess, and IR 74 Sakimay. Three of the reserves are Plains [Cree](#) and the fourth, IR74 Sakimay, is mostly [Saulteaux](#) or Plains Ojibway.

The results of my work became part of the 'Broadview Rural Development Area Study:' (An extension under general rural development ARDA project no. 8067, Regina, 1968. xli, 136 p.). The Area strategy is essentially a community development approach to dealing with slow growth communities.

In October 1965, I arrived with my wife, and two pre-school children in the small town of Broadview during a period of major changes. On the adjacent reserves, public services were just being installed. There was only one phone per reserve. Horse-pulled wagons were still used on the reserve and in town. I saw few cars on the reserve. Some of the Native housing and health conditions were third-world. The conditions in town were generally much better. Worst of

all, many local people recently lost their jobs.

The railroad Roundhouse terminal had closed three years earlier. The Indian Affairs office in Broadview was being downsized as more responsibility transferred to the Chiefs and Council on the reserves. The Valley residential school was closing, but a Day School on the reserve remained. Native kids were bussed into town.

The four adjacent Native reserves were just beginning to get electricity, piped water and paved roads. TV was new. The district was seeking development projects to provide jobs. It was a period of transition, fear, instability and hope. My job was to find solutions to improve their lives and future. All of this was to be in the context of the wider Broadview Rural Development Area.

Through observation of various kinds (questionnaires, interviews, visiting people, photographs, listening carefully), I was able to personally meet most of the people on the four reserves and in town. I attended Rain Dances, Sweat Bath Feasts, parties, private homes and public meetings.

Alcoholism was a serious problem. 75 percent of all convictions in town were related to drinking, mostly by Natives. This disease stemmed from a deep sense of inadequacy and inferiority by Natives in relation to the wider society, and was associated with violence against women, traffic accidents, destruction of property and misuse of money and credit.

Among the solutions proposed for alcoholism was better education to build confidence, a community centre to enlarge ones the circle of friends, hiring Native constables for the RCMP, and generally raising the socio-economic level for all.

The Native and non-Native peoples were friendly and accepted me and my family as an integral part of their communities. I found that friendliness encouraged friendliness. I have fond memories of those years spent working with this multicultural community.

2. Schooling for a Purpose

Despite inadequate Native Residential Schools, a few graduates became successful professionals. Their success in the outside world speaks to their adaptability to new conditions.

Due to a remarkable teacher, the best was the Day School on the Cowessess Reserve. Ernie Unruh, born in 1926 in Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan of German immigrants, really impressed me. I suspect he grew up among Mennonites. With his wife Sylvia and six children, he moved in to teach in 1963 and stayed for two years.

He treated the Natives like regular people. He was sensitive to their needs, creative in getting resources, and had a very friendly and progressive teaching style. He opened his home to everyone. 'Come in', he would say, and friendly rapport would begin. Soon Native children asked if they could watch TV. Ernie invited them to join his children in the basement. Sylvia served snacks. His house was their house.

While he looked after some 35 children during the day, and another teacher had a similar number, the learning atmosphere was extended to include skating and hockey in winter, and Bingo every week or so. Because electricity was just arriving on the reserve, Ernie used the opportunity to introduce new technology. He went to Regina and met with business people

about getting 'quality-used' electrical appliances as prizes for Bingo. And as a prize was won, Ernie, with stand-up humour, would explain how a particular electric appliance — a toaster, a frying pan — worked. Up to 100 people came out for these events. Hot dogs were sold for 10 cents and coffee for 5 cents.

In summer, Ernie persuaded the Indian Affairs Department to provide him with a bus and a professional Native driver for trips to the Exhibition and museums in Regina (the capital and largest city in Saskatchewan at that time), to the beach in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The program was popular as the children were picked up at their homes. Ernie asked the Saskatchewan Transport Department to set up a driver training program. He coaxed government to serve the people.

Another innovation was cooking and sewing classes for the women, taught by Sylvia Unruh. Native women learned 'hands-on' how to use the latest electrical appliances.

When most public schools would have been empty, Ernie filled them with social events — dances, skating (rink), bingoes, and film nights. Natives from other reserves regularly came. Through persuasion and personal initiative, Ernie Unruh was able to make effective use of public property for community purposes. More Earnies are needed.

3. Preparing for the Future

Identity is an important factor for people's well being, especially with rapid changes in our traditional values. Are we looking backward, forward, or a combination? Each of us needs to determine which way to go. Like all of us, the Native person ought to choose what feels most comfortable in the context of a changing world.

As the importance of hunting diminished in the late 1800s and the reserve system was introduced in Canada, we can say that mobility of the band members had structurally ceased. On the prairies, crop cultivation and stock raising were introduced by the Indian Affairs department as a new means of existence, often with limited success. By the 1960s, with the lure of television, jobs and bright lights, the move to the cities was starting to become a popular option. But the big question was: how should Natives on the reserves prepare for the rapidly changing times of the new environment?

An interesting insight into this question of preparing for the future comes from Peter George, one of two traditional medicine men whom I got to know during my time in the Broadview area. One day when I visited Peter in his home on the Sakimay Reserve, he took me to a cupboard, opened it, revealing a good supply of canned goods. He took out his wallet, opened it, and showed me that he had lots of money. Then he pointed out that many of the young people on the reserve live only for the day. He said, 'They get drunk and have no plans for tomorrow.'

This observation — and wisdom — was stated by a traditional Native in his late 80s who had been brought up all of his life to respect nature and prepare for tomorrow. Yet, he could see that many of the modern young people were not prepared for the times.

Sadly, a few years later Peter George died and did not pass on his lifelong herbal wisdom to the next generation. I was told he felt he could not trust the next generation. Some of Peter's

medicines were so powerful that if they were used improperly, they could harm or kill another human being. Peter could not take that risk. He was a traditional man with modern instincts and a responsible attitude towards his fellow beings. In essence, this traditional medicine man was a modern renaissance man!

4. Communal / Private Ownership Challenges

In my Broadview study, I came across several stories of people who survived residential schools and became successful on and off the reserve. One of these was a resourceful farmer, Sam Lavalley, and his wife Mary-Ann. Their son was a medical doctor working in Alberta. And their daughter Carol later went to a university in California, obtained her Ph.D. in Anthropology and became a teacher/consultant in Saskatchewan.

Sam was also a gifted violin player who often played at dances. On one of the occasions, when Sam and the family were away from their home, someone came and smashed his violin — an obvious attack on the family for their success. From then on, the family had to ensure that someone was home whenever they went shopping to town. Why? The Lavalleys told me that they were afraid that more harm might come to their property because of jealousy in being more equal than others.

The attack on the violin raises the question of a strain between communal versus individual property rights. 'Indian land' tends to be communal as defined by the Indian Act and the whole structure of the Aboriginal Affairs Department. The relationship of communal to private ownership requires much sensitivity and maturity to maintain peace between the two and arrive at a common ground of understanding and respect. Community capitalism co-exist if full employment is available along with good management, and hard work as the [Osoyoos Indian Band](#) has shown.

5. Proposed Indian Policy Paper 1969

The 1969 Indian [Policy Paper](#) was a [Canadian](#) policy document (a [white paper](#)) in which the [Minister of Indian Affairs](#), [Jean Chrétien](#), proposed the abolition of the [Indian Act](#), the rejection of [land claims](#), and the integration of [First Nations](#) people into the Canadian population with the status of other ethnic minorities rather than a distinct group.

[William I.C. Wuttunee](#), the first Native lawyer to be admitted to the bar in Western Canada, supported the policy document in his 1971 book titled *Ruffled Feathers: Indians in Canadian Society*. He pointed out that the history of colonization has led to widespread dependency and lack of initiative.

A response by [Harold Cardinal](#) and the Native Chiefs of Alberta (entitled [Citizens Plus](#) but commonly known as the "Red Paper") explained the widespread opposition to the paper from [Status Indians](#) in Canada. Prime Minister [Trudeau](#) and the [Liberals](#) began to back away from the White Paper, particularly after the [Calder case](#) decision in 1973.

According to the 1969 Policy Paper, the intent was equality and access to full citizenship:

‘To be an Indian must be to be free — free to develop Indian cultures in an environment of legal, social and economic equality with other Canadians.’

As an anthropologist, after the Broadview experience I had the honour of working on the early drafts of the Policy Paper with my colleagues from other disciplines including land surveyors, economists, agronomists, psychologists, sociologists, parks experts, educators, health workers, and fellow anthropologists. Whenever I met Native peoples whether on the Broadview area reserves, reserves in other provinces, as well as Natives in Mexico (where I went to observe first-hand the Native programs in the State of Chiapas), I asked questions and listened carefully.

In Saskatchewan, I was in contact with Native lawyer William Wuttunee who generously supported our work. As well, I was mentored by scholars [Dr. Harry B. Hawthorn](#) of UBC, [Dr. Charles Frantz](#) of the State University of New York, [Dr. Frank G. Vallee](#) of Carleton University, [Dr. Gordon K. Hirabayashi](#) of the University of Alberta and Asian scholars Yong C. Kim, Mitsuru Shimpo and David Kogawa.

One of the key things was to distinguish cultural [assimilation](#) from [integration](#). From the insights of many, I learned that ‘assimilation’ is a policy of hate, while ‘integration’ is a policy of love and respect. Naturally I chose integration as the intended concept for the Paper. The original drafts were done outside the Department of Indian Affairs. Eventually the final draft was passed on to the Department of Indian Affairs where it was prepared and presented as a White Paper. However, my feeling then and now was that the presentation was not in the spirit of ‘integration.’ Why? I could only assume that integration was not in the interest of the Department — because this would mean working oneself out of a job.

6. Solutions from the 1960s

The 1969 Policy Paper is as relevant today as it was over 40 years ago. Let’s seriously revisit it and seek ways to include the Natives as equal citizens of an integrated society in a framework of partnership and mutual respect. Let’s remember that in using a community development approach, ultimately members within ought to be involved. Nothing less than full and equal Canadian citizenship for all residents should be our common goal.

Excerpts from the *Broadview Rural Development Report*, 1968 (pages 98 - 101).

B: Recommendations [edited]

1. ... , create a new environment (the wider area approach — ... 60 miles by 60 miles) to stimulate local people to think in broader terms. Design a plan to become eligible under the FRED program ... [\[Fund for Rural Economic Development.\]](#) The wider area should consider:
 - a. A new administrative authority that would integrate the field services of all involved departments and agencies — a kind of super-departmental Regional Service, or a Human Development Service, or
 - b. An autonomous or semi-autonomous Development Corporation as with the Community Improvement Corporation in New Brunswick. To encourage the development of such a unit, ... in early 1967, the Broadview Rural Development

Council proposed a similar plan.

2. Labels are dangerous if not used with care. The most common terms... “Indians” and “Whites”. ... [have been replaced with less offensive, politically correct labels, like Aboriginal, First Nations, ...] ..
3. [Newsletters, websites and email are] ... useful media for disseminating information to every householder in the designated area. Anything that promotes understanding, toleration, and cosmopolitanism diminishes the force of ethnocentrism.
4. Education plays a prominent role in widening the horizons of the young people, and no branch of education seems better fitted to promote intergroup understanding than the social sciences, which seek specifically to comprehend and explain cultural differences. The social sciences could be introduced at three levels:
 - a. A summer class for teachers in the Development Area;
 - b. An elementary adult education night class in anthropology, sociology and psychology; and
 - c. The introduction of social sciences at the high school level.
5. Living room discussions on topics of current interest could be held during the winter. Local teachers or other qualified local people could be engaged to serve as resource leaders.
6. Workshops for the total Development Area promote the feeling of one large community having a common purpose. In brief, a sense of peoplehood.
7. Integrated education should be encouraged as much as possible. Anything that separates people whether on the basis of religion, kinship, ethnicity, social class or territory should be minimized.
8. A single ethnic-centred agency should be avoided. It should not be the intention of the province to create another Indian Affairs “single agency” (an agency which provides all services to the Indians) to replace the present federal branch. This would be a move counter to the objective of achieving ultimate integration of all its inhabitants into the mainstream society.
9. The employment of an integrated Job Corps program to construct a cultural centre, a museum-tourist centre and other community-wide endeavours.

In my opinion these ignored recommendations still apply today. Compare the above from 1968 to “[Renovating Programs in Support of Lands & Economic Development — Saskatchewan Region Engagement Session](#),” November 22–23, 2010, Saskatoon, Sask.

My main goal is to show that I have much sympathy with the [Idle No More](#) movement that is currently seeking to get the Canadian Government to pay attention to the plight of Canada's Native peoples. It is an opportunity for change and the government needs to act soon. In fact,

both sides need to critically examine how each contributes to the wider problems and opportunities. Surely it is time to begin a new public discussion (provincially and federally) of how Natives can become full citizens of Canada.

You will notice that I have generally not used [First Nations](#), but have preferred to use 'Native' to include Indians, Metis and Inuit peoples. This is deliberate. As human beings, we are neither black nor white, but a shade in between. The colour of the skin should not dictate merit, as Martin Luther King Jr. once stated. We need a common ground for action as basic human beings. To plead for superiority and isolationism is to invite prejudice and racism. In a sense, we are all aboriginals seeking to live a decent life on Planet Earth.

Surely, the Ottawa bureaucracy of Indian Affairs, the Indian Act and the reserve system are at least part of the problem. It's long term policy is [apartheid](#) in its structure in a manner similar to former South Africa where people were legally defined as black or white, as [Nelson Mandela](#) discovered when he negotiated with F.W. de Klerk leading to apartheid's abolition and the multi-racial election in 1994. As Canadians who have let go of their colonial yoke, are we afraid to go in a different direction?

Perhaps Canada's Natives ought to seriously consider getting rid of the [reserve system](#). In Canada, my ancestors, the Doukhobors, were once part of a [large reserve](#) in the early 1900s, and it was painful to lose this status in 1907. The government policy was labeled as 'a breach of faith' at the time — and resulted in the loss of 260,000 acres of improved land as well as the movement of two-thirds of the Doukhobors from Saskatchewan to British Columbia. A loss of \$11 million! Ultimately, in a strange way, this loss of the reserve was vital for the preservation and vitality of the Doukhobor movement. Natives can perhaps learn from our experience.

Over a century, dialogue has been hampered on the Native issue largely because of lineal 'silo' thinking of the entrenched Indian Affairs Department, the Indian Act and the reserve system. Today it appears that no politician dares to ask straight questions because of potentially losing votes. Status quo seems to rule the day. Even the Native leadership itself has [little motivation to change](#), with most chiefs receiving salaries up to \$100,000 per year, and many chiefs receiving more than Prime Minister Stephen Harper, while many reserve members live in third-world conditions. And Councillors (and there are many of them) have their own pay schedule. Transparency and accountability continue to be valid questions in a workable democracy.

We Canadians deserve honest accountable leadership and appropriate action, not excuses. The future is bright if we extend full citizenship to Natives and work for honest responsible government. Let's get on with it and cease to idle no more.

7. Comments

From: Robert Ewashen, Creston, BC, Feb 4, 2013

Hello Koozma,

I read your publication with great interest. It really does bring meaning to "Idle No More", and the fact that the ideas you use to illustrate this were formulated decades ago certainly highlights the fact that government has not made any serious effort to improve conditions for First Nations.

What come through is that in spite of rhetoric to the converse the primary objective of the power structure has been exploitation, marginalisation, expropriation of land and resources and stonewalling on all issues.

The articles by the pundit from the Fraser Institute really provides very little, and I suspect was probably designed to enhance support for expropriation of the remaining "reserve" rights of First Nations, no doubt under the banner of improving their economic position.

Congratulations on a fine piece of work.

Bob Ewashen

From: William Kanigan, Saskatoon, Sask., Feb 4, 2013

Hello Koozma

Thank you for your interesting and informative article.

You wrote: 'Ultimately, in a strange way, this loss of the reserve was vital for the preservation and vitality of the Doukhobor movement. Natives can perhaps learn from our experience.'

Please tell me what and or why should the natives learn from the Doukhobor experience?

How was this loss vital to the preservation and vitality of the Doukhobor movement.?

Kindest regards,

Bill

Reply by Koozma:

Hello Bill,

Thank you for your comment on the Native story. You have raised a legitimate question to my statement on the value of Doukhobor experience on the Native issue.

The logic of my response deals with reserve mentality and its poisonous apartheid implications.

If Doukhobors had continued to stay in Doukhobor Reserves, our Russian ancestors and us would likely have been trapped in time as reserve people much as the Registered Indians are trapped in time today. Our vitality as a social movement would likely have been prevented by sectarian thinking. Instead, our work ethic in a wider society made us what we are today.

Had the Indian Act and Reserve System not been imposed on the indigenous people, the fate of these people would likely have been much different than now. They would have been more adjusted and would not suffer the present identity crisis.

I hope that this response begins to answer your question.

All the best. Koozma

From: Larry Ewashen, Creston, BC, Feb. 4, 2013

Excellent coherent and focused, Koozma, which unfortunately the 'Idle no more' [bad choice in name] movement is not. I also agree with most of your conclusions, which unfortunately, are too sensible to get the traction they deserve.

From: George Marken, Vancouver, BC, Feb 5, 2013

Finally - someone has some sense!

This Native Cree is a morning radio show host in Red Deer Alberta.

[Anthony Sowan: Why Idle No More holds back the dream of Canadian equality](#), Full Comment: Letters, *National Post*, Jan 23, 2013.

Reply by Koozma:

The sentiments of this Native person are very much in tune with my own conclusions.

From Hans Sinn, Perth, Ontario. Feb.7, 2013

Koozma:

I am delighted to know of your past work as Senior Researcher for the Canadian Government, Provincial and Federal.

In that context: In 'Why are First Nations "Idle No More"?' you refer to 'the 633 third-world islands' that exist in the 'ocean of modern Canada'. Do you know of surveys of these Islands, what kind, how detailed and accessible ?

I am playing with the idea of following up (in one form or another) on the 1990-1999 North American Project of [Peace Brigades International](#) (NAP). Joan Edenburg (you may have noticed Joan as an active [Facebook](#) friend) recently published *Making Space for Peace*. The book provides a brief history of the PBI North American Project. It gives some analysis of what was believed, achieved and learned in the ten years of NAP's existence, and a few of its shortcomings. The book is a compilation of NAP articles, reports, interviews and bibliographies. Joan is the archivist of PBI, lives in Holland, heads PBI Holland, and organizes the PBI archives at McMaster U, when she comes to Canada for a few months each summer. [Peace Studies [428](#), [429](#)] *Making Space for Peace* is available in [hardcopy](#) (\$24) and [e-book format](#) (~\$13). I have three copies and am happy to lend or give one.

Who knows, in the context of Idle No More, NAP might be among the entry points for non-Indigenous-Indigenous cooperation — possibly in the field of peacebuilding and community development. Regardless, it would be very helpful to have a better understanding and clearer picture of the ‘the 633 third-world islands’ in the ‘ocean of modern Canada’.

Reply by Andrei:

RE: “Do you know of surveys of these Islands, what kind, how detailed and accessible?”

- “Islands” was my metaphor to describe how small and isolated the reserves in Canada are compared to the [United States](#), particularly Arizona where I live and some reserves are large, mostly mountainous desert. The majority of Natives along the east coast were moved west or killed.
- A lot of information is available online via the department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada page [Research and Statistics](#). Also try your local and university library information desks.
- The best reserve map online to illustrate Koozma’s article is at [TourismSaskatchewan.com](#). At section ‘Plan Your Vacation,’ click on button ‘[Order Maps and Guides](#).’ Near bottom of page find ‘Download a [PDF version a map of Saskatchewan](#)’ which provides a 2011 map : ‘[Full Province - Good Resolution](#).’ Similar maps should exist for other provinces.

RE: “...entry points for non-Indigenous-Indigenous cooperation — possibly in the field of peacebuilding and community development.”

- See the following response by a Native and Attorney who wrote “... a passionate plea for the restoration of harmony and equality between First Nations and the rest of Canadian society.”

From Harold Johnson, Cree, Attorney, Sask. Feb.8, 2013

Reserves were not IMPOSED upon us. The reservation is a "holdback". We agreed to share with *Kiciwamanawak* [literally “cousins,” referring to European settlers] all of our land, except that small area that was to be ours. The reservation is not a grant to us from the government. We selected our own reserves, we chose where our land would be. There is a problem with it however. When the treaty commissioner at the time of treaty negotiated with us, he deliberately made sure that our reserves would be small and isolated. That was for military reasons. If our nations were too large, we would be too much for Canada to handle.

If all of the northern [Cree](#), for example, lived in one area instead of several small isolated reserves, (Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and Lac La Ronge Indian Band, which are then subdivided into even smaller parcels) then we might begin to think of ourselves as a nation. The idea of nationhood and self government and self determination, is still a powerful concept. It is always there in our minds, it is in the stories about treaties and their meaning, It is in our history and I suggest that it is in our DNA. It is never going away.

The success of the divide and conquer strategy of the Dominion government is evident in the in fighting between Aboriginal peoples. It would be almost impossible now for the northern Cree to form a single nation. Because our communities are deliberately small and deliberately isolated, many of our people continue to think small and isolated, us and them, even in relation to other Aboriginal Peoples.

For more detail on the relationship between the Cree and *Kiciwamanawak*, please read, [Two Families: Treaties and Government](#) (Saskatoon, [Purich Publishing](#) 2007, 143 pages) by Harold Johnson. [From the book jacket: "Treaties were the instruments that gave Europeans the right to settle here, share resources, and build a relationship of equality with those who were here before. Johnson's ancestors did not intend the treaties to allow the subjugation and impoverishment of First Nations, or give settler governments the right to legislate every aspect of First Nations activities. ... [the book] ... is a passionate plea for the restoration of harmony and equality between First Nations and the rest of Canadian society." [Also see excerpt.](#)]

[[Harold Johnson](#) is a Crown Attorney working in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, and living at Lake Montreal "off the [electric] grid." He earned a master's degree in law from Harvard University by learning how to navigate both "families" — his heritage culture and the culture of the land occupiers. He is very committed to promoting a culture of peace.]

Your comment will be here

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