

Canadian History 101- constantly changing, we can do it again!

In the beginning, Canada was a vast and 'humanless' half continent. Some ten or twelve thousand years before Confederation, as hundreds of metres of glacial ice retreated northward, melting into the oceans, human migration began no doubt from what is today Mongolia and Eastern Russia. It is more likely that these "Asiatic" people ventured along in water craft, hugging the coast until safe landfall was available. Haden on the Fraser River is one possible first settlement, carbon dated back to at least eight or more thousands of years ago, about the time of the cradle of civilization, Mesopotamia.

Or perhaps like Adam and Eve of Judo/Christian dogma, the first people in what was to become Canada, were created by the Great Spirit, Manatu or Raven, etc. Either way, it is doubtful that they crossed the Bering Straight land-bridge... at that time an impassible, towering, ever flowing, shifting and treacherous wilderness of ice.

Prior to this, it is very probable that humans entered the continent of South America around Tierra DelFuego by sea from Australasia, as carbon dating has shown human existence there for at least ten thousand years.

Both groups of people spread in every direction throughout both continents, through central America and Mexico, eventually meeting as they blanketed the two continents. Human ability to adapt to these twin plentiful gardens of Eden was quite remarkable. The cornucopia of foods, and natural medicines, various styles of shelter and clothing to suite climates was tailor made for the adaptability and talents of these first nations.

Flash forward to the early 1500's just after Christobal Columbo had reached the Americas, when John Cabot re-found what is

now Newfoundland. Prior to this around 1000 CE, it had been settled for two years by Lief Erickson the Viking and most likely visited before this frequently from about 600 CE by Celtic Farfarers who harvested vast amounts of walrus ivory worth it's weight at the time, in gold, as well as meat, hides and rendered fat oil.

When news hit Europe of Cabot's pots of cod available for the dipping, the English, French, Portuguese, etc. raced to the Grande Banks to begin the decimation of this limitless supply that would lead to the cod moratorium in the 1980's, as we changed old habits in an attempt to reverse the extinction of this endless source of food fish which was "Enough your Sire to last to the end of all time".

With the assistance of indigenous peoples, Cartier, Champlaign, etc. began the French settlement of Eastern Canada. Maple syrup was certainly a sugary treat worth sending home for profit. But it was the Northwest Company's discovery that natives would part with plentiful piles of luxurious first rate furs for a trinket or two, a pot, a pan, or an ax head and that the profit margins for the Europeans were huge, bringing riches to all who ventured forth. When the British realized how much top hat beaver and other prime animal fur was available for next to nothing, they attacked from the North with with Hudson Bay company which was given all of Rupert's Land by the King. Kings could do that sight unseen in those days.

Under the leadership of Thompson, MacKenzie and Fraser, Canada began to grow and spread into previously unexplored, "unoccupied" territory, with the help of native guides, paddlers, packers and trappers who knew the entire area like the back of their hand.

The enthusiastic and scrupulous entrepreneurs of the NW and Hudson Bay Companies built

forts, brought bullets, guns, liquor and diabetes inducing refined sugar as well as courts, law and order and the hanging judges needed to control the accompanying drunken violent backlash towards white men who occasionally decided local females, willing or not were into the bargain.

Indigenous people who had been traveling throughout and living off the area for millennium were surprized at how empty the white folk perceived their general store of food, medicine, shelter, clothing, tools and weapons. Indigenous peoples have been fighting for compensation from coast to coast to coast ever since. (NB There has never been a land settlement by the Beothuk first nations of NFLD either, as we managed to wipe them out completely the way the Tasmanian natives were officially hunted by bounty, to extinction by the British Expeditionary Forces).

Canada was then changing again, becoming a collection of British Colonies, starting with Nova Scotia, PEI, Upper and Lower Canada as French Quebec now fell under British colonial control when Wolfe defeated Montcalm. The minor Maritimes and New Caledonia (BC to be) were run by the British Colonial office, while the “empty” and still relatively undeveloped prairie regions remained a form of territories along with the areas now called Yukon, NWT and Nunuvut.

Fort Garry, Selkirk, Red River, St. Boniface went through a period of independence warring as Louis Riel, native and Metis peoples fought for independence or a kind of autonomy. The Eastern government was not concerned about the fact hundreds of native children were starving to death without promised food supplies. This was as a result of sport and Gatteling gun slaughter, which systematically wiped out countless bison that happened to be the local native’s prime source of survival. Anyway, the locals elected a guy named Riel. When he so eloquently defended

his people’s actions at Batoche and in general and explained how they thought they could take a better shot at self government we hung him. One hundred year’s later, the Canadian government would officially change its mind, Pardon him posthumously and admit Louis Riel was a duly elected leader who was wrongly convicted of treason and murdered by an unrecognized Imperialist occupying government. Well, maybe it wasn’t worded quite that way, but in effect that was historically the gist of it.

Historically, attempts to completely wipe out indigenous peoples with pox contaminated Hudson Bay point blankets and venereal disease didn't work so the unofficial Colonial scheme back then towards them included assimilation. Later in history, when they proved slightly hardier than this passive method, the church and state interred them on reservations and sent them to Residential schools where their language, way of life and pride was beaten, raped and bugged out of them for decades. The aforementioned introduction of refined sugar and alcohol were also used to try to finish them off. The social and health implications of these acts today continue to haunt this British legacy. Despite all of the mistreatment, indigenous people continued to cooperate to open Canada up because at the time it seemed beneficial. Little did they know what was in store for their aboriginal peoples in the long run.

To avoid the Indian wars of the United States, where unemployed post civil war military men (I use that term men loosely) were on a psychopathic killing spree throughout the Oregon Trail territories to rid the area of their pesky angry natives who were getting tired of being relocated every time something valuable was found on their newly assigned Reserved lands, the NWMP assigned Sam Steele to settle things peacefully. This is one of the few highlights in Canada indigenous relations. He cleaned up Fort Whoop-up, established Fort’s

MacLeod and Steele and generally made peace with the natives. Once again we changed our habits again, even if just for a little while towards the indigenous folk..

Beyond the Rockies was a mountainous land of forests, rivers and some more coast. Canada already had enough fish from the east so that stuff didn't become important until Hudson Bay's Fort Langley realized the fish, again "limitless in supply", would swim right up the river into their nets. This salmon was salted and shipped to the Lord Sandwich Islands, whose natives would some day return to calling their home Hawaii. This steady supply of fish was a handy supplement to the fur trade which was waning by this time because top hats weren't kewl in Britain anymore. Then gold was discovered in the Cariboo. The first nations living there were chased out after a few killings back and forth and a couple of natives had been hanged by Begbie. Canada now really wanted New Caledonia so we changed the name to British Columbia, which has been confusing to people throughout the world ever since, who think it's somewhere on the North Coast of South America.

British Columbia and change! Well they've been getting screwed on transfer payments forever and remember the equalization payments enjoyed by the have-not provinces that we all accepted as just being a part of the country of Canada? You know like when one province is hurting economically we step in to share the wealth! The resource based economy in BC has mostly been up as long as we're willing to give gobs of raw materials away for next to nothing. I mean let's face it, the United States doesn't need BC to cut up whole logs for them. "Just send them intact and if you don't want to we'll hit you with a NAFTA infringement, because we're entitled to anything you have that we need and we make the rules" is their divine attitude. How much did we lose on that one \$50 million or billion? California, in the midst of the Enron energy

rip off crunch, never paid BC Hydro for half of the hundreds of millions in power she sent to their LA Hummer, global warming heat wave induced air-conditioning blackout rescue. As a result of all this awesome Free Trade BC finally qualified as a have-not province. Once they finally did qualify as being a poor province, due to NAFTA softwood lumber disagreements, the dying salmon industry because they didn't last forever and the decline of coal exports due to China's cheaper, polluting soft coal, the rules about equalization were changed so BC no longer qualified, at least that's how it seems to the people in lotus land. But we all love Canada so we just accept whatever goes on in the spirit of in for a penny in for pound! Such a throwback to our British Colonial heritage that.

NAFTA is such a far cry from Canada's original stance whose battle cry "No Truck or Trade with the Yankees!" could be heard in the earlier 20th century when Canadians were smarter.

Newfoundland and Labrador. Hey! That's a change. Canada didn't really see much value in the Rocky Isle other than buying her fish, so NFLD remained out of Confederation until Joey Smallwood and 1949. NFLD has been economically slightly better off ever since. Labrador couldn't make a go of it on her own, and she's not that French so Quebec wasn't an option. Electricity through Labrador was attractive to NFLD, hence amalgamation long after Confederation. It's interesting to note here, that for decades Alberta enjoyed billions from a sweet royalty deal on THEIR oil, but when NFLD/Labrador oil started to flow they had to fight for years to finally get the Feds to change their stance and give them a fair share of the Hibernia income. Oh who cares about them anyway? They're like a half an hour behind the rest of Canada anyway, eh! What is the sales tax in Alberta again. Somewhere around nothing percent.

I review all of this as a form of introduction to the ever changing nature of what Canada is. It has changed methodically much the way the “uniform” cap of the NWMP/RCMP has changed since it was formed to take over policing the country from the British Army.

Canada only received it’s Independence from Britain on July 1, 1867. Which as of July 2006, would make her, go ahead put down the pencil and calculator, do the math in your head... she would be one hundred and thirty nine, 139.

Canada is ONLY 139 years of age as a full fledged country. Some people live just shy of that. Prior to that and actually a little further along, every decision about where she was headed was made or influenced heavily by the British Parliament. We are still a parliamentary system in principal but in effect we are no longer a democratic parliament.

In the beginning, Canada was a lean mean harvesting, mining, building machine. She expended huge amounts of human energy into building her railway and opening the country chock full of natural resources. As soon as the CPR was finished at the cost of hundreds of Chinese coolie lives, rich foreign sport hunting expeditions rolled out to shoot and machine gun to death a mountain of millions of bison to near extinction in a period of several years, opening up vast tracts of “uninhabited, empty” prairie. Well, once the bison were gone the natives started to die off more quickly through starvation etcetera too. Remember the Riel thing earlier?

Then we began begging immigrants to come. Not from India or Pakistan or China mind you. Just European white folk. We gave them free land to come all the way from the Ukraine to live in soddies and farm wheat here. We opened the door to political/ religious refugees, Hutterite, Mennonite by the

thousands- “Give us your poor, etcetera!” Canada has certainly changed again recently. Now you have a better chance on the point system if you have big bucks.

Remember when most people who owned property in Canada lived here. It was kind of a given. Well it’s changed for the worse. Now most of our children will never be able to afford to own a home, because the prices have gone through the roof. Thousands of properties lay empty in Vancouver alone. They are safe investments for foreigners in a great market, many of who will never set foot here in their lives. Germany, Austria and most civilized societies who take care of their own citizens properly have strict property ownership rules, something Canada does not have and must change retroactively.

Why Canada needs a drastic and revolutionary change:

While Canadians are lulled to sleep by CanWest Global media, the rich and powerful right-wing plutocracy is subverting and displacing our democratic institutions, little by little.

Canada’s political system was of course originally controlled by powerful corporations and individuals. This only changed in response to mounting civil disobedience (e.g. Winnipeg Postal Strike), labour militancy and grassroots political organizing (e.g. Tommy Douglas- Medicare), that is the bases of democracy. These limited victories were successful in forcing elected governments to implement some policies befitting all Canadians, rather than just the powerful and the wealthy.

Canada’s major policies are no longer designed by Parliamentarians and bureaucrats. They are heavily influenced by local organizations like the Canadian Council of

Chief Executives and international organizations like the Trilateral Commission, the World Economic Forum, and the Bilderberg Group.

Such groups have an abiding contempt for democracy. In one of its first commissioned studies, The Trilateral Commission, published under the name *The Crisis of Democracy* (1975), states that Western societies were suffering from too much democracy. For government to function, marginalized groups had to remain apathetic and uninvolved in politics, the traditional acceptance of “hierarchy, coercion, discipline, secrecy and deception” in government had to be restored and the public needed to once again feel compelled “to obey those whom they had previously considered superior to themselves...”

Canada’s elites in their support for the Fraser Institute (one of the most vile right-wing think tanks in Canada), feel the same way. The Institute was established as a propaganda machine with the explicit purpose of changing Canadian attitudes towards public support for the welfare state. It is funded by corporate donors and right wing “charities”. The Institute has developed close ties with both the Liberals and Conservatives. Despite the shoddiness of the research it produces, it’s work is guaranteed to receive widespread coverage in Canada’s corporate media. Witness it’s annual trashing of public schools. The Fraser Institute represents the views of the wealthiest sector of Canadian society.

Besides being the most class-conscious and politically active segment of Canadian society, Canada’s elites also have vast resources with which to push their plutocratic agenda. Through networks of powerful friends, lobbying groups like the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, and the National Citizen’s Coalition, think-tanks like the CD Howe Institute and the Fraser Institute, media

empires like CanWest Global and their financing of Canada's ruling parties, they’ve transformed our ideological and political landscape, reversing nearly all the gains made by the labour movement since the 1950s.

Wealthy corporations have a vested interest in promoting a global consumer culture dedicated to the quest for material gratification. They want corporations to have freedom to act solely on the basis of profitability without any concern for social or environmental consequences. The only way to achieve these ends is by eliminating the ability of governments to challenge corporate power. This is turning elections into meaningless pageants and politicians into pawns.

These goals are radically opposed to those shared by most Canadians, who know that unrestrained corporate greed is encouraging psychopathic values and laying waste to our environment. Global warming (perhaps better termed “frying”), is the most horrific consequence of this lust. Unless our corporations are restricted by national law, their activities will disrupt our climate further to the point where our economies and perhaps our very civilization will be shattered by storms and flooding, drought and famine, desertification and disease. That’s why right-wing institutes like the National Post and the Fraser Institute refuse to acknowledge global warming despite the unprecedented scientific consensus on the issue. They know that if global warming is real, then the only way to address it is by legislating constraints on corporate greed and that the only thing that could bring this about is a resurgence of true Canadian democracy. They deny climate change because they despise democracy.

Democracy manifests itself in the ongoing struggle by the many to reclaim the economic and political power hoarded by the few. It’s time to take back our government. It’s time for a major change in power.

Remember those government “Litter Bug” campaigns that resulted in far cleaner streets and highways. Remember when it used to be legal to advertise tobacco and alcohol products until we admitted they were killing us and draining our health care system? We banned them. There is a carnage far deadlier out there. Teenagers grow up thinking automobiles are to be driven recklessly as they are in almost every commercial. Should we not also ban or restrict content in those? But more importantly, most advertizing today convinces us that shopping is a great sport. A fun hobby. A way of life. And this consumer driven habit is the most addictive and deadly we have ever partaken in. It is killing the planet. How long will we wait to promote a change in Canada’s lifestyle? Should we wait until the last majestic polar bear is gone? They are going quickly now. Should we wait until all the glaciers and polar ice have also become extinct?

The biggest battle will be against corporation control of media and government. In order to restore democracy to Canada for Canadians, a system of financing must be set up to counter the propaganda of the right wing corporations who have unlimited resources the democratic left wing does not have.

I have faith that Canada can change. She's done it many many times before. Let's just do it again!

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