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July 20th, 2018

Building a Better Canada

Canada. A nation of many spectacular facets which not only inhabit the vast geographic homeland but deliver a commanding impression of Canada on the international scale. From incredible social services catering from the local citizens to refugees, while offering several systematic programs for every age group, Canada has indeed made Canadians proud of their nationality. The outstanding acceptance of various ethnicities, cultures, and religions has only increased the multicultural picture of a true Canadian society. Despite a lower population for the land size of Canada, one can always find a place to bring or carry on their heritage and background in any part of the country. The most stunning feature of Canada is that by 2018, Canada has now become synonymous with one word: Democracy. The conditions of the government have been formed in a just and democratic manner which strives to be as transparent as possible. Peaceful protests can occur without much harm to the public and new ideas to improve the country are always encouraged. As Emily Murphy says, who is the first female magistrate in Canada and the British Empire, "I believe that never was a country better adapted to produce a great race of women than this Canada of ours, nor a race of women better adapted a great country". However, despite strenuous pressures from the government for citizens to treat each other with dignity, love, and respect as per the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the main portion of Canada's population is not being treated ethically: Indigenous peoples. "In Canada, the term Indigenous peoples (or Aboriginal peoples) refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. These are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada. Though severely

threatened — and in certain cases extinguished — by colonial forces, Indigenous culture, language, and social systems have shaped the development of Canada, and continue to grow and thrive despite extreme adversity” (Parrot). “Nearly 1.7 million people identified as Indigenous people in the 2016 census, Statistics Canada says” (Kirkup). Though prime minister Justin Trudeau [who has said that "no relationship is more important to Canada than the one with Indigenous peoples"] (Palmater), today, Indigenous peoples are the most mistreated ethnic group in all of Canada. From unkempt solitary reserves, poor health care availability, to insufficient searches for missing women, they have seen it all. The government simply turns a blind eye to the miseries of Indigenous peoples despite numerous promises and national announcements. As a result, the overall population of Indigenous peoples continues to diminish while Canada strives to keep its honor and courtesy up at an international scale. This is what is truly bringing down Canada’s reputation internally and if not solved, will expose a layer of concealed hypocrisy and influenced discrimination worldwide. To prevent an early extinction of Canada’s original lineage, the following complications must be resolved in order to save the last members of a brutally colonized race.

To begin, the premier trouble which has to be tackled first is the alarming number of missing Indigenous women. “The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) acknowledged in a 2014 report that there have been nearly 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women between 1980 and 2012” (Canadian Encyclopedia). If missing women were to be the only problem, having strict rules when it comes to police officers patrolling on duty would save the government a lot of time and money. But apparently, “police forces don't have to report missing Indigenous women to the national statistics agency. The problem here is while the RCMP is increasing

efforts to find missing Indigenous women, it patrols only 20 percent of the population in Canada. The rest of the country falls under the jurisdiction of provincial, municipal and First Nations police forces. The RCMP and other forces don't coordinate the questions on their missing person forms" (CBC News). "The legacy of colonization has pushed them, over generations, into the most vulnerable pockets of society. Discrimination, or dismissive attitudes from the police, only exacerbates that vulnerability" (White). Due to scant data being provided about the disastrous disappearances of Indigenous women, in particular, there is not enough attention being taken to find out the root causes of these disappearances nor to save them or at least find them for their families. ["In the absence of a national inquiry, it's hard to know why so many aboriginal women in Canada have been murdered or gone missing". According to a Human Rights Watch study released last year, at least part of the problem appears to stem from the broken relationship between indigenous women and girls and the Canadian justice system. That report found that many Indigenous women have suffered mistreatment and abuse by law enforcement officials. The result, said lead researcher Meghan Rhoad in a statement, "is an environment of mistrust and insecurity that is heightened by a lack of adequate police oversight and complaint mechanisms" (Wylter).] This can be demonstrated in a heartbreaking example in which, "remember that Edmonton murder trial in 2015, the one which saw a dead Aboriginal woman's preserved vagina introduced into evidence by the Crown — a depraved, horrific first in Commonwealth jurisprudence. Or that 2015 preliminary hearing in Edmonton, during which a female Aboriginal rape victim was led into court in shackles — after spending a week in jail and being forced to ride to court with the violent sexual predator who nearly killed her — because a white, middle-aged male judge felt she might not show up to testify. These are just two obscene,

monstrous examples of how the Canadian criminal justice system — the Canadian state — treated raped and murdered Aboriginal women” (Langford). Another factor that hinders Indigenous people’s well-being is the disgusting unacceptable mechanisms used to convert Indigenous peoples into a British so-called civilized lifestyle such as residential schools, which has severely traumatized Indigenous peoples, thus making them more vulnerable than any other minority group in Canada. The proper and factual evidence is not being effortly collected since “Indigenous women’s groups, however, document the number of missing and murdered to be over 4,000. The confusion about the numbers has to do with the under-reporting of violence against Indigenous women and girls and the lack of an effective database, as well as the failure to identify such cases by ethnicity” (Brant). The above figure is contrary to the previous statement in which the RCMP declared nearly 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women. If there are not established searches and rescue missions to find these women, it becomes a headlight for predators that these women are indeed powerless and are easy prey and any sort of punishment might not be given at all if anything criminal is done to these women. Hundreds of examples such as the Tina Fontaine case, Amber Tuccaro, Colten Boushie etc, have already explained that limited help is given to the families of these victims since none of their murderers were trialed or even jailed. This is nothing but a slap in the face of Indigenous peoples especially after many protests were enacted and too many girls have disappeared in a short period. On the other hand, in 2015, Justin Trudeau during his election campaign promises he will find all the missing women and girls and to do so, he launches a national public enquiry to retrieve all the missing persons but as he, “stood quietly with his head down as families expressed extreme anger toward him about the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls” (The Globe and

Mail), it is evident that it was nothing more than a half-baked promise in which the sensitivity of the issue was not recognized. This is ruining Canada's overall happiness because a significant section of the population is currently suffering who ironically, are the inherited rulers of the whole country since they were here in Canada first. The picture is crystal clear: Indigenous peoples are not treated fairly, primarily women, even in 2018. Countless examples can be used to illustrate the issue but unless Canadians change their mindset and recognize that racism towards Indigenous peoples still exists, nothing can be changed. Stern uncompromising laws need to put in order for Indigenous peoples to go through equal justice processes. From municipal to federal protection, everyone needs to be taught about the decrease in Indigenous peoples. A method to solve this horrendous epidemic is to put tremendous pressure on the government to change their attitude about Indigenous peoples and to realize that just a bunch of signed treaties is not ensuring their safety at all. With the help of media, various protests and letters can be conducted out in a firm but peaceful manner so that it is clear, Canada has a problem and it needs to be fixed once and for all. Doing so will change Canada's social image of a double-sided coin and ensure that Indigenous peoples receive the utmost care and respect they deserve which has been neglected and carelessly given until now.

Likewise, the second drastic difficulty Indigenous peoples suffer, are the conditions of the reserves they live in. Due to the colonization of Canada, Indigenous peoples were always given second class and poor treatment since they were forced out of their lands and put on reserves, therefore, not given enough protection and security compared to the rest of Canada. History says, "in 1982, the Government of Canada patriated the Canadian Constitution, and in so doing, formally entrenched Aboriginal and treaty rights in the supreme law of Canada. Section

35 neither confirms nor creates absolute Aboriginal rights. It does confirm existing Aboriginal or treaty rights that had not been extinguished by surrender or legislation before 1982 (Joseph).

“Aboriginal rights have not been granted from external sources but are a result of Aboriginal peoples’ own occupation of their home territories as well as their ongoing social structures and political and legal systems. As such, Aboriginal rights are separate from rights afforded to non-Aboriginal Canadian citizens under Canadian common law” (Aboriginal Rights). Due to this separation of rights because of previous unfortunate circumstances, Indigenous peoples are not being treated fairly in everyday life. One reason for this is because of designated reserves. “If your home reserve is located in an area of land that is part of a treaty, then you are considered treaty and are eligible to receive treaty benefits and have the treaty rights agreed to in the original treaty. If, on the other hand, you are a registered member of a reserve that is not located on land covered by a treaty, then you are a non-treaty registered Indian” (Trying Hard To Be Equal).

This clearly indicates that only under special laws, Indigenous peoples are treated equally because they have signed lands over to Canada. The reality of the lands on which Indigenous people live is far from common knowledge. [“First Nations people in Canada live in Third World conditions, with a lack of access to clean water and decent housing”, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations said. “We rank no better than a Third World country, and that is simply unacceptable. There is no good reason why our people should be as poor as they are. Problems include unsafe drinking water, crowded homes, high suicide rates, limited access to quality healthcare. It's a situation where they are unsure of their drinking water supply and that drinking water could have E. coli or other kinds of bacteria. The most disturbing thing is this despair often leads these young people even to contemplate suicide” (CBC News)]. “Aboriginals

are suffering more acutely than any other Canadian community, by any economic and health measure. They die sooner and face the highest levels of poverty, disease, and violence” (Cooper). Elvis Presley once said “Home is where the heart is” but for Indigenous peoples, it is more of “Home is where the grave is”. They are dying off gradually on the reserves and through various health concerns, yet nothing has changed. “Today Indigenous people still suffer psychologically from the effects of historical wrongs” (Palmer, Leo). Due to the severe isolation and horrible settings, Indigenous peoples actually suffer much more in general than Canada’s non-Aboriginal population. If “suicide rates are five to seven times higher for First Nations youth than for non-Aboriginal youth, and for Inuit youth, the rate is among the highest in the world - 11 times the national average” (Joseph), this is nothing but an indication that if something is not done now, Canada will lose a huge segment of its youth. To prevent these unwanted lethal consequences a clear-cut procedure can be drawn out to improve the conditions of these reserves and to save those who are mentally and physically ill. This can be implemented in the following approaches: To have monthly check-ups conducted by the government to ensure basic necessities are met such as clean water, adequate food supply, an excellent hospital dedicated to mental and physical well-being, police stations, and most importantly, well-spaced homes constructed according to sizes of families. These requirements must become a law for every reserve committed to Indigenous peoples, and if not obeyed, severe action has to be taken such as fines or arrests for the officers who failed to do their job correctly will be paid/carried out by the government. Indigenous peoples deserve the same life conditions the rest of Canada enjoys which needs to be taken seriously as they have already been misused enough and have not been given enough compensation for it.

In the final analysis, there are a few obstacles Canada needs to work on clearing through still, to ensure fair and functional assistance is provided to Indigenous peoples. Though media, citizens, and the government have done serious work to raise awareness of their existing problems in the country, there are incidents of pain, inequality, and partiality occurring even today. Intolerable segregation of Indigenous peoples who are truly 100% Canadian has torn many innocent lives and sadly, continues to in 151st birthday of Canada. The treatment of Indigenous peoples has gone to such an extent that their necessities are being questioned. Enough is enough. Canada's laws need to be amended straight away to save the original peoples of Canada. If not, they will become an extinct species of Canada who were the sole owners of the country but unfortunately have been forcefully stripped of their title. One can sit back, watch the news about any of these tragedies of them, feel sorry for a few seconds and then carry on with their life. But the Canadian mentality is to show compassion and help each other out which is exactly why Canada has put so much money and time into bringing refugees and other people from crises internationally. Canada has already established a worldwide respect and honor but it is only these problems associated with Indigenous people which are bringing Canada down than up. If just a little more time, care, and hard work are put in, Canada can definitely cooperate with its Indigenous peoples who are in need of immediate assistance to which the presented solutions can be into action for Canada to portray as an exemplary nation for other countries to follow for centuries to come.

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