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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Posted 1 hour ago

NATIVE LEADERS MANIPULATED BY ISRAEL LOBBY

A joke is sometimes defined as the juxtapositioning of the incongruous. This is exactly what I experienced when reading Two Solitudes Break Their Isolation Together in the Globe and Mail July 31.

In the article, Phil Fontaine (national chief, Assembly of First Nations) and Rabbi Rouven Bulk and Sylvain Abitol of the Canadian Jewish Congress wax eloquently about their journey of peace and reconciliation, and experiencing persecution, discrimination and attempted genocide in common.

In order for the "two solitudes" to learn more about each others common history and daily lives a journey to Israel of 20 First Nations' chiefs jointly led by the congress and the assembly was necessary.

The AFN delegation visited "with an empathy born of dispossession and marginalization" and the second delegation of First Nations' women learned "about empowerment, entrepreneurship and women in leadership roles."

According to Jewish leaders Canadian Jews "must attend on First Nations' land and acknowledge . . . responsibility to work with First Nations as they strive to reclaim their past and develop their future."

The missions to Israel and the return visits to Canadian reserves of the CJC delegation are intended to stimulate cooperative action on property alleviation, combatting anti-Semitism and anti-native bigotry.

Native leadership in Canada has erred. It has allowed itself to be manipulated by the Israel lobby which is one of the most powerful political lobbies in North America (Canadians can make up their own minds about its influence in Canada).

If Phil Fontaine wants to stand up and be counted on the world stage or at the United Nations then he should take it upon himself to read a few books about what really is going on in Israel and not take a tourist's view of Israel without talking to the Palestinians on the West Bank or in Gaza. If Phil thinks his people have it rough in Canada he should talk to Nelson Mandela about pre-1994 South Africa and then ask Nelson what he thinks about Israel.

His visit has pre-empted his leadership of the AFN and disqualified him from being an expert on persecution. He would be greatly respected if he supported the truly humiliated rather than the arrogantly perpetuated.

It would be nice if Phil would think of all the things that could possibly be denied a human being and then asked himself if the picture he imagines exists outside of the "two solitudes."

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The Palestinians are dispossessed. Canadian First Nations have much more in common with them and nearly nothing in common with Israel which has every possession, material and spiritual, that their society has to offer thanks to the support and contributions from the United States.

Loving kindness should be woven into every society's fabric, especially when one society has absolute control over another.

Gary D'Orazio, Queen Street

SPEND MONEY ON SURVIVORS

The government of Canada, along with their allies, the Ottawa Indians, regarding the Assembly of First Nations' recent announcement of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which will begin in very near future, is nothing more than a money grab and a delusion of appeasement.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which will be headed by Justice Harry Laforme, is to look at the Indian residential school legacy and the harm that it did to First Nations people.

This commission will take approximately five year, at a cost yet to be determined (undoubtedly a lot of money.) The vast majority of this money will be going to salaries for Justice Laforme, his fellow commissioners and their staff to

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travel across Canada first class, stay in the best hotels and eat in the best restaurants interviewing survivors of Indian residential schools.

By the time this travelling circus is over, most of the survivors of the Indian residential schools will be dead.

The money that will be spent on the TRC should go directly to the survivors and their families. Why pay these commissions and their staff all this money for something we already know? The survivors of Indian residential schools need this money now to help them in any way it can.

This money can go to the families of Indian residential schools survivors and help them with housing, education or health care or whatever and in the process help them deal with what they have to deal with.

This Truth and Reconciliation Commission is very similar to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) back in 1996. That commission, headed by Georges Erasmus, cost the taxpayers \$55 million. Most of that money went to the salaries for the commissioners and their staff to travel across Canada on a fact finding mission about the lives of First Nation people.

RCAP took approximately five years to complete and was a useless exercise, costing \$55 million to tell us what we already know.

What happened to the RCAP report? I believe it is sitting in university libraries collecting dust and being used by first-year political science students for their essays on First Nation people.

The government of Canada must stop this pointless Truth and Reconciliation Commission now and give that money that would be spent on the commission to the survivors of Indian residential schools.

The survivors of Indian residential schools need this money much more than Justice Harry Laforme and the rest of the commissioners and their staff of the so-called Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Joseph Nolan, McNabb Street

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