

Why I wanted to make the Apology Dice

Canadians spend so much time patting themselves on the back for their supposed openness to ethnicity, acceptance of gay marriage, history of peacekeeping, socialized medicine, and so many other things, one must wonder why we don't all have sore wrists. Some of these claims are certainly true, and I am proud of them. But there lies an inherent danger: self-congratulation can obscure areas that need improvement, such as major retractions in our commitment to fighting climate change, and our continuing history of subjugating First Nations people.

For many years I have wanted to make something that expresses my desire to be an ally with Indigenous peoples, but I didn't know how. The problems are so complex. One only has to read the nasty comments under any Aboriginal-themed news article to realize that a huge part of 'polite, liberal, open-minded' Canada has written these people off: "What's done is done. Why can't they just get over their problems, and conform to the rest of us?" One out of many responses come to mind: We, settlers, have all but obliterated their land, culture, language, and forced them to adopt an entirely new way of life. We have relocated them far from the rest of us, sometimes in very inhospitable conditions, and set up barriers to equal education, employment, political/legal representation, and healthcare. History shows that demolished civilizations don't adapt and rebound overnight. Besides, what is so damn great about our society that they should conform to us? They were here first; maybe we should be the ones conforming to them.

Collaborating with David Garneau has given me a special opportunity to add my skills and empathy to this conversation, hopefully without being another intruder. Thanks to Sophie McCall, Gabrielle Hill, and Ashok Mathur for helping to make this happen. Apology Dice is meant to stimulate conversation between people of different backgrounds, because only as a unified nation are we going to fix the problems within our country and within ourselves.

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