

Look to native leaders for answers

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Re: Natives don't have the same opportunity, July 9.

Letter-writer Amy Brathwaite is sympathetic to natives but ignores some basic facts: Why would anyone want to live in the conditions she describes? If someone, likely the chief or band council, receives money from the government, why do the people responsible not do something about it?

Tens of millions of people have come to Canada from around the world and have made better situations for themselves; why not natives? Immigrants often lived in conditions as bad or worse, but they said: Enough -- they would not live that way any more. They left their countries, their villages and their families to seek a better way of life.

Do we consider their cultures to be so inferior to our natives' that they were willing to abandon everything, risk everything, and travel thousands of miles to a foreign country to make a better future for their children?

People just do not understand the mess involved in land claims, and to suggest that the entire blame rests on the shoulders of the government shows a real lack of understanding. The process is a gold mine for lawyers and some natives, and when the process drags on for more than 20 years you have to question the desire for settlement.

The Citizen article on the massive Algonquin land claim ("Never surrendered," July 8) pointed out one of the main stumbling blocks. Who owned the land? Most tribes were nomads and the warriors usually pushed out the few settlers. Who should be compensated, the warriors or the settlers?

Do not assume that governments are the bad guys and the native chiefs the good guys. That is a simplistic view of a callous system that rewards the native people at the top of the food chain and ignores the plight of those at the bottom.

Why do native leaders not do more for their own people? Where is the leadership beyond the constant demand for more money and control?

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