

Native leaders must step up to help reserves

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Re: Put an end to land-claim industry, June 2.

It is encouraging that a few voices are finally being heard about the scandalous state of affairs surrounding native land claims.

Letter-writer Paul Lamothe, chief of the Ottawa Algonquin First Nation, has pointed out the obvious truth that all levels of government have ignored over the years.

The land-claim procedure does not resolve problems; it merely makes lawyers rich and continues the dominance of certain chiefs over their domain. The Kelowna Accord would not have resolved the disputes.

The problem is simple. Governments are motivated by a sense of guilt and containment and do not have the resolve to confront the problems head on and find a resolution. There are two elementary steps that could be taken that would advance the cause tremendously.

First, have the Auditor General present a full accounting in a detailed manner of all costs involved in negotiations. Canadians will be amazed at the fortune spent on lawyers. There is no value for fee. Then compare the total amount received by the Native negotiators over the years versus the original settlement demanded. Natives on reserves will be astonished at the resulting comparison.

Second, televise all negotiations so that all Canadians have the opportunity to decide if the negotiations are conducted in an honest attempt to resolve the issue. Once again, all Canadians will be amazed and current sympathetic positions on the subject will be changed drastically.

Letter-writer Jeff Spooner ("Time to step up") also made some excellent points that must be answered. Why have tens of millions of people come to Canada with little more than the clothes on their back and still have found a way to live and even prosper?

Trying to blame everything on the white man must be examined in context. Native chiefs must also be held accountable for the lack of progress for their people when it comes to adapting to the change. Evolution tells us to adapt or perish. Natives cannot continue to live as they did in the past. Leadership is required on the part of the chiefs, not just finger-pointing.

Owen Prince,

Kanata

