

Wulustuk Times

Wulustuk - Indigenous name for St John River

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All
the



The Web that Connects the Universe

universe is connected together by a web of order, balance and harmony - the stars and galaxies and planets - and so too, planet earth, from the beginning of the ages - all are connected. All strands in the web radiate outward from the Source and Power, represented in this graphic by the symbol of an eagle with penetrating eyes. This is the One that controls it all, sensing every vibration in the web, from a loud clap of thunder, to a baby's heartbeat, to a tiny snowflake falling gently on the ground, to our very thoughts churning in our minds. This is the One that communicates over the web to all the universe, sending out a message in harmonic vibrations, a sacred melody, a healing energy for those that listen and get in tune. Are we listening? Can we hear the beat of the spiritual drum that is tapping out a message? Are we keeping in tune? Nugeekadoonkut

TABLE OF CONTENTS, FEB. 2009

IN THE BEGINNING

FIRST STEP; HONOUR FIRST NATIONS' CULTURE

WATERTOWN TREATY, 1776

PRESERVING INDIAN CULTURE IN A EURO-CHRISTIAN WORLD

IMPROVE NATIVE TREATMENT, UN URGES CANADA

THE NATIONAL DISGRACE OF ABORIGINAL HOUSING

DAN'S CORNER, - Native spirituality Sharing our Wabanaki Perspective

DEAN'S DEN, - Pages of Ages

Wulustuk Times:

Each month we gather and publish the latest, most current and relevant native information for our readership. Proceeding with this concept, we feel that a well informed person is better able to see, relate with, and assess a situation more accurately when equipped with the right tools. Our policy is to provide you with the precise tools and the best information possible.

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IN THE BEGINNING

In the Beginning - The First European arrivals to this land came with Christopher Columbus, from Spain, who arrived on the shores of what is called San Salvador Island, an island of the Bahamas in 1492. The Island people treated the Spanish strangers with peaceful hospitality and generosity, as was their custom. The European, although commenting on the People's sweetness and gentleness, because they were also naked, this was all taken as signs of weakness and heathenism. Over the next four centuries millions of European immigrants and their descendants, as a result of their unquestioned belief in their racial superiority, undertook the task of imposing and enforcing their customs, beliefs, religion and language upon the people they found living in the New World--and who had been living in organized societies for thousands of years.

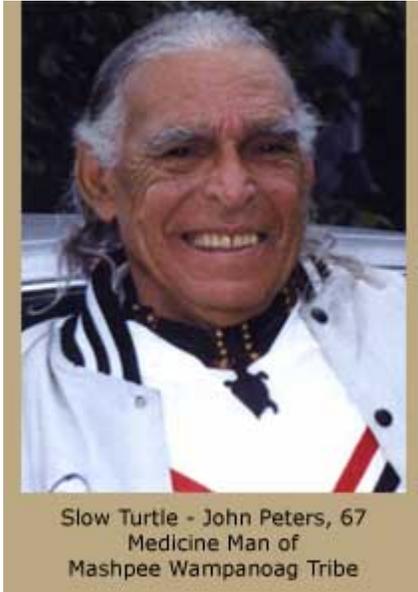
This same racial superiority was exhibited in Jamestown, Virginia. A Dutch slave trader exchanged his cargo of Africans for food in 1619. The Africans became indentured servants, similar in legal position to many poor Englishmen who traded several years labor in exchange for passage to America. The popular conception of a racial-based slave system did not develop, however, until the 1680's. The legal end to slavery did not occur until December 1865--spanning almost 200 years when the Northern abolitionist States, winning of the Civil War against the proponents of slave-owning in the South, ended slavery.

European immigrants to this land, from the fifteenth century on, portrayed the First People, Asians, Africans & Pacific Islanders as a godless, ignorant and savage people desperately needing to be so-called civilized. This practice continues; it has become painfully obvious in Iraq. The U.S. administration, it's disguised mercenary motives now revealed, invading Iraq to bring a so-called better way of life to the poor Iraqis. Of course, they, like First People of this land, are all but destroyed in the process of our improvement of them. Like the Iraqi's, there was something that the European immigrants wanted from First People--they wanted the land upon which the indigenous peoples lived and they wanted the gold in the hills of the sacred burial grounds of their ancestors. They wanted access to the cotton on the land where Natives lived in the Southeast. Today, our government wants access to the 'black gold', known as oil in the land of Iraq; while corporations seek operations free from U.S. governmental restrictions, there.

First Nations Governance
When the European immigrants arrived on the shores of the so-called New World in the early 1600's, the First Nations People of the Northeast--League of Iroquois--welcomed them and taught the new arrivals survival skills & planting methods in an unfamiliar land, as well as directions on setting up a partnership model of governance unknown to those first settlers. The League of the Iroquois were comprised by five sovereign nations who had a council composed of delegates called caucuses which originates from the People. Unlike the European immigrants' model of government of monarchy: kings and queens and their class system of higher and lower, the League of the Iroquois blended the sovereignty of their several nations into one government. Our forefathers, escaping oppression in their homeland, adopted this concept in creating the Constitution, and today we call this a federal system whereby states monitor their own affairs and the national government regulates all affairs in common. The Iroquois Confederacy exhibited an advanced social organization requiring no written laws, no police, no jails, no lawsuits. Honor and truthfulness were inner guides in their society. In fact, lying in Indian nations was punishable by death.

In Profiles of Wisdom, author Steven McFadden interviewed Slow Turtle of the Wampanoag Nation in what is now called Massachusetts, who states: "We had democracy here before the

Europeans came, but we had spirituality in our democracy. We had respect for each other, respect for differences in other people's way of life. This is a partnership model of governance. White people don't allow for that in their system, today. They have removed the spirit out of democracy, so it can't work right--because there's no respect.



Slow Turtle - John Peters, 67
Medicine Man of
Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

JohnPeters,67; Medicine Man of Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe"

"You've got a power structure here; you've got the pyramid type of government. For Native People of this land, our form of government was always in a Circle. There was never a hierarchy. Our traditional form of government is always in that Circle where everyone contributes. When you contribute that way, then you become part of the whole. And so we all considered each other equals. No one was ever greater or lesser than the other person. It doesn't matter that I'm a medicine man--I'm no greater than anyone else, and I understand that. I just have a position. We don't have that hierarchy and for that reason we don't have the competition and the jealousies that go with it. And we don't have the fears that the rest of society has, and the anxieties, and all those kinds of things where you have a few people at the top who have it all, and the rest are always wanting something they don't have."

The welcome and assistance offered by the tribes was gradually and increasingly repaid by ingratitude and aggression as more boat-loads of immigrants moved onto the land in search of their own land. First Nations Peoples who inhabited their long-time ancestral areas were being pushed back by the immigrants who wanted The People's land. First People were asked to sell their land to the immigrants or the government would take it from them. Superior European weaponry and European disease overcame the First People - their nations were forced off the lands where they had lived - Reservations were established and required relocations, often to the poorest soil and in the most undesired locations - First Nations' children were taken from their families and required to attend boarding schools-or were 'adopted' by White families - their native languages, traditions, and spirituality were stripped from them and forbidden - European language, customs, clothing and religion were foisted upon the First

People in their arrogant and xenophobic belief that these Indian ways were "savage" and "uncivilized" and that these "ignorant" Indian people were in need of being taught a better--meaning, Christian--way of life.

Natives removal from their land was two-fold: the Indians were viewed as impeding progress and expansion of white settlers; Indians were viewed as dangerous and uncivilized, and the whites--government coveted the gold along with other natural resources found on Native land. So, Indians had to be moved. The arrogance of ethnocentrism of the Europeans--they saw the Indian as heathen; and the xenophobia of the European mind-set all contributed to a near annihilation of a People who listened to and lived close to the earth.

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FIRST STEP; HONOUR FIRST NATIONS' CULTURE

Aboriginal students will flourish when we recognize one system doesn't fit all
Geoff Johnson, Special to Times Colonist Published: Tuesday, January 27, 2009
"Insanity is doing that same thing over and over expecting a different result"
-- Albert Einstein

The success rate of First Nations students in our public school system is little more than half the success rate of non-First Nations students. That alone begs a couple of important and unavoidable questions: First, how does a standards-driven public school system define success in a way that is unavailable to a significant proportion of its population; and second, how can any system persist for so long making the same mistakes over and over again?

Those educational leaders, political and professional, First Nations and non-First Nations, who would seriously address the issue of full spectrum student success beyond the level of rhetoric would do well to begin by reading John Ralston Saul's bestseller A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada.

"Fair" in this context does not mean pretty. It means balanced, rational, just and reasonable. An education system that accepts failure for a culturally defined segment of its population can claim none of those attributes.

Saul proposes that it is the failure of public policy makers to understand the significance of the legitimate historical relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultures that is "a failure of [our] civilization" and is at the root of the aboriginal failure rate. Saul's plea for policy makers is to imagine a system that addresses the needs of our historically multicultural population but is not just "yet another tortured attempt to apply European or U.S. concepts to a very different reality." That different reality is the unique blending of cultures that has resulted in what is now Canada.

As an example of where to begin to think about all this, Saul suggests the highest levels of our justice system, the Supreme Court of Canada, which now recognizes the legitimacy of the

oral nature of much of aboriginal history and culture and the importance of consensus as being a way of recognizing and honouring continuing differences.

That recognition is now enshrined in three significant court decisions: the Guerin, Delgamuukw and Oakes decisions. Those decisions, Saul suggests, will eventually result in a deep systemic re-evaluation of previously ignored aboriginal and non-aboriginal relationships and will redefine "the obligation of those in authority to the land, the place and the people." And that would mean all the people.

Our system of public education, based on a European and British model, recognizes few if any of these obligations to Canadian realities. Subsequently it fails our aboriginal people by imposing assumptions about learning, including what we learn and how we learn it, and about what is important in children's lives, which are alien to both aboriginal history and culture.

In the early 1990s, in the school district in which I was working we conducted a modest research project with a local tribal person, a University of B.C. graduate, as the researcher. The purpose was to determine whether aboriginal and non-aboriginal attitudes toward public education were similar or different.

The similarities were remarkable. Education and eventual graduation were considered very important as goals by both aboriginal and non-aboriginal families. In fact, at every separate aboriginal "graduation" celebration I ever attended that theme was echoed by tribal recognition of all members who had completed high school, trades college, accounting courses, nursing, university -- any form of significant graduation.

The differences were equally remarkable. Traditional public education based on the expectation of full attendance for the 190 or so days in session with classes of 30 sitting attentive to a teacher at the front of the room, limited recognition of individual student differences and, in a few unfortunate cases, disrespectful behaviour on the part of the teacher did not align well with tribal needs.

Aboriginal parents stated that while school was very important, family matters and responsibilities were of equal value. If an aging family member was ill and groceries needed to be brought, then that took precedence over sitting in class. If important tribal ceremonies or traditional activities that required a child's presence were scheduled, that also was at least of equal importance. And so on.

In other words, the inflexible requirements of public education were a part, but not the whole, of a tribal child's life and responsibilities. The expectations were a bad fit.

As an alternative, the notion of success-oriented, self-paced, self-directed individualized learning programs as a way of accommodating differences in learning styles may be a better fit. These are increasingly being explored and adopted by major universities and colleges here and in the U.S and in a few Canadian secondary schools. The goal of student success trumps organizational convenience.

Only when the public education system accepts the notion that a linear approach to public education which excludes so many aboriginal children is not successful, will education policy makers then fully understand and address the significance of the frustration expressed by

Nisga'a Chief Joseph Gosnell when he said, "The Nisga'a people have long sought to negotiate ourselves into Canada."

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Times Colonist , (Victoria, BC)

WATERTOWN TREATY, 1776 (Contributed by Hank Bear, LL.B. Maliseet Nation)

The Watertown Treaty of 1776 between the Maliseet Nation and the United States is the clearest recorded declaration of brotherhood and equality among all peoples. It is still a valid treaty, as valid as the Declaration of Independence itself. It recognizes the international legal status of the Maliseet Nation. It proclaims and secures specific Maliseet rights and obligations

On July 19th, 1776, just 15 days after the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Watertown with the Maliseet Nation (St. John Indians) was the very first international treaty made on behalf of the new republic of the United States of America

WATERTOWN TREATY: 1776

WHEREAS, the United States of America, in general Congress Assembled, have ... declared that these United Colonies are ... free and independent States ... and ... have full power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and things which independent States have the right to do;

WE THE GOVERNORS, of the State of Massachusetts Bay, do ... enter into and conclude the following Treaty of Friendship and Alliance....

1st, We the Governors of the said State of Massachusetts Bay, in behalf of the said State, and the other United States of America on the one part, and Ambrius Bear, Newell Sallis, and Francis, delegates of the St. John's Tribe, Joseph Deneguarra, Charles, Mattahu Antrane, Nicholas, John Battis, Peter Andre and Sebattis Netobcobwit, Delegates of the Micmac Tribe of Indians, inhabiting within the Province of Nova Scotia, for themselves, and in behalf of said Tribes on the other part, do solemnly agree that the people of the said State of Massachusetts Bay, and of the other United states of America, and of the said Tribes of Indians shall henceforth be at peace with each other, and be considered as Friends and Brothers united and allied together for their mutual defence, safety and happiness.

2nd, That each party to this Treaty shall, and will consider the enemies of the other as Enemies to themselves, and do hereby solemnly promise and engage to and with each other, that when called upon for that purpose, they shall, and will, to the utmost of their abilities, aid and assist each other against their public Enemies, and particularly, that the people of the said Tribe of Indians shall and will afford, and give to the people of the said State of Massachusetts Bay, and the people of the other United States of America, during their present war with the King of Great Britain, all the aid and assistance in their power.

AND, that they the people of said Tribes of Indians shall not, and will not directly or indirectly give any aid, or assistance to the Troops, or Subjects, of the said King of Great Britain, or others adhering to Him, or hold any correspondence, or carry on any Commerce with them during the present war.

3rd, That if any robbery or outrage happens to be committed by any of the Subjects of the said State of Massachusetts Bay, or any of the United States of America, upon any of the people of said Tribes, the said State shall upon proper application being made, cause satisfaction and restitution speedily to be made to the Party injured.

4th, That if any robbery or outrage happens to be committed by any of the said Tribes of Indians, upon any of the Subjects of the said State, or of any of the other of the United States of America, the Tribe to which the offender, or offenders shall belong, shall, upon proper application being made, cause satisfaction and restitution speedily to be made to the Party injured.

5th, That in case any misunderstanding, quarrel, or injury shall happen between the said State of Massachusetts Bay, or any other United States of America, and said Tribes of Indians, or either of them, no private revenge shall be taken, but a peaceable application shall be made for redress.

6th, That the said Tribes of Indians, shall and will furnish and supply 600 strong men out of said Tribes, or as many as may be, who shall without delay proceed from their several homes up to the Town of Boston within this State, and from thence shall march to join the Army of the United States of America, now at New York, under the immediate command of his Excellency, General George Washington, there to take his orders.

7th, That each of the Indians who shall by their respective Tribes, be appointed to join the Army of the United States of America, shall bring with him a good gun, and shall be allowed One Dollar for the use of it; and in case the Gun shall be lost in the Service, shall be paid the value of it.

AND, the pay of each Man shall begin from the time they sail from Machias for Boston, and they shall be supplied with provisions, and a vessel or vessels for their passage up to Boston. Each private Man shall receive the like pay as is given to our own private Men. The Indians shall be formed into Companies when they arrive in Boston, and shall want them not exceeding the term of three years, unless General Washington and they shall agree for a longer time.

AND, as Joseph Denaquarra, Peter Andre and Sabattis Netobcowit, have manfully and generously offered to enter immediately into the war, they shall be sent as soon as may be, to Geneneral Washington to join the Army, and shall be considered as entering into our pay at the time of arrival at New York.

8th, The delegates above named, who may return to their homes, do promise and engage, to use their utmost influence with the Passamaquoddy, and other neighbouring Tribes of Indians to persuade them to furnish, and supply for the said service, as many strong men of their respective Tribes as possible, and that they come along with those of the Tribes of St. John's Micmac.

AND, the said Governor, of the said State of Massachusetts Bay, does hereby engage to give to such of the Passamaquoddy, or other neighbouring Indians, who shall enter into the service of the United States of America, the same pay and encouragement in every particular, as is above agreed to be given to the St. John's, or Micmac Indians, and to consider them as our friends and Brothers.

9th, That the said State of Massachusetts Bay shall, and will furnish their Truckhouses at Machias, as soon as may be with proper Articles for the purpose of supplying the Indians of said Tribes with the necessaries and conveniences of life.

10th, And the said Delegates do hereby annul and make void all former Treaties by them or by others in behalf of their respective Tribes made with any other Power, State, or Person, so far forth as the same shall be repugnant to any of the Articles contained in this Treaty.

PRESERVING INDIAN CULTURE IN A EURO-CHRISTIAN WORLD

The tide of Euro-Christian whites began flowing into this land five centuries ago, bringing with them their consuming culture, their complex system of written monarchical laws, their religion which condoned slavery, their diseases which the native inhabitant's bodies had never known, and their domestic livestock that would reshape the landscape and ecosystems. They spread their "influenza" throughout the continent, taking tens of thousands of animal pelts and salted fish back to Europe, cutting down the forests, and excavating the earth in search of minerals. They brought with them a culture of greed, which devoured, polluted and created trash that littered the landscape.

They enforced their complicated "legal" system of land tenure onto the inhabitants who could not possibly understand it, because its concepts were the total inverse of their own culture. Their culture of oral agreements, their ethics of fairness and honesty, of non-interference, of group decision making, their concept of communal sharing, and their concept of time, made them incapable of understanding in full what putting their marks on paper treaties with complex legal jargon was all about. The white invaders were quite aware of this and used it to take advantage of these "savages", of these "children of the forest" who had child like mentalities, and who would never be bright enough to realize what was happening.

When a sachem or sagamore put his mark on an agreement, in his mind he was doing something different than what his white counterpart to the agreement was doing. The white man consequently didn't give much attention to the agreement after signing it, and before long would bend, or even break, the conditions in the agreement.

To add more confusion, there were agreements in different languages with the French, English, Spanish and Dutch, all with different systems and languages of agreements. They all wanted the resources of the Indian's lands. They would bring gifts to entice the Indians to trade with them. Most often the gifts were inexpensive items such as pretty glass beads, glass bottles, mirrors, copper bells, bright coloured linen, red hats, and other knick-knacksand biscuits and RUM. Before long they had some of the Indians violating their own culture, taking more than they needed from their forests and streams, trading for material goods such as guns, gun powder, knives, axes, fish hooks, nails, brass kettles and iron pots. Some of the earlier explorers like George Weymouth and Estevan Gomez would lure the Indians onto their ships with their gifts, and then kidnap them, taking them back to the old country to be sold as slaves. Without any doubt there were many talking circles in those times where the elders shared their concerns about what was taking place among their people.

Today we see where it has all led. A world of materialism has been built around them with a dependency on bureaucratic handouts for survival, all neatly wrapped in a gift to them of reserved lands, lands that were theirs in the first place (even under white man's laws of "squatter's rights" or "adverse possession" the land was theirs for 10,000 years of occupation). They have forsaken their traditional culture and have become dependent on the new society, which measures riches by material possessions. They have been lured into a cage of deception, a captivity called "assimilation." Like animals in a cage, being watered and fed, but prohibited from enjoying the freedom and pleasures of their indigenous kind, dependent on the facilities provided them with the feeding hand. Like creatures of the wild,

they have been herded together and domesticated. It happened so slowly, over such a long period of time, that many do not even realize the situation they are in, especially the younger generation. The culture and society within a reserve is tarnished with the Euro-Christian laws and governance because the hand that feeds them makes the rules and guidelines.

In 1611 Jesuit Father Pierre Biard wrote that the Indians buried with the dead "all that he owns, such as his bag, his arrows, his skins and other articles and baggage...", and that the survivors "add to these a number of such offerings, as tokens of friendship." Father Biard is astonished by this disposal of all their worldly possessions, and comments that this ritual by these "good people" is far removed from the "cursed avarice which we see among us." By this he is referring to the concept of inheritance within his own culture, saying there are some who wanting "to become possessed of the riches of the dead, desire and seek eagerly for the loss and departure of the living."

Again Father Biard is puzzled how the Indians "consider themselves more ingenious" than the French. He considers it insulting of the Indians not to show outward admiration of the craft productions of the French, that they are "so rude and ignorant, lacking intelligence, they bestow very little admiration upon what we show them." He adds his own opinion that compared to what the Indians make, the French works "are much more worthy of being admired". And then he adds, "Hence they regard themselves as much richer than we are, although they are poor and wretched in the extreme." This attitude by the Indians puzzles Father Biard so much he repeats it again in another letter, "they think they are better, more valiant and more ingenious than the French; and, what is difficult to believe, richer than we are." And again he writes, "However, these poor weaklings and children consider themselves superior to all other men, and they would not for the world give up their childishness and wretchedness. And this is not to be wondered at, for, as I have said, they are children."

How could these "wretched savages", owning so few worldly possessions, think they were richer than the French? Why, even their great Chiefs, the Sachems, and sagamores, had no more wealth, material possessions, than the rest of their people. How ridiculous! Father Biard missed a golden opportunity to explore the culture and values of these people, to determine how their lifestyle, their system of governance had made it possible for them to survive in this land, happy and healthy, for 10,000 years until the disease carrying Euro-Christians arrived.

Just as puzzling to Father Biard, morally, the Indians considered themselves better than the French, for, they say of the French, "you are always fighting and quarreling among yourselves; we live peaceably. You are envious and are all the time slandering each other; you are thieves and deceivers; you are covetous, and are neither generous nor kind; as for us, if we have a morsel of bread we share it with our neighbor." The white visitors could have learned a lot about honesty, sharing, gratitude, and especially the ethic of non-interference from these "savages." But the whites' attitude towards these wild men in the forest was so condescending that they were blinded to the true riches of these people. The fact that Cartier (in 1535) and Champlain's men (in 1604) were dying of scurvy in the harsh winter here, and the Indians never came down with that malady, didn't cause these Europeans to question what the Indians secret was, why they never got the life threatening scurvy. But the Indians did save some of the men from dying by kindly giving them some of their "Annedda" tea to drink.

Father Biard, in his letters, refers to this land as "this newly acquired kingdom of the Son of God, this new France and new Christendom." The Euro-Christians believed that their God had given them North America to have dominion over, a gift of natural resource treasures, hence we call our country "the dominion of Canada."

In this time of economic meltdown, created by a global corporate system of greed, the beast that has ravaged the world for the past few centuries, this time when the systems of gold leafed religions that supported that beast are themselves losing faith, many people are now eagerly looking for a better way of living and surviving on this planet.

Perhaps it is time for the captive ones to use the education and tools of the Euro-Christian world to break from their captivity, to regain the freedom their people once had. A nation is not confined by physical or political boundaries. A nation is a people with a common belief and culture no matter where they are. Moving outside the "property" boundary of a reserve might have implications in the money based system that affixes taxation to its privileged subjects, but that system cannot tax the heart and soul of a person.

Trying to exist in a hybrid world on a reserve where your traditional culture is blended with another culture that is based on exact opposite values, creates confusion and chaos, and is a recipe for the destruction of moral character and spirit. There is no pride in one's culture, no patriotism, because the culture is not clearly defined. Life lacks meaning and purpose. Living in such conditions creates an identity crisis for individuals and can lead to alcoholism, drug addiction and even suicide.

The time is ripe for turning back the pages of the calendar to those early contact years and examining closely the ancient ways, the values, of those "childish and wretched children of the forest" who survived for ten thousand years in this land without upsetting the balance of nature or polluting the forests, lakes and streams. What was the traditional culture? Who were you?

Here is an idea for a project to revitalize the spirit of the people. To be most effective and successful, this requires a group effort, in the same manner as the functions of a talking circle, but with markers and paper. Make a chart with four columns, the first one being marked simply "Item". Then one column for the "Traditional System" of the ancestors, one for the "Euro-Christian System" of the world today, and one for the "Hybrid System" (traditional and Euro-Christian combined) that exists on most reserves. Start making a list in the Item column. For example, Role of the Chief, Wages, Treatment of the Dead, Beliefs, Gifts and Giving, Oral Agreements, Property and Land Ownership, Taxes, Shelter, Hunting, Foods, Water, Language, Health Care, Education, Stories, Entertainment, etc. Add as many as come to mind. Describe how these work in each of the columns, Traditional (ways of the ancestors), Euro-Christian (the Dominion Government system) and Hybrid Culture (as imposed by Indian Affairs).

Such an exercise is not simple. It will require knowledge of the traditional customs of the ancients and of their value systems. For some people it might require some research into historical records, of oral traditions and stories. In so doing, it will reveal how much culture has been lost.

Look for cultural values that are still applicable today and can be implemented without interference from the Hand-that-Feeds. Look also for fitting traditional roles into today's modern world. Roles like Keeper of the Fire, Keeper of the Drums, Keeper of the Medicine, and of course, Keeper of the Traditions. Basically this would be breaking down your governance into its various traditional roles and relating them to this new world.

For example, as a role of Keepers of the Forest, the Great Sagamore might gather in a circle with his councilors and agree to assign a role to one or more individuals to go into certain forest areas and monitor what is happening with digital cameras and GPS units (or blackberry devices) and record events of concern with images, notes, and global positioning coordinates. Then post the findings on the Keepers of the Forest web site for the world to see. This "eye in the forest" is no different than video surveillance cameras or web-cams that are so popular today. The technology is very familiar to most youth today, and such an exercise would give them a feeling of importance and usefulness in furthering the preservation of their culture.

For Keepers of the Drums, the younger ones could revive the old traditional songs; the paddle song, the visitors song, the hunting song, etc. They could recreate these old songs and dances with the enhancements of modern technology, yet retain the essence of the beat and the words. They could make inexpensive videos of people dancing and singing in traditional costume. These could be posted on YouTube and other video oriented web sites for all the world to see. In fact, YouTube has many examples of this, and it is growing. However, it is not coordinated into any type of mission or governance program.

This modern age of high-speed communication technology, with easy access to electronic images of old historical documents, letters, and journals in archives and libraries, has opened up a whole new world of opportunity for Native people. The ability to reach out with their culture, across all boundaries, to tell their story unlike it has been told in the white man's educational system, and to spread the gospel of a better way of life and governance on this earth. A traditional way, far from being outdated, having an intelligence and wisdom that keeps the balance with Mother Earth. All creatures can benefit from it.

Nugeekadoonkut

IMPROVE NATIVE TREATMENT, UN URGES CANADA -CP

A United Nations panel is calling on Canada to improve the treatment of its aboriginal people and other disadvantaged groups, such as new immigrants and minorities.

The UN Human Rights Council mentions in particular the need to protect aboriginal women who face discrimination in various areas including "employment, housing, education and health care."

The council also points out the "inequalities" that exist between aboriginals, recent immigrants and other Canadians.

Canada's human rights record came under review in Geneva this week with a Canadian government delegation appearing before the 47-country council for several hours Tuesday.

It took just 15 minutes Thursday for the council to adopt a report containing 68 points based on concerns voiced by dozens of UN member countries about the situation in Canada.

"A lot of attention was given to indigenous issues. So, from the perspective of lobbying from the outside, we were quite successful," said Willie Littlechild, regional chief for Treaty Six, Seven and Eight in Alberta.

A federal official said Canada was generally praised for its "constructive and serious approach" at the review.

"We recognize that no country, including Canada, has a perfect human rights record," said Gwyn Kutz, a director at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

TRUTH

"It does not take too many words to speak the truth" -Chief Joseph, Nez Perce

THE NATIONAL DISGRACE OF ABORIGINAL HOUSING

The Ahousaht home of Shirley John wasn't designed to withstand an annual rainfall of more than three metres. "At first I tried to wash the mould off with bleach, but it came back," says John, 69. Photograph by: Debra Brash, Times Colonist, Times Colonist Between now and Feb. 14, the Times Colonist investigates the housing crisis that plagues First Nations reserves -- why such conditions exist in Canada, who is to blame and how the problems can be solved.

Four women and an eight-year-old girl are killed when fire rips through an aging wood home on the Chemainus First Nation reserve near Ladysmith.

A mother suspects the black mould in her house on the Ahousaht reserve near Tofino caused the death of her infant son.

A chief blames the same toxic mould for high rates of respiratory illness and a rash of child apprehensions on the Tsulquate reserve in Port Hardy.

The sorry state of First Nations housing on reserves across B.C. and Canada is hardly a secret. But aboriginal leaders, band members, public health officials and housing experts interviewed by the Times Colonist over the past two months say the situation has become a full-blown crisis that is leaving a widening stain on our international reputation.

The United Nations Human Rights Council last week urged Canada to improve its treatment of aboriginal people, citing housing among the pressing concerns. The story broke the same day as news that a nine-year-old girl had died when fire destroyed a dilapidated house occupied by 15 people on Manitoba's Sandy Bay Reserve.

"We have already paid dearly through the many lives lost as a consequence of decrepit, shabby and unsafe aboriginal housing," Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said. "It is a national disgrace."

That assessment is echoed by others and documented in numerous government audits, consultant reports, and discussion papers over the past 20 years. But despite the mounds of paper, the problems persist.

Among the key issues this series will examine:

- Housing shortages on most reserves that mean too many people are shoe-horned into aging, decrepit homes.
- Poor designs, shoddy construction and lax oversight that have saddled bands with homes that leak from the outside and retain moisture inside.
- Pervasive mould problems on many reserves that stem from design flaws, construction problems, overcrowding and accelerated deterioration of homes.
- High rates of tuberculosis and respiratory problems such as bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma and viral illnesses that experts link to toxic mould, overcrowding and poverty.
- Fire deaths that occur on reserves at rates up to six times higher than the general population. Officials cite substandard housing and improper maintenance among the reasons.
- Space and money shortages on most coastal reserves that prevent bands from building the homes they desperately need.
- Confusing funding formulas that deter many bands from applying for intersecting government grants, subsidies and loans.
- Problems collecting rent on reserves that force bands into financial ruin because they can't pay the mortgages.
- Poor maintenance and a lack of pride in homes.
- High rates of homelessness among First Nations people who leave reserves in search of better places to live.

The problems are likely to get worse in the coming years as Canada's aboriginal population grows at six times the rate of the general population.

"Maybe the system needs to crash and fail because, to change it, you're upsetting a power structure that has been in place for a long time," said Garry Merkel, who has worked for

decades in aboriginal community development and acts as chairman of the Aboriginal Housing Committee of B.C.

Yet, despite what many consider a dire situation, some reserves are making progress, and we'll tell their stories, too.

The Nanoose Bay band at Lantzville recently opened 30 new houses for elders and families that are drawing people back to the reserve. And down the road, in Port Alberni, there's an unusual atmosphere of community pride when Hupacasath band members talk about housing.

"It doesn't necessarily look like it yet, but some of the best housing people in this country are aboriginal people working on aboriginal files," said Sylvia Olsen, a member of the First Nations National Housing Managers Association.

"That's not to say that some of the problems are not freaking overwhelming, but, because we have the worst housing, we have the best thinkers."

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DAN'S CORNER, -Native spirituality Sharing our Wabanaki Perspective

For our people our spirituality comes directly from the one who created all things... Creator. We are told we are to live a spiritual life from conception through to the completion of our earth walk. All our daily living is dominated and is permeated by, and with, spirituality. Since we are to live in a spiritual way throughout our earth walk we have no need for intermediaries such as priests. We relate and communicate directly with Creator.

If our people were to give a gender to Creator it would be woman. As the ones who have the sacred responsibility to bring forth life, we therefore refer to women as Lifegivers. In the same way Creator creates life or brings forth life, so does woman create life or brings forth life. To our people, Lifegivers create life just as Creator creates life.

She gave our people "original instructions," or traditional teachings, we are to live by on a moment-to-moment basis. We are to live in and as light or light-energy, we are to live life, live in love, in peace, in healing; we are to live in awareness, forgiveness, truth, honesty, compassion, humility, respect and wisdom.

In our Spirituality, man had no part in its creation. His responsibility is to receive and accept those original instructions, to preserve those teachings, to share those teachings and to pass on those teachings.

There is no hierarchical structure dominated by man alone who makes up volumes of "good books" with lots and lots of rules that serve to control people, to keep women out and down or serve to stigmatize "others" and exclude them.

Included in those original instructions are instructions on how we are to care for our Sacred Earth Mother. As she is the one who provides for us, nurtures us, protects us and who

demonstrates to us on a moment by moment basis her love for us, so should we demonstrate the same to her by showing our love for her by respecting her, nurturing her and protecting her. Since she was made perfect by Creator in the first place, we do not try to change her, nor try to improve her in any way - that would be insulting and would demonstrate our complete lack of respect for both the Earth Mother and Creator.

The great Earth Mother is our spiritual connection to all things in Creation, to the Ancestors, to the Seventh Generation, to the Light energy, to the Universal Mind and to Creator.

Ceremonies were given to us as a way of beseeching Creator, as a way of communicating with Creator, as a way of purifying ourselves physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually; and as a way of expressing our humility, thankfulness and gratefulness for all of the many gifts from Creator.

For myself the spiritual ways and teachings of our people was the last and most difficult to return to, to embrace, understand and recognize. When I discovered that I had an Indian identity some 35 years ago, I plunged into this Indian identity with almost total abandonment, save for the spiritual aspect. This was my personal hang-up because of the brainwashing I had received from the civilized Christian blackrobes who had forced on our people their teachings that included, among other things, that our peoples' spiritual way of relating to Creator was all wrong, sinful and was the way of the white devil.

But almost without my being aware of how I was changing spiritually and slowly moving toward our spiritual traditional teachings, I began to yearn in my heart and spirit to experience fully our peoples' spiritual ways and ceremonies.

At first it was our sacred drum that awoke my heart and had such a deep and profound impact on my spirit. Then it was our sacred pipe ceremony that created a similar deep and profound impact on my spirit; and then it was our sacred sweatlodge ceremony with an even more intense impact on my whole being at all levels and in all dimensions. After all of these things happened to me, I experienced a sense of deep and profound sadness, loneliness and a deep sense of loss of something that I once had and to which there was a deep and abiding spirit, centered relationship and connection. It was my identity.

Someone had ripped out of my very center, my spirit and my identity as a human being and left this empty shell without spirit, love, respect or a future. It was at this time my life entered my angry and grieving stage. Over time I have managed to almost rid my life of the anger and the rage but not completely. The grieving is still with me but by returning to my own identity I am now better able to recognize, acknowledge, accept and reconcile the source of my grief and grieving.

Through attending ceremonies and opening up to my Medicine Elders, I was able to begin my healing process - my healing path journey. Through this process I discovered my purpose on my earth walk and was also able to recognize and better understand my task and responsibilities I had to fulfill during my earth walk.

Though I still have a long way to go, I am at this time attempting to live our spiritual traditional teaching on a moment by moment basis. I am working at putting myself back in balance as well as working at making myself whole once again. I am also working at mending and healing my relationship to Creation, to the Ancestors, to the People and to the Seventh Generation.

Everything in Creation has a purpose. Everything in Creation has a task and responsibilities to fulfill during their earth walk. One of the most sacred of these responsibilities given to each of us is to recognize, acknowledge and accept our sacred relatedness to all things. This wisdom is the primary reason why our people were able to retain and maintain perfect balance and harmony, and keep our sacred Turtle Island in balance and harmony, clean and beautiful for those millions of years prior to contact.

During this time, individuals and whole peoples lived a life that recognized, acknowledged, accepted and respected our sacred responsibility... to know, respect, love and protect our Sacred Earth Mother and all of Creation. We today, must do the same.

All My Relations,
Dan Ennis,
Tobique First Nation

DEAN'S DEN ... Pages Of Ages

His hair was white, and thick as night
The epitome of all things wise
Perfect profile, in classical style
Incarnation, discreet in disguise,
Understanding - lore - and all things before
The beginning and, also, the end
Elemental, tangential
Master, tutor, mentor - and friend,

Events arrayed, before man strayed
Species, genus, kin and kind
Where hope was pinned, before man sinned
And followed his singular mind,
The heart and soul, azygous role
Organic, atomic ... and yet
Tenure and time, rhythm and rhyme
The universe in silhouette,

The impermanent pages of passing ages
Inevitable rise, and destined demise
Water and fire, distain and desire
All reflected, alike, in his eyes,
A countenance cast, on now and the past
Omnipresent, integral, and near
Persuasion of faith - presence or wraith
For me, for the moment ... He's here!

The way that we met, the forgive and forget

The seeing, the vision, the dream
Elder and youth, skepticism and truth
Of how I must fit in life's scheme!

-D.C. Butterfield