

Guest Editorial

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Our young people today are faced with the extremely difficult task of finding a way to live as Indigenous people in a world that does not value their continuing survival as Indigenous people, and with very little support and much resistance to their continuing cultural survival on the part of older people in their nations. Colonialism is an historic and ongoing process that has virtually destroyed traditional Native cultures and it has transformed our so-called leaders into the mental servants of capitalists and the colonial state. Far from being a post-colonial era, I believe we are entering a new phase of colonialism, and the most dangerous time in the history of our peoples.

Colonial attitudes and institutions still rule the land, and Canadian society has not relented in the least from previous eras, as it continues to strike our communities with destructive forces that press against and strain the integrity and stability of our lives. Contemporary colonialism is deceptive because it cloaks its racist, assimilative, and possessive intent in words that make hatred, cultural extermination, and stealing of land sound like technical aspects of the inevitable march of progress. Governmental and economic double-speak confuse people and prevent us from seeing and thinking clearly about the direness of the situation. And there are the politics of distraction, where our leaders fight phony battles over insignificant issues, and we are culturally bombed by revolutionary delusions and fantasies of liberation via technological enhancement. These are powerful weapons that the state and corporations use to disempower, control, and dispossess; and they are proving to be superbly effective at further advancing the goals and objectives of Western society in relation to the land and Original Peoples.

Who do we have to stand up against it? What hope do we have for the survival of our Nations? The answer to both of these questions is the next generation of educated and cultured Indigenous youth.

A culturally rooted education, achieved through teaching Indigenous youth their history and language, and how to see the world they live in through Indigenous eyes and to think through their challenges and opportunities they face in their lives using an Indigenous mind, is the only guarantee of a future for our peoples. In the situation we face, what is being Indigenous if not being a warrior, standing bravely in the face of the intimidating threats to the continuing existence of The People? In this dangerous time, being Indigenous and being a warrior are one in the same. And as parents and educators, we need to focus on the fundamental objec-

tive of teaching our children and our students that being Indigenous is all about loving the land. From the same sense of what it was to be a human being came generation upon generation of people that were respectful and reverent and powerful, flowing from their connection as individuals and as societies to the intellectual, spiritual, and physical power of the natural world.

Such a renewed consciousness has the possibility to become the sacred knowledge that guides our young people on their journey of survival in the 21st century and beyond—teaching them who they are based on sacred teachings that come from the land; teaching them the rationale, logic, and necessity of standing up for themselves; and, teaching them to accept nothing less than full and just restitution for the harms that our peoples have endured. This is an Indigenous education for the future, and this is the intellectual and psychological foundation upon which our young warriors will go out into the world and help to build better relationships within communities, restore our laws and governments to their proper place, and lead people to courageously counter the legacies of trauma and the ever-present and evolving threats to our existences.

My warriors shall be mighty
In the strength of the Creator
Between him and my song they are
For it was he who gave the song
This war song that I sing.

—from the Kaienerekowa of the Haudenosaunee