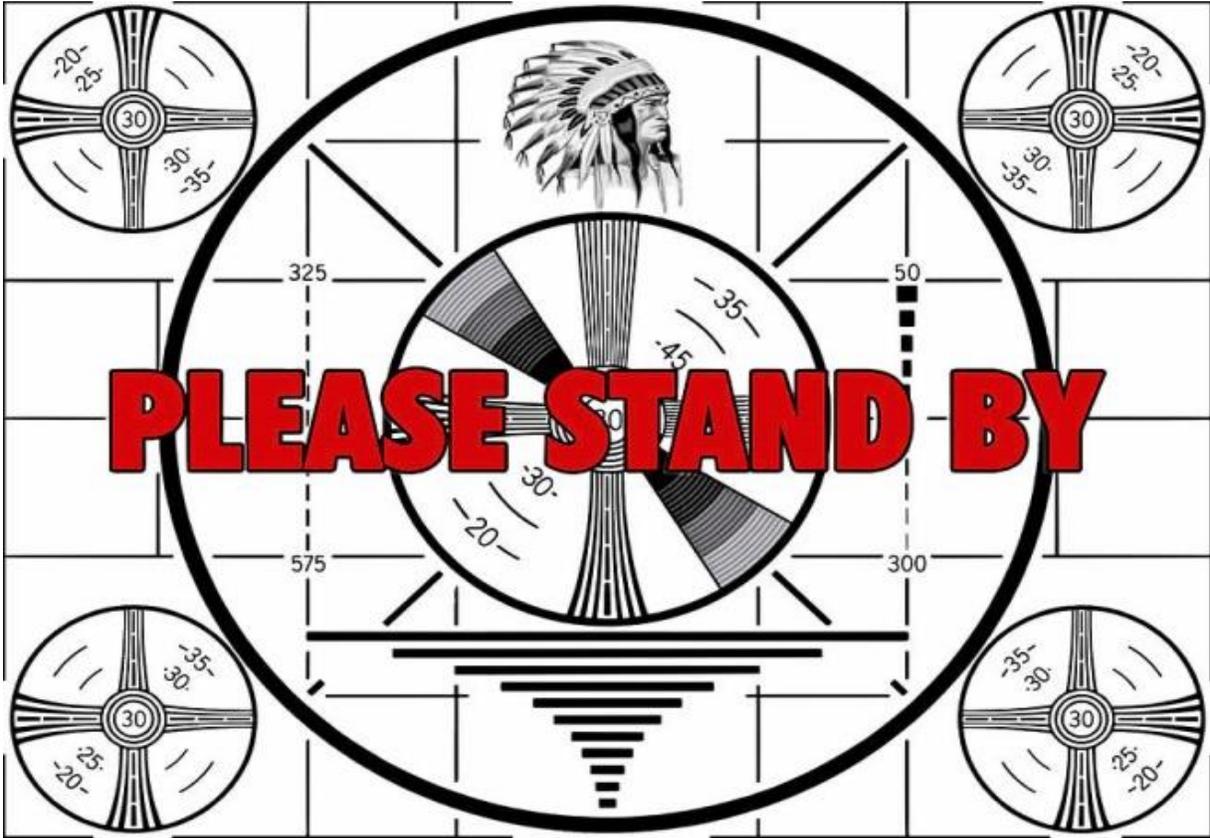


Assumptions about Indigenous peoples



Debunking the Myth's

Peacekeepers Project
Shining Mountains LCS
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The Myth of Taxation.

Assumes that Indigenous peoples do not pay taxes. This myth is closely tied to the damaging belief that people who do not pay taxes are lazy, socially parasitic and unworthy of even the most basic human rights.

To debunk this myth, we must: first recognize that the Indian Act tax exemption does not include most Indigenous peoples (***only status Indians***) and applies only to goods, services, personal property and income located on a reserve. Also, many First Nations have exchanged tax exemption for other benefits in self-governing final agreements or have instituted their own taxation regimes.

The Myth of Free Housing.

Assumes Indigenous peoples receive free housing.

To debunk this myth, we must understand that no one is handing out free houses on-reserve. There is market-based housing, where households pay the full cost associated with purchasing or renting; and non-profit social housing, where the cost is covered by a combination of government funding and private-sector loans — a situation not unique to First Nations.

The Myth of the Drunken Indian.

Assumes that alcohol abuse is a cultural trait and Indigenous peoples cannot metabolize alcohol and are all drunks. To debunk this myth, we must learn that research shows First Nations peoples react to alcohol much like other peoples and there is nothing inherent in the culture or genes that make First Nations peoples more likely to become alcoholics. In fact, more Indigenous people abstain from alcohol than in the general Canadian population. Heavy drinking is, however, more common among Indigenous drinkers than non-Indigenous because of residential school trauma, repercussions of the Indian Act, child welfare issues, geographic isolation, racism and intergenerational trauma.

The Myth of the Level Playing Field.

Assumes that while Indigenous peoples have legitimate grievances stemming from awful things that were done in the past, the advent of a modern democracy means we are now all equal and have equal access to the same rights.

To debunk this myth, we must realize there is no break between the past and present and that equality does not mean “the same.” Have honest discussions and see there is no level playing field upon which Indigenous peoples can benefit equally.

The Myth of Progress.

Assumes that, as time passes, things are inevitably getting better. Yes, bad things did happen, but they are in the past and equality has been achieved.

To debunk this myth we must talk, listen, learn. Use school and the media to tell true stories of what happened, and continues to happen, and share our histories while learning the histories of others.

Many misconceptions about Aboriginal peoples in Canada are based on stereotyping and lack of information. These misconceptions have serious consequences and are often at the root of racism and discrimination that Aboriginal peoples continue to experience today. For employers, ongoing misconceptions about Aboriginal peoples can adversely impact the effectiveness of their Aboriginal workforce participation initiatives.

Dispelling the myths is one step towards building relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Here are 10 common myths about Aboriginal peoples, along with factual information that will help to dispel them.

MYTH: All Aboriginal peoples are the same.

The Facts: The Aboriginal population is very diverse, the Aboriginal population is composed of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples – each with a different history, culture and society.

Over 50 Aboriginal languages are spoken in Canada today.

Aboriginal peoples live in many different parts of Canada -in geographically diverse locations such as urban centres, rural communities and remote locations. As of 2016, half of Status Indians live in urban areas.

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples have always had the same rights as others in Canada.

The Facts: Only recently have Aboriginal peoples begun to obtain the same rights as other people in Canada. Registered First Nations peoples obtained the right to vote in 1960. In light of the 1973 Calder case and the 1997 Delgamuukw case, Aboriginal title equals communal ownership of land (excluding individual ownership). Throughout history, Aboriginal peoples were denied certain rights afforded other people in Canada:

In 1880, an amendment to the Indian Act provided for automatic enfranchisement (loss of status) of any Indian who earned a university degree or any Indian woman who married a non-Indian or an unregistered Indian. Enfranchisement was not officially repealed until 1985.

In 1884, an amendment to the Indian Act instituted prison sentences for anyone participating in potlatch, tawartawa dance and other rituals (traditional Aboriginal ceremonies).

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples are responsible for their current situation.

The Facts: Many factors have contributed to the situation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada:

Prior to European contact, Aboriginal societies were strong and self-sufficient. While Aboriginal peoples were never conquered, the process of colonization resulted in loss of control. Policies of displacement and assimilation (e.g., residential schools and banning of potlatch) deprived Aboriginal peoples of their traditional, social, economic and political powers. Aboriginal peoples are now re-establishing control through a process of healing, negotiation and partnership.

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples have a lot of money.

The Facts: Aboriginal individuals have lower incomes and higher dependency rates than others in Canada:

In 2006, the median income for Aboriginal peoples was \$18,962—30% lower than the \$27,097 median income for the rest of Canadians. The difference of \$8,135 that existed in 2006, however, was marginally smaller than the difference of \$9,045 in 2001 or \$9,428 in 1996. While income disparity between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canadians narrowed slightly between 1996 and 2006, at this rate it would take 63 years for the gap to be erased.

Although Aboriginal incomes rise with increased education, even highly educated Aboriginal people still face a considerable income gap relative to non-Aboriginal people. Land claim monies foster community economic growth on a long-term basis, however their impact on individual income is minimal. Given the size of the difference between Aboriginal average income and national average income, it will take a long time to eliminate this

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples have everything paid for. They don't have to pay for their housing, education or medical expenses.

The Facts: Certain services are paid for. What these are, and who they are for, is defined by statute or agreement:

Registered First Nations peoples have certain services paid for. These are part of the federal government's statutory obligations as outlined in the Indian Act. When a registered First Nations person leaves the community, access to these rights are limited and as the federal government cuts spending, items admissible under these statutory obligations also diminish.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, now called Indigenous and Northern Affairs, provides certain services to the Inuit through its Indian and Inuit programs. The department funds services for these communities that Canadians receive from their provincial or municipal governments. These services include education, social services and community infrastructure.

Although until recently the federal government recognized no statutory obligation to Métis people, it provided core funding to Métis representative organizations to advocate and negotiate, with federal and provincial governments, programs and policies that affect its membership (i.e., socio-economic status, health and cultural identity).

Some Métis groups also have agreements with provincial governments to provide services (nature of agreements and services vary). In *Daniels v. Canada* (2016), the Supreme Court of Canada declared that Métis (and non-status Indians) must be considered “Indians” in section 91(24) of the Constitution and thereby fall under federal jurisdiction. These cases did not include remedial action but they open the doors for Métis rights and land claims.

Outside of the items defined by statute and agreement, Aboriginal peoples pay their own expenses.

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples do not pay taxes.

The Facts: Tax exemption occurs only in confined cases. Aboriginal peoples pay significant amounts of tax every year:

Inuit and Métis people always pay taxes.

First Nations peoples without status, and registered First Nations peoples living off-reserve, pay taxes like the rest of the country.

Registered First Nations peoples working off-reserve pay income tax, regardless of where they reside (even on-reserve).

Administrative costs incurred by registered First Nations peoples claiming tax exemption for off-reserve purchases under \$500 discourage requests for reimbursement. In these cases, most registered First Nations peoples opt to pay the sales tax.

Registered First Nations peoples are sometimes exempted from paying taxes. Tax exemption is part of the federal government’s statutory obligation as outlined in the Indian Act.

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples cannot interface with, or adapt to, life in the mainstream.

The Facts: Aboriginal peoples have extensive and effective relationships with the rest of Canadian society:

Aboriginal peoples attend, and graduate from, a wide range of colleges and universities.

Aboriginal peoples work in all parts of the economy – many in large mainstream industries like mining, forestry, banking, construction, etc.

Aboriginal businesses form joint ventures (and other business arrangements) with non-Aboriginal businesses.

Of all self-employed Aboriginal people in Canada, women make up 37% and even 51% of Aboriginal small- and medium-sized enterprises are owned in whole or in part by Aboriginal women;

MYTH: Aboriginal peoples do not have a good work ethic.

They have high rates of turnover and absenteeism.

The Facts: Aboriginal peoples are skilled, productive and reliable employees who are valued by their employers:

Aboriginal peoples participate extensively in work-oriented education and training programs.

Aboriginal peoples work in all parts of the economy and in many different occupations.

Aboriginal peoples are valued as stable, reliable employees who contribute in many ways to corporate performance. Flexible work arrangements may be established to allow Aboriginal peoples to pursue their traditional ways, the timing of which differs from statutory holidays.

MYTH: There are no qualified Aboriginal peoples to hire.

The Facts: Aboriginal peoples have the education, skills and expertise required for jobs in all economic sectors, almost one-half (48.4%) of Aboriginal people had a postsecondary qualification in 2011, including 14.4% with a trades certificate, 20.6% with a college diploma, 3.5% with a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level, and 9.8% with a university degree. (In comparison, almost two-thirds (64.7%) of the non-Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had a postsecondary qualification in 2011.)

Aboriginal peoples work in many occupations. They are obtaining qualifications and experience in business/ finance/administration, management, social sciences/ education, natural and applied sciences, and health.

Many services are available to help employers find qualified Aboriginal employees.

MYTH: Hiring Aboriginal peoples is a form of reverse discrimination.

The Facts: Hiring Aboriginal peoples is part of a strategy to develop a representative workforce. A representative workforce strategy means that all groups are represented – those who are part of the majority population as well as those who are in minorities—reflecting the make-up of the country or of the population surrounding work areas.

Measures to increase Aboriginal workforce participation are not designed to favor one group over another. They are designed to increase access to employment vacancies and promote equitable opportunity for all groups.

Provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (as well as provincial and territorial statutes) permit employers to take special measures to achieve the equitable representation of Aboriginal peoples and other groups in the workforce.

MYTH: Around Status Cards

A status card is government ID that identifies someone as a "status Indian" as defined by the federal Indian Act. Although a status card allows "registered Indians" access to some benefits, it's not a credit card and it's not a free pass.

Not all indigenous people in Canada are eligible for a status card. The Inuit and Métis do not have status cards because they are not an "Indian" as defined by the Indian Act — at least not yet. In the case of *Daniels v. Canada*, the Federal Court recognized them as "Indians" under the Constitution. The federal government appealed that ruling.

In 2014, the Federal Court of Appeal upheld part of the decision. It ruled that while Métis should remain "Indians" under the Constitution, extending that recognition to "non-status Indians" should be done on a case-by-case basis since it is a separate issue. The case is now before the Supreme Court.

Did you know "status Indians" actually need a Canadian passport in order to fly out of the country?

However, we are still allowed to drive over the border with a status card.

Discussion.....

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