

Yahia Abdelrahman

Chalmers Neighborhood Renewal Corporation

Truth and Reconciliation Recommendation

Stereotypes of Indigenous People

First Nations in Canada and North America face stereotypical beliefs because of the Legacy of Colonization. Since the arrival of European settlers, they have been spewing negativity against Indigenous people. While there were treaty agreements between Indigenous people and settlers in some provinces and territories, settlers failed to honor their promises. Throughout the Residential School system and the Sixties Scoop Settlement, Indigenous children and adults were separated from their families, which had a detrimental effect on many.

The government moved thousands of Indigenous children and placed them in a strict foster home. They began to integrate them into white families, assimilate them to the white culture and eradicate their language and culture. The government of Canada has implemented numerous policies that have led to the general public's negative perception of Indigenous people. In modern society, many people think it is acceptable to denigrate their fellow human beings merely because of their race.

In 1989, Canada helped draft the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which lays out the minimum standard for all children worldwide. Although Canada helped draft the Convention in 2007, UNICEF reported that "Canada has been slow to honor its commitment to uphold those rights and ensure the well-being of children, particularly in situations addressing Aboriginal Children" (Ball pp. 1-5).

Throughout history, Indigenous people of Canada have been looked down and called names in very specific ways that are not acceptable and this all has to do with the legacy of the colonisation that led them feel like they did not belong to the society. The racist terms and name calling are continuous and has affected Indigenous people in term of accessing services.. There is also the ongoing controversy over the appropriation of First Nation or Native American tribal names for team mascots.

The stereotype: non-Indigenous people only learn about Indigenous people and their cultures through the media, movies, television shows, newspaper articles, and magazines. These reports primarily focus on opposing views on Indigenous people. Moreover, book articles often focus on negative thoughts about Indigenous people. The non-Indigenous main objective is to create a framework with Indigenous people and organizations that provide services to Indigenous people, that involves volunteering with Indigenous individuals, which will foster a mutual understanding of Indigenous culture. Having more information will allow people to see past stereotypes and racism and find the truth.

The Canadian government failed to educate non-Indigenous students about Indigenous culture in the schools; thus, this contributed to the development of negative stereotypes. Non-indigenous people could learn about the culture in the early years of school, allowing a better understanding of the importance of Indigenous people. There would have been less harm or ignorance towards the Indigenous people. Many Canadian provinces are incorporating Indigenous history into their educational curriculum. Providing students with a solid understanding of Indigenous history will have a positive impact on their future. The article titled “The Enduring Nature of First Nation Stereotypes” Joseph states “What is the impact of Indigenous stereotypes on Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people? For Indigenous

people, it diminishes self-esteem and cultural pride, and for the non-Indigenous it dehumanizes and enhances negative perceptions of Indigenous people and their culture” (p. 3).

In addition, another stereotype that has affected Indigenous people is that the individuals who write stories in the media or write books are generally non-Indigenous and are therefore missing the main issues. It has caused a misunderstanding of the relationship between the narrators and the writers of the stories. Consequently, it is essential for non-indigenous people to involve Indigenous elders or representatives throughout the whole writing process.

As an example, the Hollywood film industry has been making millions of dollars by telling stories about Indigenous people, such as cowboys. In fact, in some TV shows, natives and Indians in movies are played by non-Indigenous actors, so their representation is minimal since stereotype ideas do not allow indigenous people to participate in the film industry. Indigenous people experience many negative stereotypes.

In the sports sector, there has been a push to change some of the team names because of the association with an Indigenous stereotype. Non-Indigenous Canadians struggle to understand the indigenous culture; therefore, non-indigenous people are more likely to form either a positive or negative view of it. The problem is that non-Indigenous people assume they know what Indigenous cultures are, but do not take the time to learn about or engage with Indigenous people or their culture.

Stereotypes and the film industry are largely based on views rather than representing the entire culture. Indigenous people have been let down by the ignorance that let them feel less human and less secure. In Canada today we have a huge issue because we are prioritizing the issues of racism and discrimination. Also calling the entire generation a specific racist term or hate crimes because it does affect individuals and their families. In order to rebuild trust, we

must all denounce any form of name calling or descriptions of stereotyping on our vulnerable citizens. Indigenous people generally feel that the society mistreated them and ignored them completely so this has created a gap and disconnection between them and the non-Indigenous people. The stereotyping can affect and harm individuals and also build a low self esteem on them so therefore it is important that the government change their policies and pursue a new direction in dismantling laws that was wrongly applied in the past against I indigenous people.

There is a common stereotype that non-Indigenous culture is standard, and Indigenous culture is abnormal because non-Indigenous people are in a position of power. Many non-indigenous people express their discomfort and disapproval towards Indigenous people because of the Legacy of the Colonization and the government system that the white European views run. The majority of non-Indigenous people assume indigenous people are all alike, but this is not necessarily true. Indigenous people are nations and had their own government system long before the arrival of Europeans.

By creating awareness and providing understanding information, the TRC hopes to minimize discrimination and stereotypes against Indigenous people. In the Residential school system, the Canadian government and churches were the perpetrators, because they denied the harm and suffering of thousands of Indigenous children who were taken from their parents and placed in schools run by the perpetrators and biased against indigenous people.

To break down the existing barriers, creating a framework based on mutual understanding is essential. Lack of communication and dialogue in cross-cultural situations causes conflict between Indigenous people and the dominant non-Indigenous culture, resulting in gaps between the two groups. People are experiencing microaggressions and feeling frustrated, and this is causing problems. It is possible that they have been frustrated or exhausted by the

burden of representing their group or cultural expression due to the fear of belonging to a specific group.

Cultural appropriation involves adapting or using significant cultural items from another culture; thereby, hijacking their culture by removing the original concept will lead to a loss or a distortion. For example, pop culture is known for using Indigenous symbols and history to sell to the fashion industry. Also, traditional indigenous clothing has a deep spiritual connection for the Indigenous people, but for pop culture it is a marketing opportunity to collect revenues. Overall, the Sixties Scoop is considered the period when many Indigenous people lost their languages and relinquished their heritage. That was an extremely painful period in Canadian history. The community as a whole remains divided as there is little support for moving forward.

References

Ball, Jessica. "Promoting Equity and Dignity for Aboriginal Children in Canada." *Institute for Research on Public Policy Choices*. 14 (7). June, 2008: 21,
https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/sixties_scoop/

Joseph, Bob. "The Enduring Nature of First Nation Stereotypes." *Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.* April, 2015, www.ictinc.ca/blog/the-enduring-nature-of-first-nation-stereotypes.

