

MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY AND CANADA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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In 2013, Canada's minority Indigenous population remains socio-economically challenged, living out a legacy of social injustice that stems back to colonization. Domestic and gang violence, substance abuse, and suicide rates are increasing along with population growth that is outstripping the majority mainstream population. Unresolved treaties and land claims stand at the heart of the conflict as a barrier to achieving equality and a unified nation. This article highlights paths towards improved social justice that breaks away from Canada's trajectory of growing social ills. The new reality may be negotiated through renewed sensitivity to the effects of colonization, and through multi-track diplomacy that aims to remove barriers to peace and recreate Canada's governance priorities and discourse about citizen equality.

INTRODUCTION

Ongoing conflict exists in Canada between indigenous Aboriginal Canadians and mainstream, European-based society. Canada's post-millennial social milieu is one of disparity and class differences that the average Canadian would denounce in other countries. Yet Canadians often seem indifferent to social injustice in their own backyard. In 2012, Canada's Aboriginal leaders met to form a national plan that would address their rights. Former Assembly of First Nations Grand Chief, Ovide Mercredi, stated, "The option for us is very clear; we have to make our own laws and ignore Parliament."¹ He added that there is little the country can do if First Nations peoples unite. "Parliament," he said, "can pass all the laws they want; we'll just

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