

Pimicikamak Okimawin

The Transparency Project

History

Genocide has long been a fact of life for the aboriginal peoples of Canada. On May 28, 2015, Canada's Chief Justice brought this out of the closet in a speech that anticipated the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Both politely called it 'cultural genocide'.

It did not involve deliberately killing lots of individuals. It did involve deliberately seeking to destroy them as distinct peoples. Residential schools and forcible removal of children were among the ways this was done. Less obvious were steps to destroy the ability of aboriginal peoples to govern themselves. This was done by destroying (or as the Minister admitted, 'disaggregating') their traditional governing institutions and setting up fake governments.

The objective was simple: to dispossess the people of its traditional territory so that it would no longer protect the land and water.

For 140 years the Cross Lake Band Council administered the growing poverty of the Pimicikamak people. The Indian Act created a form of band government that is not accountable to the people. It is accountable to the Minister and to bureaucrats in Ottawa and Winnipeg who use it to control every aspect of Pimicikamak life. It even tells us who we are.

Before the Indian Act took over, the Pimicikamak people—like other indigenous peoples—was very good at governing itself. Its form of government was stable and the nation was successful for thousands of years, far longer and better than any European government.

There is no point trying to fix band government. It is designed to destroy the people, not to help it to survive.

Restoring Self-Determination

Some people hope the federal government will fix the problem. In November 2015 the Prime Minister directed the Minister to build 'a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples'. Yet she seems not to know Pimicikamak exists.

Simply, the federal government can't fix it. Only the Pimicikamak people can.

In the 1990s Pimicikamak set out to restore self-determination. This involves working on Pimicikamak citizens governing themselves.

The Project

Over the past two years Pimicikamak representatives have explained to Manitoba Hydro representatives that Manitoba Hydro needs a new relationship if it is to have a sustainable presence in Pimicikamak territory.

They have also explained why an essential element of a new relationship is funding that is respectful and not genocidal.

That means Pimicikamak must be accountable to its own citizens for its use of funds, not to Manitoba Hydro.

The Transparency Project creates the practical means to do this. While Manitoba Hydro initially resisted this change, it paid the cost of setting it up and it is supportive of the still-growing results that it can see.

The Project puts all of Pimicikamak's financial information in full public view online. It includes copies of cheque requisitions, financial statements, policy documents and high-level exchanges with other governmental entities. It is organized to be accessible and user-friendly.

In publicity materials Pimicikamak Okimawin is now being described as the most transparent government in North America. (It may in fact be the most transparent government in the world.)

Summary

For Pimicikamak this change—along with grant funding from Manitoba Hydro—is a fundamental shift in favour of survival for both parties.

23 May 2017