

BRIEFING NOTE

SUBJECT: Empowering, Recognising and Equipping The Aboriginal People to have a real representation and recognition in our Nation.

DATE: 8 March 2018

NAME: David McLachlan, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

OVERVIEW / SITUATION:

The current situation in our nation is that our indigenous population is without direction, without leadership in the National forum and disenfranchised from our society as a whole. This has many contributing factors; however, there is no significant solutions on the horizon. This has left this important part of our society in a holding pattern of failed promises, ineffectual programmes, and out of date beliefs, about who they are as individuals and as a people. This has also had a significant impact on their identity as a people and in the public eye.

This frustration of being caught in limbo while others decide what is best for them. Which has led to actions, born out of desperation and a need to shake people out of their lethargy and myopic mindsets.

There are however, a large number of people who would like to see change, and not just within the indigenous community but others as well. They can see this 'wicked'* problem and wants something done but have no idea how to 'fix' this.

One of the most significant issues that keep the 'status quo' is a lack of real representation for the Aboriginal people in our Government. We have long waited for Indigenous people to become involved but this has been slow and its impact has not achieved the needed results for the people they represent.

PROPOSAL

I propose that:

David McLachlan, [REDACTED]

We address the current situation of representation by creating between 10 – 12 Indigenous Federal regions where the people in that region would elect a representative. An example would be The Federal Member for the Noongar People. Now these may not fall within our State or Territory borders, but should be representative of the Indigenous cultural groupings.

These members would then sit in the Lower House with 1 Member elected from within that group to sit in the Senate as the Indigenous or First Nation Member. This person would have full voting rights as any other Senator would. Their specific charge would be to represent the interests and needs of their constituents.

BENEFITS:

1. This would be a real way of promoting the specific interests of the Indigenous population.
2. It would be a significant step in removing the disparity between how the indigenous people are perceived in our society and the knowledge of how much the indigenous community contribute to our nation as a whole. By having proper representation they are no longer 'second class', but are equal. Having the same voice. Having representation that is specific to their own culture, yet equal in their ability to create change, address concerns and grow and develop as a people.
3. It would continue the process of re-affirming their true place in our nation.
4. It would recognize their culture and beliefs as being valid, needed and respected.
5. It would assist the current cultural leaders within the indigenous community to build their peoples in a spirit of reconciliation and respect.
6. It would honour the indigenous community in a way that may elevate the frustration and anger towards the government.
7. On the world stage, it would show that we as a people are willing to move beyond antiquated and myopic thinking to embrace our past, checkered and flawed as it is, and find ways to make it right.
8. It would create an opportunity for the indigenous community to grow. Free from the shackles of marginalization and disenfranchisement.

HURDLES:

There are going to be some significant hurdles to address.

- There may not be anyone who can do the job. This may be an issue in the short term, but can be easily addressed by being open to teaching and training those chosen to do the job. It may also require assistance in the day to day. This can be achieved by having an assistant who can help navigate the political realities for a Federal Member.
In the long term this could be addressed once the indigenous people see that this is actually a career option for them we will see a spike in enrolments in Universities by indigenous peoples wanting to make a difference.
- Choosing the representatives may be seen as impossible. There is a mindset that the Aboriginal Nations are too disjointed and there is no cohesive commonality of structure within their regional 'countries'. This may be a more difficult in the short term. It will require indigenous leadership involvement in how this could be rolled out. However, given the opportunity to finally have real representation at a national level, you may be surprised on how motivated the Aboriginal Leadership can be.
- It may change the political landscape as well know it. There may be some factions within the current governmental structure that would be opposed to this idea. These are not in the best interest of our nation and should be addressed. Yes, having an Indigenous representative will mean that we will be forced to challenge old ideals and behaviours. The questions is not "why should we put ourselves through all that hassle", but rather "how can we not act".
- The cost is going to be significant. Not just long term but setting this up will take a mammoth effort. We will need a department who will communicate with and organize the Indigenous communities towards this goal. I won't try and spin the costs on this. Let me just say that we have gained so much at the expense of the indigenous population. Is there any cost that is TOO high to redress the past treatments?
- Mentality of maintaining the 'Status Quo'. Yes I will admit that it is much easier to keep things as they are and try and make a difference in small ways. This is much more palatable to the general population. But while we maintain this holding pattern generations of Indigenous people a living in poverty, with little hope things will ever change. There are also some people who have a vested interest in keeping things as they are. These are generally powerful and carefully placed to protect their own assets and agenda. This will be the greatest barrier. However, their focus is only on their own needs. We must cast a vision of what our nation can be. Even these must bow to public opinion and pressure or suffer the consequences through loss to their own agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

How I think this can be achieved. (Please note that this will need to be discussed with Indigenous Leaders and their input addressed)

1. On May 27th this year, Parliament announce that on May 27 2020 they will be inducting in the Lower & Upper Houses, Indigenous Nation representatives to represent the interests and concerns at a Federal level. That this is a formal acknowledgement and recognition of their place in our Nation and society.
2. That Parliament announce that as part of this redressing of the past we are seeking to formal distance ourselves politically from the colonial history, and stand as one united people under a new political system. A republic. Not because we don't want to be associated with England but rather as a decisive shift from the old mindset of colonization to the new mindset of unity and recognition.
3. That a department to be set up to communicate with the indigenous community and assist in the formulation of regional groupings from which these representatives will be selected by their own community.
4. That an educational scholarship programme be set up to assist indigenous people with interested in Politics, Economics and Business. This will not only be for Federal representation, but local as well.
5. To coincide with these representatives being welcomed into Parliament, May 27 is to be the "The Day of Recognition" and declared our national holiday.
6. That the government will assist the indigenous community in cultural programmes (food, entertainment, Art and literature, etc) to be celebrated on May 27 2020. This is to celebrate them and create change in the mindset of what 'being aboriginal' truly means, but from a positive perspective.
7. That a museum be created (Location to be determined later) that will be specifically to represent our indigenous community. This "People of the Dream Time Museum" would showcase their beliefs, culture and History. This should also reflect the truth of their treatment as well as their part in making this nation what it is today. This would not be possible to have up and running by then, but it could be announced.

FINAL COMMENTS:

Yes, this is not an easy road to go down. Yes, there is a lot of work involved. However, until the indigenous people of our nation have significant representation in our government they will continue to be a conquered people. Both politically and sociologically. Their current circumstances of hopelessness, disenfranchisement and marginalisation will continue. They will not progress as a people and will always be 'on the fringes' of our society. This cannot be allowed to continue. We must move into the new millennium politically. We must accept as a nation our corporate responsibility for the past and make the changes to redress it. Not just for today, but for the future. We cannot move forward as a nation without changing how we treat our indigenous people.

On January 10, 49 BCE, Julius Caesar uttered the words "alea iacta est" (literally – The die is cast) and then crossed the Rubicon River with his army, and brought about a new era for the Roman people. We need a decisive, irrevocable mandate to get this done.

Why? Because I can see a future for our nation where our indigenous people live in hope of a better future for them and their children. A future where they are respected, embraced and engaged. I see a people filled with pride and purpose. However, it starts with restoring their hope. Hope that things will change, hope that they are vital to our nation's future. Hope that their children will grow up and take their proper place in our nation. Hope that sees a child choose their career in the light of the knowledge that if they can see it, and they have the support and tools to assist them in working hard to achieve it, they be anything they want to be.

This is that first step. We must restore their hope that the future will be different, and then have the determination to see it done.