

The Price of Aboriginal Leadership¹

Edin Robinson's statement about financial disclosure of chiefs and councillors is right on. They are indeed asked "to prove they aren't liars and cheats." The very purpose of disclosure is to discourage financial mismanagement of public funds.

The *real* reason for resistance to transparency is all too transparent. The scandalously high salaries of a few elites ruling a community smaller than my extended family are totally indefensible, especially in view of the conditions of poverty and neglect that prevail on the reserve.

The *stated* reason for the scandalously high salaries—higher even than that of our Prime Minister and Premier—is that it goes counter to Shuswap culture. That may be true to a degree, but such traditions have developed under conditions of trust, fairness and equality. When those conditions no longer hold, it is time of serious review. The *source* culture of that money, Canadian taxpayers, *does* demand transparency.

I am not sure who is responsible for this situation. I believe it is a long succession of Governments that have allowed it to develop. I praise our present Government for trying to stem this scandalous situation and am deeply offended by the opposition parties who oppose this demand for transparency.²

¹ Letter to the Editor, *VS*, 7 Nov/2014 in response to (1) "Family at centre of pay firestorm...", 5 Nov/2014; (2) "Reserve life out of step...", 7 Nov/2014. This article is item (3) in the file "Aboriginals, Racism..."

² It is noteworthy that a few days after these articles were published and the matter aired, the opulent chief was voted out of power and replaced by the party who demanded transparency. We will see what happens. All too often, when a critic gains power she ends up doing the very thing she opposed earlier.