

## Chat about Aboriginals

### Loenen-Boer Correspondence

My Letter to the Editor of VS, "Calling a Spade a Spade,"<sup>1</sup> motivated my friend, Nick Loenen, a former Member of the BC Legislature, to write the following letter:

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Hi John:

Congratulations on getting published. That is not easy.

I take it you favour compassion but find public policies undermine personal responsibility.

If so, is that also how you see our treatment of on-reserve Aboriginals?

**Nick Loenen**

That letter prompted the following response from me:

Hello, Nick

Thanks for your congrats. Indeed, it is not easy to get your letters published. I have many rejections. This time I consciously used a trick: praise the paper while making your point. It worked! That is, I got it in. It did not work so well in that the Editor deleted the meat of the matter.

Your statement of my main point is perfectly put. Couldn't have said it better. I wanted to make sure the short point on compassion was not overlooked by the readers and so I italicized it. The editor either overlooked that or consciously deleted it.

As to Aboriginals, you have understood me well, though I am not sure why you restrict this to those on the reserve. I have a nephew who manages the housing dept of a reserve and the stories he has of total lack of responsibility tear your heart out. In fact, his stories are very similar to our experiences in Nigeria. Our Aboriginals are the same as Third World people, and that should not surprise us, for Animism is basically the same the world over, even if they have never met.

A major difference between our Aboriginals and others and Animists elsewhere is that the latter do not have governments with deep pockets and guilty consciences as the zipper to unlock those pockets.

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<sup>1</sup>VS, Feb. 27/2013 (p. A12).

<sup>2</sup>VS, Feb. 27/2013 (p. A12).

We are writing our memoirs. In a travel chapter, I wrote the following—still first draft and open to any kind of editing and correction at this point. Mostly musings as we travel along. In BC:

Everywhere there are historical markers provided by the Government about the history of the First Nations peoples. It is all very interesting material that goes out of its way to honour the history of the First Nations and their contributions to Canadian history. In mission studies, they would be described as “hagiography,” that is, writing only good and positive things about them, writing as if they were angels. There are critical portions as well, but they invariably refer to the barbarian Whites who allegedly brought only destruction and death. There is little about their inter-tribal wars and slavery or other negative features that exist in all communities. While the secular ethos of the country frowns on public discussion of religion, the traditional First Nation religion is extensively described, but as culture, not as religion. This is blatant discrimination against other religions in BC, especially the Christian religion, that do not receive such respectful attention. It is all politically correct stuff and hardly balanced history or objective. We often take the RV into WA state. There, you run across the same politically correct “Indian” history, as First Nations are called in the US.<sup>3</sup>

A paragraph about Quadra Island, just off Vancouver Island:

In terms of Aboriginals, it is home to the [Southern Kwakiutl](#), who migrated from [Queen Charlotte Strait](#) over two centuries ago, enslaving, displacing and absorbing the [Comox](#) and [Pentlatch](#) peoples who formerly lived there. Now *that's* not information you will easily get from the politically correct Parks board signage. Enslaving their fellow Aboriginals? Taking over their homeland? That makes me wonder why they so object to the Caucasian invasion. Never heard of Caucasians enslaving Aboriginals in BC. And I thought Aboriginals objected to being absorbed or integrated into the invading society! And do these invaded, enslaved and absorbed people have the right to reclaim their lands and make development demands of their invaders? I almost wonder if Caucasians might have copied the methods of First Nations. Sometimes it is smart to de-and re-construct your history—until you are found out and then it smells worse than if you had been open about it to begin with. Of course, my source may not have it correctly!

There is an Aboriginal lodge at Cape Mudge, a beautiful and modern structure meant to attract tourists. We saw very few guests there, while most of the staff seemed to be non-Aboriginal, a feature we've seen more often in Aboriginal establishments. Which leads me to ask why Aboriginals complain so much about unemployment and poverty.

You see, many questions; no answers. I know, politically incorrect, but Aboriginals do owe us some explanations. I am not anti-Aboriginal. I am only too aware of the horrendous results of their interaction with Caucasians and am ashamed, deeply ashamed, of my race, culture and even of the religion that is at the centre of my life. However, that should not prevent us from raising long-suppressed issues. Do Aboriginals really have a

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<sup>3</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 5, p. 49.

right to the moral high road? We had a nice sleep in our RV in the very centre of the town that night with a great view of both the town and the strait.<sup>4</sup>

I stand to be corrected.

One more morsel. We once went on a Bill Chu tour of Chinese and Aboriginal history. Very interesting and highly recommended. We found ourselves in the home of an Aboriginal leader who had taken his cause all the way to the UN. One of his statements was that Aboriginal children should all be educated in primary schools totally conducted in their own local native tongue!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Every Square Inch*, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 4, pp. 103-104.