

The Hidden History of the Americas: The Destruction and Depopulation of the Indigenous Civilisations of the Americas by European Invaders

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The following is a modified version of an Anti-Racism Lecture delivered on 22 March 2011 at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. It is here presented as a speech and without supporting references. A more extended version of this lecture is available [here](#).

Until the Lion has his historian, the hunter will always be the hero.

Unknown.

The Lion today will be the American Indian, and on his behalf I will present an American Indian perspective about the European Invasion of the Americas, and the consequent near fatal disastrous results it had for our civilizations (in this paper the term 'American Indian' is applicable to all of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas).

The main topic of my commentary today will be about the Hidden History of the Americas, and the Conspiracy of Silence that keeps it out of Eurocentric Education Systems, and hidden safely away in the Archives of Canada, the United States, the Vatican, France, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, and far too many other countries to mention here. Yesterday, 21 March 2011, was the date that the United Nations set aside in 1966 to remind humanity each year thereafter that we have a moral obligation to work diligently for the Elimination of Racism around the world. Today, I'll provide you

with some of the highlights of the true histories of the invasion and colonizing of the Americas by Europeans, which I hope will provide a small forward step in that direction. My presentation is designed to put on the table for discussion a long denied fact: the dispossessing of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas by Europeans, and the near extermination of them in the process, is the greatest inhuman barbarity that this World has ever known.

The following are some of the major tragic consequences that stem from the European invasion. First and foremost, the suffering that it caused American Indians over the centuries is beyond measurement, and the number that perished because of it is so immense that uncountable millions is the only reasonable estimate that can be given! Beside out and out Genocide, starvation, which was caused by the deliberate destruction of Indigenous trading patterns and food supplies, took a heavy toll. Another item that took a heavy toll was malnutrition. It started shortly after the invasion's onset, slowly became universally widespread among the Indigenous Peoples of the two Continents and continued until recent times. Initially, it was caused by food supply destruction, but later the major cause was the near starvation rations passed out to Indigenous peoples by Caucasian governments – in a weakened state even common illnesses were very often deadly. People sold into slavery were also a huge factor. Then we must not forget the hundreds of thousands of American Indians who died at the hands of brutal Caucasian governments during the 1900s in such places as Guatemala, where they were the majority population fighting the minority for representation. Notable is the fact that Caucasian Canadian and American politicians turned a blind eye to the atrocities that their peers were committing in these countries, probably justifying their non-interference by labelling the rebellions communist-inspired.

Before laying out some facts to support my previous statement I'll provide a sampling of pre-Columbian American Indian statistics and accomplishments.

In 1492, when the European invasion of the Americas was instigated by a human error that saw Christopher Columbus get lost at sea while trying to reach the Indies, and making landfall instead in the Americas, the two continents were not, as some would have us

believe, two vast and vacant land masses that were created by the Great Spirit for the specific purpose of enriching Europeans. In fact, both continents were widely populated by humans who were citizens of hundreds of well established diverse civilisations – a statement of fact that may not sit well with those who buy into the White Supremacist belief that the inhabitants of the two continents were not civilized human beings but savage animals.

Unfortunately, because of the lack of reliable statistics the number of humans that were residents of the Americas in 1492 can only be estimated. Thus, over the eons, using various methods, experts have made estimates that vary widely – a few million to a hundred million. However, I believe, due to the fact that the vast land mass was populated from the Arctic to the tip of South America, including deserts, islands, swamps, Jungles, and mountains, that a total population estimate of 100 million would not be far off.

The citizens of these Nations spoke hundreds of different languages and resided in societies that covered the spectrum – hunter-gatherer to sophisticated city dwellers. Farms that fed thousands of citizens of these Nations existed, and many cities had large populations. The norms of human interaction such as marriage, divorce, social assistance, etc., were in place. Such disciplines as engineering, astrology, medicine, etc., were available for educational pursuit in many societies. Calendars, suspension bridges, and record keeping, etc., were also part of the fabric of many societies. Trading patterns between most Nations were developed and well established.

Politics ranged from democratic to autocratic. For instance, the Aztecs, Inca and Maya lived under emperors, while most of the North American Nations were democratic. In fact, shortly after the invasion started, the democratic ideals of these Nations soon gave rise to the democratic aspirations of long oppressed Europeans. Proof of it lies in the fact that both the Constitution and Bill of Rights of the United States of America were modelled to a large extent on the democratic ideals and laws of Indigenous American Nations, in particular an Iroquoian law entitled 'The Great Law of Peace' (and it took until a Resolution of November 1988 for the US Congress to recognise these American Indian democratic values and ideals).

Over ten thousand years ago American Indian horticulturists engineered a plant they christened 'maize', commonly known today

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as corn. In modern times the harvest of corn provides approximately twenty-one per cent of human nutrition across the globe. Interestingly, it took until 2010 before modern science could finally figure out how they did it. Further, American Indians were very ingenious in domesticating food sources; including corn, they domesticated nine of the most important food crops that feed and sustain the modern world's population.

Another long ignored fact to ponder is this: over five thousand years ago the Indigenous People of California, utilising a process they had perfected to take the bitterness out of acorns, were milling flour out of them. To assure a reliable supply of acorns they grew and groomed large orchards of oak trees. This was a time in history, forget not, in which many Europeans were still hanging out in caves.

This is just a tiny sample of some of the positive societal information that is readily available about the Nations of the pre-Columbian Americas. But, of course, it is not taught in schools or widely publicised. In fact, I venture to state without hesitation that just about everybody attending this session did not know any of the facts just relayed until I mentioned them. Which begs the question: in view of the fact that the information just mentioned is readily available to teach, why is it not taught? The answer will be revealed by the time I finish.

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QUESTION: Why does the racism that degrades American Indians continue to blatantly exist within the fabric of the modern Nations of the Americas? The answer is simple; most of the modern Nations of the Americas, due to their Eurocentric founding, will not willingly do what good conscience and justice demands: that is, to teach the truth about the European invasion and colonisation of the two continents. This course of action, no matter how demeaning to the European founders of their societies it is, is a moral obligation that these modern Nations, if they ascribe to being civilised societies, should no longer ignore and resist!

In his discourse, 'Lessons at the Halfway Point', Michael Levine accurately identifies with this gem of wisdom why intolerance exists:

'If you don't personally get to know people from other racial, religious or cultural groups', he writes, 'it's very easy to believe ugly things about them and make them frightening in your mind'. A sound piece of wisdom. If after 1492, instead of illegally appropriating and colonising the territories of the sovereign Indigenous Nations of the Americas, Europeans had followed the advice it contains, and had gotten to know and had accepted Indigenous Americans as equals, peaceful interaction between American Indians and Europeans would have occurred. However, instead of civilised interaction, they adopted White Supremacist racist beliefs that were responsible for the depiction of American Indians, and later of the Africans they imported into the Americas from Africa to be their slaves, as bloodthirsty inhuman savages – false depictions of both peoples that have been passed along from generation to generation, among Caucasians, for the better part of five centuries. Had White Supremacist attitudes not prevailed, both peoples of colour would not have suffered the indescribable hells that they suffered across the Americas until recent times and, in far too many cases, still suffer.

However, had at that time in history Europeans been civilized enough to accept all fellow human beings as equals, as American Indians did, they wouldn't have been occupied in the first place with 'discovering' and stealing the properties that belonged to other sovereign Nations. But, with notions of racial superiority prevailing, the European invaders utilised two very effective White Supremacist creations to justify their invasion of the generally peaceful Nations of the Americas, and the pillaging of them. Without conscience, demonising propaganda was created and used to dehumanise American Indians, and the Doctrine of Discovery – a Papal document that stated that non-Christians could not own land – was used to give a smidgeon of legality and a Christian blessing to the stealing of American Indian National territories, and to the carnage that the invaders visited upon the citizens of the land they stole.

Therefore, in view of the onslaught that they were facing, it should come as no surprise that the citizens of the American Nations, who were being butchered, robbed and dispossessed by invaders that were armed to the teeth with lethal weaponry, fought back heroically to preserve their freedom and countries. The twisted

result of all of this, in view of White Supremacist attitudes prevailing, does not surprise either, but it does defy logical rational reasoning. Because American Indians fought the brutal European invaders to preserve the territory and freedom that the Great Spirit had given them, the American Indian resistors were, and still are depicted by many as the villains. Thus, when a logical and reasonable person, with honesty, contemplates the result, he/she cannot help but conclude that it is incredible in the extreme to find that in the overall scheme of things the American Indian victims are the villains, while the European bandits are the heroes. Such an outcome makes as much sense as would a murder victim's family being ostracised and victimised because they caused discomfort for the murderer.

Related to the prevalent White Supremacist attitudes that predominated among Caucasians during colonial times, it was rare indeed to find a prominent colonial official who had the humanity to see, and the courage to discuss openly, the justification of American Indians fighting tooth and nail to keep their Nations intact and to preserve their freedom. In fact, the only written statement that I've come across during my reading of hundreds of thousands of pages of history books, colonial documents etc., which acknowledges the right and the justice of the American Indian's fight for their land and for their freedom, was the following one, made in 1867 by Nova Scotia's Honourable Joseph Howe:

The Indians [Mi'kmaq] who fought your forefathers were open enemies, and had good reason for what they did. They were fighting for their country, which they loved, as we have loved it in these latter years. It was a wilderness. There was perhaps not a square mile of cultivation, or a road or a bridge anywhere. But it was their home, and what God in His bounty had given them they defended like brave and true men. They fought the old pioneers of our civilization for a hundred and thirty years, and during all that time they were true to each other and to their country, wilderness though it was.

Greed was the main motivation for the horrors that were visited upon the Peoples of the Americas by the European invaders. Their thirst and craving for power and riches were insatiable; the more they acquired the more they wanted. Sioux Chief Sitting Bull aptly described it:

The love of possessions is a disease with them. [...] They take tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the Earth, for their own and fence their neighbours away.

If North America had been twice the size it is, there still would not have been enough; the Indian would still have been dispossessed. The only modern comparison I can think of, without the carnage of course, is Wall Street bankers, who almost brought the world economy down in 2008 by the irresponsible actions they took to enrich themselves over the prior decade or so. During that period, in careless disregard of their financial responsibilities to society, they designed and implemented schemes that were geared almost entirely towards trying to satisfy their blind senseless greedy desire to accumulate more wealth than they needed. The human suffering from it has been tremendous worldwide, massive unemployment, tens of thousands have lost their homes, and in 2011, millions are still unemployed.

Conversion to Christianity did not help American Indians to survive. In fact, the atrocious treatment that they suffered at the hands of Caucasians before conversion continued unabated after conversion. For instance, the Mi'kmaq began to convert in 1610, but, during the 1700s their land was still being taken without their consent and without compensation, and they were subjected to attempts to exterminate them. Within the records of the modern Nations of the Americas rest many accounts of some of the gruesome methods utilized by Christian stalwarts to convert the 'Pagans'.

Germ Warfare was used by the colonials to try to exterminate American Indian populations; the preferred method was smallpox infection. The following quotes from July 1763 are extracted from

exchanges between the Commander-in-Chief of British forces in North America, General Jeffrey Amherst, and Colonel Henry Bouquet. They give an excellent example of inhuman racist mentality in action:

Amherst: Could it not be contrived to send the Smallpox among the disaffected Tribes of Indians?

Bouquet: I will try to inoculate the Indians with some blankets that may fall into their hands, and take care not to get the disease myself.

Amherst: You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets.

Amherst's favourite degrading label for American Indians was that they were an 'execrable race'. In spite of the before-mentioned, and the fact that after they exchanged their memos many citizens of American Indian Nations began dying from the disease, Amherst defenders state it is only circumstantial evidence.

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Before I get to the Mi'kmaq experience, I want to provide a few examples of other atrocities suffered by American Indians.

The Cherokee of Georgia were rounded up in 1838, and during the winter months herded to Oklahoma (the 'Trail of Tears'). *En route*, out of a starting number of approximately 15,000, over 5,000 perished. Many Nations were exterminated by the invaders, such as the Beothuk and the Taino. So many disappeared that Shawnee Chief Tecumseh observed: 'Where are the [...] many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the white man, as snow before a summer sun'. A comprehensive list of the barbarities visited upon the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, which would also include many horrors that occurred during the more enlightened 1900s, would require many works of encyclopaedic proportions! The following statement, 'No state can achieve proper culture, civilization, and progress [...] as long as Indians are permitted to remain', although articulated by

U.S. President Martin Van Buren in 1837, lays bare the predominant White Supremacist genocidal mentality that the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas have had to contend with since Columbus landed in 1492.

Canada is a country that was created by the British by dispossessing thirty-four American Indian Tribes of their territories; it is also a land that includes genocidal efforts in its history. For instance, there were three scalp proclamations issued by British colonial authorities in efforts to try to exterminate the Mi'kmaq. The first, issued by Massachusetts Bay Colonial Governor William Shirley in 1744, included bounties for the scalps of men, women and children. The second, issued by Nova Scotia Colonial Governor Edward Cornwallis, also included bounties for women and children. A third, issued in 1756 by Governor Charles Lawrence, was for men only; however, it is not too far-fetched to state that many bounty hunters would have still believed that the all inclusive bounties for Mi'kmaq scalps were still in effect.

I'll use the Mi'kmaq experience of life under Caucasian rule to demonstrate how American Indians suffered from neglect and declined in numbers because of it.

On June 25, 1761, a Burying of the Hatchet Ceremony was held at the Governor's farm in Halifax; the British representative was Governor Jonathan Belcher; the Mi'kmaq were represented by several Chiefs. As the Ceremony progressed, several Peace and Friendship treaties were signed between the parties. It did not spell relief and prosperity for the Mi'kmaq. From this point to the late 1940s they lived in a state of near starvation – malnutrition was rampant. The following are a few examples of the extent of the suffering of the People under British rule, which are quoted from reports that widely respected Caucasian Indian Superintendents submitted to Colonial Governments.

In 1774, 'a Bill to prevent the destruction of moose, beaver, and muskrat in the Indian hunting ground was introduced in the legislature, but was defeated'. The majority of legislators did not want to provide the Mi'kmaq with even this small measure of comfort. However, White settlers in many instances did supply some relief to the destitute and starving People. While they did so the government disregarded petitions and reports coming in from across

the province depicting the horrifying state of affairs that existed. Even reports of people living in wigwams completely naked and without sustenance in winter brought no relief.

George Monk, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at the time, had forwarded many petitions from settlers that begged the government to help the Mi'kmaq. The government responded by providing only minimal rations from a budget of £100 per year. One settler described in a petition of January 1794 just how desperate the situation was:

A great many Micmac have died for want of victual [...] notwithstanding the little they get from the Superintendent [...] if they have not some more general relief they and their wives and children must in a few years all perish with cold and hunger in their own country.

Joseph Howe, who was Indian Superintendent in 1843, said of the Mi'kmaq plight in a report he made to the Nova Scotia colonial government:

At this rate [of population decline] the whole Race would be extinct in 40 years, and half a Century hence the very existence of the Tribe would be as a dream and a tradition to our Grandchildren, who would find it difficult to imagine the features or dwelling of a Micmac, as we do to realize those of an Ancient Breton. [...] Assuming the statistics of 1838 as a basis of a calculation, and deducting 10 percent, your Lordship will perceive that there must be at least 1,300 Souls still in this Province, appealing to the sympathies of every honourable mind by the contrast of their misfortunes with our prosperity, their fading numbers with our numerical advancement, their ignorance and destitution with the wealth and civilization which surrounds and presses upon them from every side.

The Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1848, Abraham Gesner, was condemnatory of the meagreness of government assistance offered to the Mi'kmaq in the reports he sent to the British colonial government about the population decline of the Mi'kmaq. Gesner was a medical doctor and a fellow of the Geological Society, a scientist, inventor and author. His most famous output was the development of kerosene, which laid the foundation for our modern petrochemical industry. The following are excerpts from his reports:

Unless the progress of their annihilation is soon arrested, the time is close at hand, when [...] the last of their race, to use their own idea, 'will sleep with the bones of their fathers'. Unless the vices and diseases of civilization are speedily arrested, the Indians [...] will soon be as the Red Men of Newfoundland, or other Tribes of the West, whose existence is forever blotted out from the face of the Earth.

It might be supposed that after their wars [...] and encounters with the whites had terminated, the Aborigines would multiply, yet experience has proved exactly the reverse. [...] Exposed to the inclemency of the weather, and destitute of the proper diet and treatment required for contagious diseases, numbers are swept off annually by complaint unknown to them in their state. [...]

From the clearing and occupation of the forests, the wild domain of the moose and caribou has been narrowed. Being hunted by the dogs of the back settlers, these animals have become scarce - thus the Indian has been deprived of his principal subsistence, as well as the warm furs that in olden times lined his wigwam. Indigenous roots once highly prized for food have been destroyed by domestic animals. [...] These united causes have operated fearfully, and have reduced the whole tribe to the extreme of misery and wretchedness.

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Almost the whole Micmac population are now vagrants, who wander from place to place, and door to door, seeking alms. The aged and infirm are supplied with written briefs upon which they place much reliance. They are clad in filthy rags. Necessity often compels them to consume putrid and unwholesome food. The offal of the slaughter-house is their portion. Their camps or wigwams are seldom comfortable, and in winter, at places where they are not permitted to cut wood, they suffer from the cold. The sufferings of the sick and infirm surpass description, and from the lack of a humble degree of accommodation, almost every case of disease proves fatal.

During my inquiries into the actual state of these people in June last, I found four orphan children who were unable to rise for the want of food – whole families were subsisting upon wild roots and eels, and the withered features of others told too plainly to be misunderstood that they had nearly approached starvation.

The Mi'kmaq population of Nova Scotia remained almost stationary, approximately 1400, until the Canadian government started providing more nutritious diets and better medical care in the mid-1940s. As a result, the population in 2011 is around 15,000.

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But if survival is assured, ongoing invisibility remains a problem. Dalhousie University Professor Susan Sherwin concisely identifies the type of racism that American Indians are contending with in modern times: 'the greatest danger of oppression lies where bias is so pervasive as to be invisible'. Her short concise statement is by far the best I've ever read on the subject.

In a nutshell, the pervasive invisible bias that still victimizes American Indians with the unwarranted designation 'savage heritage', a designation originating from the demonizing propaganda

of European colonial times, has been so deeply imbedded in the subconscious of succeeding generations of Caucasians that it is almost impossible to get Caucasian society to recognise and accept that the systemic racism which victimises First Nations Peoples today actually exists. In plain English, the unwarranted, racist 'savage' designation that we suffer from, because of its centuries-old passage from generation to generation, is subconsciously considered by many as the true depiction of American Indians.

The before-mentioned assertion of Caucasian denial of American Indian civility, and of Caucasians having little awareness of American Indian history, is a fact highlighted by the following examples of American Indian invisibility – incidents which occurred in Nova Scotia while I was Executive Director of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. However, it should be kept in mind that if one were to transcribe all similar types of incidents that have occurred over the ages in and around the Americas, it would take volumes to do it.

Signs stating 'Annapolis Royal: Established 1605, Canada's Oldest settlement' were placed at exits from a newly constructed bypass express highway of the village of Annapolis Royal. The message did not recognize this fact: Canada had First Nation settlements for uncountable centuries before Europeans began to establish their settlements after 1492. After hearing about it, and viewing it, I contacted the mayor of the Town of Annapolis Royal, the Warden of Annapolis County, and the Department of Transportation, and voiced my outrage. To their credit, after they were reminded about First Nation existence, the Mayor and Warden were shocked that they had supported the wording of the sign, and that they had not even briefly considered the existence of American Indian civilisations. Within a few days of my intervention the signs were removed, and I was invited to a joint meeting of the councils, where both formally apologised for the racist oversight. The sign now reads: 'Annapolis Royal: Established 1605, Stroll Through the Centuries'.

Signs on highway 102 stated: 'Bedford: A Stopping Place Since 1503', which ignored the fact that the Mi'kmaq had been using the Bedford location as a stopping place for tens of centuries before Europeans did. The sign wording was recommended for adoption by the Town Council of Bedford by author Elsie Tolson. To find out why

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Elsie had not acknowledged Mi'kmaq usage when she coined the phrase, I met with her, and pointed out the erroneous message that it portrayed. She was appalled by the fact that she had not taken into consideration the existence of our ancestors. With her cooperation, and the progressive attitude of Bedford's Town Council, the sign now reads, 'Bedford: A Traditional Stopping Place'.

In the 1990s I attended a businesspersons' meeting at the Holiday Inn in Dartmouth. The keynote speaker was an internationally respected CEO from the United States. He started off his presentation with a statement that came across something like this: 'When our ancestors first arrived in the Americas they found two vast and vacant Continents, loaded with immeasurable wealth for the taking'. Taking exception to the insulting erroneous statement, I immediately rose to my feet and pointed out the error of his ways. He responded by turning red, apologising profusely for his systemic racist statement, and later he correctly placed the blame for his ignorance where it so rightly belongs: the White Supremacist education systems of the Americas, which all but ignore the existence of the robust civilizations that prospered and flourished in the Americas prior to the European invasion.

To have Eurocentric education systems still in place in the Americas in 2011, which by and large ignore the real history of American Indians, is the result of wilful ignorance! I state this because teaching the truth of what transpired during colonial times would not bode well for the reputations of the European colonials, who brutally dispossessed the original inhabitants of the two continents of their properties and civilisations, and in many cases, their very existence. It should be noted that the destruction was universally successful: of the hundreds of robust civilisations that existed in the Americas in 1492, not one survives intact today.

In 1993 I wrote the first of three editions of a book entitled *We Were Not the Savages*. The latest edition was published in 2006. The title, which I used with slight variations for the three editions, poses a question that someday has to be truthfully answered by Caucasians, which is: If not the American Indians, who then were the savages? I think the truthful answer is very unspeakable and painful for a great many Caucasians to contemplate and acknowledge.

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The continued degrading of American Indian civility that ensues from not teaching the history of the Americas and from journeying on with the Eurocentric lies that have passed to-date for history, is unacceptable in societies that proclaim themselves democratic and just. Such an indefensible course only reinforces the systemic racism that was created by colonial propaganda, which will continue to victimise the victims into eternity if not refuted and discarded.

If you wish to test the veracity of what I've relayed, I suggest that you journey down Barrington Street to the site where Governor Edward Cornwallis's statue is located in Cornwallis Park, across from the Westin Hotel, and contemplate and honestly answer the following question (for those from other areas of the Americas: do the same with statues of such barbarians as Columbus, Cortez, Colonel John Chivington, General George Armstrong Custer, et al.). If the victims of the Governor's self-admitted attempt to exterminate their race had been from a White race, and not American Indians, would the statue erected in his honour be there? I believe that Caucasians of good conscience would come up with the same answer that I did when I pondered this question several decades ago: it would not be there! In my opinion, no nation that self-describes itself as civilised can honour such a man. Honouring him, in view of what he tried to do to the Mi'kmaq, signifies that racism is alive and well in Nova Scotia. And the same can be said for jurisdictions across the Americas that honour colonial barbarians.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mi'kmaq Elder Dr. Daniel N. Paul, C.M., O.N.S., is a passionate advocate for social justice and the eradication of racial discrimination. He is an outspoken champion for First Nations Peoples and all other disadvantaged members of society. He has widely publicised the proud heritage and history of the Mi'kmaq Nation.