

LETTERS

Letters Of The Week

Indians face a taxing matter

It's illegal to violate treaties

I have learned on this sacred Mother Earth that people are not to be taken by surprise by what is in their minds and very odd in their hearts.

Traditional North American native elders are saying that we must say strong by keeping our traditional culture alive; that means living on ancestral ways as much as possible. Our clans, clan members and people are continuously being disrespected, ignored, exploited; there are no words to count or calculate how much destruction has been done to us or to Mother Earth.

Today the so-called gentiles and engineers have decided to make more elaborate laws, policies and rules, to profit from this sacred Mother Earth. The Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and broken treaties with indigenous people are the works of so-called educated economists and graduiates.

The world crisis escalates with problems such as acid rain, ozone depletion, greenhouse effect, AIDS and overpopulation, etc. How can these problems not be addressed before human energy is wasted on short-term profits?

The Earth economy is once more neglected by ignorant engineers and intellectuals who have no concern or any real understanding of the Earth or for our children. If the real Earth knowledge and real Earth management is ignored, any higher form than us is at risk. The intricate concepts of the world have been colonialized, exploited, ignored, raped,



REMIKO JALAVIEN/TORONTO STAR

DANNY BEATON: Gives a North American Indian's view about broken treaties and the economic destruction of Mother Earth.

and controlled. Until the Earth community learns to respect, listen to and learn from indigenous knowledge, the world will be missing the most important link for survival — if survival is to be taken seriously.

It was the Mohawk nation and other native nations who fought alongside the British in the 18th century to make Canada free from the United States. It was the crown who negotiated sacred treaties for recognition for natives in return for the use of their lands as a legal free Canada to violate sacred treaties.

How long will it take these so-called educated graduiates to see where their race and energy belong? It felt terrible for the little ones who will have to suffer from the consequences of ignorance and greed.

We owe our prosperity to sacrifices of Indians

With resignation, foresight and grace, and without bloodshed, the first Nations of this continent gave us the security of the past against the uncertainties of the future. They shared with a virtual blood-courtesy by conquering disease-causing refugees from Europe, fought with the end of their freedom on this continent, they look, humbly, at national and humane steps, obligated to ensure the survival of their people and cultures.

They signed treaties designed to allow the new people to co-exist peacefully with the ancient inhabitants, side by side.

Like most of the recent and long-ago immigrants to this country, I am not descended from nobility.

My ancestors had not moved to this country, they likely would have starved in Ireland.

I am thankful for this beautiful continent that has been my family's home for generations. I have very extensive ties to this piece of land and to the sacrifices of the first Nations people who lived here.

What price can we place on:

a continent where we and our descendants can live in perpetuity? How do we make contributions to the original inhabitants for the loss of freedom, life, of being and land for those who find their descendants in perpetuity?

It's not possible to thank people enough for such a precious gift. But it would be possible to gratefully acknowledge their sacrifices, and to extend our children's homeland.

The treaties contain only a few weak acknowledgements, including exemptions from some kinds of taxation.

My government shames me when it tries to snatch back what it was put into place in the past.

And my own people — people who owe our prosperity and often our very lives to this sacrifice, yet who complain loudly about how much we give to the Indian? — also shame me. **DENNIS O'BRIEN**, Toronto

An ironic twist of tax laws

As *Powwow* backs overseas (Dec. 30), about a downtown powwow in support of Indians protesting a new tax law forcing thousands of status Indians who live off reserves and work for Indian-run firms to pay income tax for the first time.

How ironic that Canada's native people are being denied tax-free status when working off the reserve. The same individuals (liberal politicians) who are pushing the law into force collect salaries that are one-third tax-free.

Perhaps when the taxpayers weren't looking, all the parliament buildings and city halls in Canada were designated as reserves, rather than the preserves (or privileges) that they are. If the politicians were faced with a change in their tax-free status, would they organize an occupation? Or would they simply renege so they could take advantage of their luxurious pension plans?

RAVENWOOD DUBINA
Scarborough

DANNY BEATON
Tulita, Canada
Mohawk Six Nations