

Supply

was summed up hundreds of years ago as: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you". We should treat other people the way we would like other people to treat us. When we look at our neighbours in this way, we begin to understand a few things.

Let us imagine, if we can, the case of Sam, a Salish Indian living on a tiny reserve on Vancouver Island. The reserve is tiny because in the 19th century, government officials decided that British Columbian Indians did not need very much land because they made their living from fishing. Today a greatly increased population still has to get by with the same little piece of land. In the meantime, however, their right to fish has been cut back, restricted and regulated by the very same Government which took their land in the first place saying that Indians did not need much land because they made their living from the sea.

Sam looks at his family of four young children and at the other families in his village. He looks at their tiny reserve and wonders what kind of a future he and his children will have. He thinks of his sister, her husband and their children. They have moved to the city and are having a pretty rough time. Whenever his sister comes home to the village for a visit, she worries that her children do not have the same understanding of their culture as their cousins. Sam knows that before the coming of European colonists, his people had the entire area to themselves. They used that area, the land and the sea, to provide for all their needs. They had their own system of government with its laws and customs for conservation, for looking after the weaker members of society, for holding and exchanging property, for trading with other nations and for choosing their leaders and so on. They had the land and the right to govern themselves. Sam knows that they never sold those rights. They never had them taken from them in war. If there is any justice in Canada, these rights should still be intact.

Sam looks at his family. He looks at his small overcrowded reserve and knows what aboriginal leaders mean when they talk about aboriginal rights, about land claims and about aboriginal self-government. When they talk about these things, aboriginal leaders are talking about Sam, his kids and their future. Sam knows he cannot turn the clock back to the 1850s when the first immigrants begin to show up. He knows the people in the nearby towns and the farmers have their rights and that these rights have to be respected. He knows that even hunting and fishing have changed. He knows there have to be rules and regulations so that everyone will get their fair share. But then he looks at his small reserve and thinks of the thousands of acres the forest companies control. They got the land for a few cents an acre, took the best of the timber, destroying spawning beds as they did, and then sold out to another company which does not even have its head office in Canada.

Sam thinks of the way that so much of his life has been controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs. He remembers how as a small child he was taken away from his home,

family and village and sent away to a residential school where he was not even allowed to speak his own language and he was not allowed to talk with his sister because any contact between boys and girls was forbidden. He had to work half of each day on the school farm so that the education he ended up with never really amounted to very much. He thinks of the difficulty he had trying to borrow money so he could start a small business. The banks would not lend him any money because he lived on an Indian reserve. All the Government's promises about economic development turned out to be nothing but promises.

Sam knows that for his sake, for the sake of his children and his people, he and his people have to gain control over their own lives. Over the last few years he has developed some pretty good ideas about how this should happen. At the very top of the list is the need for federal and provincial Governments to recognize that he has rights. He has rights which were inherited in the same way as other people might inherit a farm, a house or a business. Sam has inherited rights. It is about time that the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia recognized this. He has rights to land, land that goes far beyond the dinky little piece of land that the Government left to him and his people. He has rights with respect to hunting and fishing that go beyond the hunting and fishing rights of other Canadians.

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Sam and his people have the right to govern themselves rather than being controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs. This means that they have the right to make basic decisions about their children's education, how they should spend their health budget, how they should look after the welfare of their children, how they should develop their economy, and how they should conserve fish stocks in the stream that runs through the reserve.

Over the last 20 years Sam and his people have become more and more dependent upon Indian Affairs for financial help in running their band and for looking after the growing number of people who have ended up on welfare. Sam has a kind of funny attitude toward this money. He did not like it because of the way it was dealt out. In particular, he did not like what the welfare money did to so many people. Welfare money seemed to destroy their initiative, their independence, their pride and even their joy in life.

Sam knows that in the old days even when times were tough people could take care of themselves. They could take care of one another. Sam wants his people to get back to that spirit and that attitude. But nothing makes Sam more angry than to hear people in the town talking about Indians getting welfare as though they were just sponges on society. It was the system that had done this to his people. They had not chosen to be on welfare. It was the system that had stolen their land, penned them up on a tiny reservation with no economic base except fishing, and then had their right to fish taken away. The people had paid a terribly high price for this welfare, and Sam was