

Some Popular Misconceptions about Indigenous People

1. Indigenous people don't pay taxes.

Maybe not the same taxes on land and housing, but we do pay taxes. Except for a few items, gas and tobacco products bought in our convenience stores, all the rest of our buying power is taxable. Much of our major business and personal spending is done in the urban centres and is not tax exempt. For every dollar we spend in our community at least nine dollars is spent elsewhere to purchase food, clothing, school supplies, cars, trucks, major appliances and other household items. Bands spend all of their capital dollars elsewhere to purchase construction, electrical and plumbing supplies, office furnishings, equipment and supplies. We do our banking at the major banks.

2. Indigenous people get FREE housing.

Most of our housing comes under Canada Mortgage and Housing. Other than the trades personnel employed from our communities, the rest of the housing dollars go elsewhere, including interest on bank loans. Our members do pay rent, some of which goes towards the Band's housing maintenance program.

3. Indigenous people get free education.

For many Indigenous families living off reserve, education dollars are not readily available and they rely on scholarships, student loans and bursaries to pay for post-secondary education. Some members receive funds to cover only books and tuition costs. The federal Indian Affairs Branch makes payments to the schools in which Indigenous children attend. Those amounts are in most cases greater than the dollars paid for non-Indigenous students.

4. Indigenous people own lots of land.

Just go into any Band office and ask to see all their reserve land. Much of it has right of way encroachments or is on rocky or steep slopes therefore unusable. Under the Indian Act 'land is held in trust for the use and benefit of Indians'. The 'use and benefit of' is subject to the Indian Act. Reserve land cannot be used as collateral for business or other loans. Neither the Band nor the individual can hold title to land. We have to await approval from the Indian Affairs Minister in order to hold land on reserve, lawfully. Trying to develop on reserve is a lengthy process many developers do not wish to even deal with.

5. Indigenous people 'depend' on welfare.

Some do because of the lack of employment. The unemployment in most Indigenous communities ranges from 50-80 per cent. Many individuals out there depend on seasonal employment. And some need welfare to supplement their unemployment benefits, if in fact they are eligible for benefits.

SOURCE:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120801143403/http://www.cariboolinks.com:80/ctc/misconceptions.html>