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The Colonial Present: The Role of Ignorance and the Rule of Law

Kerry Coast

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No treaties were made with indigenous nations residing in those territories where now there is a Canadian province called British Columbia. Instead, a breathtaking policy of criminalization, assimilation and land rights and sovereignty extinguishment has been vigorously carried out against them. Present day governments continue that approach, now 150 years old, in processes which have recently been re-named and cosmetically improved but remain unconstitutional and are prohibited by the 1948 Genocide Convention, which terms as genocide, inter alia, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. Neither Britain nor Canada nor the settlers of British Columbia themselves have ever honourably addressed the peoples whose lands and resources form British Columbia. The indigenous nations in what is now called British Columbia have never joined Canada but had citizenship imposed on them. The province of BC has never fulfilled Canadaâ€™s constitutional requirements of purchasing lands from the indigenous owners before settling. The ongoing colonization of British Columbia relies on the settler populationâ€™s indifference to the indigenous peoplesâ€™ plights and rights. The Colonial Present documents the colonizerâ€™s manufacture of a new mythology to dehumanize the native peoples and strip them of their rightful place. The interests of resource industries have dominated accounts of indigenous peoples throughout the mainstream media, the academic presses and the courts. They have substantially corrupted and impoverished the non-native understanding of indigenous peoples on whose homelands they live and work, and to which they seem to feel entitled. The indigenous nations and individuals have suffered excruciating losses. But the highest expression of official BC aspirations for reconciliation is only that they should release title to their homelands, accept a small financial, land and program funding settlement, and submit to the British Columbia Treaty Commission agenda reducing them, in legal terms, to incorporated associations exercising management capacities barely distinguishable from those of BC municipalities, while by fee simple title, their lands and rich resources are ceded to the Queen. This book is an exploration of how such a stunning string of events has happened, and British Columbians continuing attempts to rationalize them.

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