

*Article written for the Edmonton Journal on December 6, 2006 regarding consultation with Aboriginal communities.*

My name is Peter Politis and I am the Senior Consultant for For Evergreen Innovative Strategies Inc. which specializes in bridging the gap between Aboriginal and industrial Interests.

I would like to comment on an article written by Gordon Jaremko in your Dec 4 2006 edition titled "Finally, A Way To Get A Grip On Consultations"

I found Mr. Jaremko's assessment of the issues to be well done and enjoyed his journalistic objectivity. At the same time, I noticed that some of his conclusions were a little misguided and thought I would offer some perspective to help him along with this issue.

Mr. Jaremko concluded that Judge Phalens order to "stop hearings until the Community is brought into the process" was a dead end solution. Nothing could be farther from reality. In fact, just previous to this Mr. Jaremko correctly identified that the path taken by the government and the industry "only took into account Federal and Provincial jurisdictional niceties". Ironically, I will suggest that this is the real "dead end" when attempting to consult with Aboriginals - Communities must legally being involved in development. As long as governments and developers trivialize the legal importance of Aboriginal rights and just do the "niceties" instead, while relying on the convoluted and costly Judicial system to solve the problems, there will always be expensive confrontation.

Mr. Jaremko suggests by this article that the inception of a lead person or Negotiator from the government will somehow become the revolutionary solution to Consultation. While I respect Mr. Jaremko's thoughts on this my experience in the Aboriginal arena forces me to smile (just a little) at this misguided false hope.

The real fundamental problem here is not some organizational flaw in this system,. It is that Aboriginal Rights have remained undefined since their recognition in 1982. If you will excuse the fascesciousness, as long as these rights remain undefined the Pope could be in charge and the result will remain the same - conflict. Until rights are defined, governments will not and cannot act. Until governments act, Industry will be stuck with trying to manage convoluted Political social issues in the unforgiving environment of economics.

Without intending on being cynical, A Federally appointed bureaucrat to lead the process in an attempt to "Create Order" will work as well as the Indian Agent did not too long ago (it won't).

The real and sustainable solution lies in understanding the emotional and psychological needs of Aboriginal People and in defining a process that not only recognizes this, but recognizes Industry's needs as well. Unfortunately, those charged with this responsibility

still seem to be frightened by the confusion around the undefined rights and remain convinced that the only solution is the Legal one. It isn't, real solutions are being implemented across the country that do not involve traversing the legal quagmire. They simply involve approaching the problem from a different angle.