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# How to achieve balance between environmental stewardship and the resource economy

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Independent Senator Mary Jane Mccallum

Individuals, corporations, and governments all want an easy solution to finding a balance between responsible environmental stewardship and a prosperous resource economy. These are two mutually exclusive concepts-or are they? In **Canada**, we never give up hope.

We know it is a long road back to justice that we all have to traverse, together, without the resources-natural, human, and environmental-that we had in the past. When we talk about finding balance now, we can no longer go back to the abundance of the past. This is because actions of man, in the pursuit of wealth, have contributed to so much destruction. We must be cognizant of what has been done to our lands in the name of profit and what we do now to ensure our generations to come will remain safe in the future.

In **Canada**, whether or not we like to acknowledge it, this balance rests between resource extractive companies and Indigenous communities. There is no way around this discourse. As First Nations, we have been unilaterally relegated to provincial jurisdiction despite our federal treaties. As First Nations, we struggle to find stability through protection of the **Canadian** government in our own homeland. Why is that? Especially when **Canada** has unilaterally given itself the sacred responsibility of being entrusted to care for Indians and Indian Lands yet has never adequately fulfilled that responsibility.

**Canada** acknowledges that Indigenous peoples and their legal traditions and societies dominated this country before explorers arrived-explorers who would not have survived without the help and compassion of the Indigenous peoples. These explorers then laid claim to what was not theirs once they were learned the lay of the land.

We still have these explorers on our lands today; those who continue to lay waste to the land and our lives. They continue such actions to this day.

Since the arrival of these explorers, "civilizing" Indigenous peoples because they didn't practice neoliberalist ways of marketing and individualism was a common excuse to justify the assimilation and insubordination of Indigenous peoples. People argue that history should remain in the past, but it cannot. This country's traditions, philosophies, and justifications have shaped the land and its peoples; accomplished through the actions of partisan politics.

Will we ever get past the discourse of jurisdictional issues that exist between provinces and First Nations? They were delegated what was our jurisdiction-how do you reconcile what was stolen?

Partisan politics cannot think long-term and therefore cannot plan long-term. Provinces and their unilateral inheritance of treaty rights surrounding childcare, natural resources, health care-all matters that are deeply ours. It places the country into a deep and abiding social division. Why is our country so intent on division?

What are the root causes that have led to this imbalance in the relationship between a responsible environmental stewardship and a prosperous resource economy? Only after society, at its various levels, has had this uncomfortable conversation will it start to find its way back to ensuring that our future generations will inherit clean land, air, and water. The initial conversation has to be between Indigenous women and resource extractive companies.

"Truth." Such an easy word to say and so very difficult to practice. "Nothing exists in isolation." Such an easy concept to understand but also easy to ignore.

How, then, do we move from a climate of destruction through resource extraction to one that strives to live in harmony with all living things, while respecting their environments?

In the CBC opinion piece entitled, "[Our colonial history, the colonial agenda and Bill C-15](#)," Wendy Lynn Lerat, a professor at the First Nations University of **Canada**, states:

"UNDRIP provides hope for a more just, sustainable, and decolonized future at a time in history when ecosystems are collapsing as a consequence of global over-exploitation of Creation. Some call this 'development,' but in reality, it's a time of human-caused climate change unprecedented in its magnitude and reach."

How do we bring the proponents of colonialism and capitalism to the table to take accountability for what they have wrought? That is the main problem; thoughts take their own form of being-colonialism and capitalism-but they will not come to the table for discussion and resolution.

Independent Senator **Mary Jane McCallum** represents Manitoba and is a member of the **Senate** Energy, the Environment, and Natural Resources Committee.

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