

MYTHS SURROUNDING FIRST NATIONS

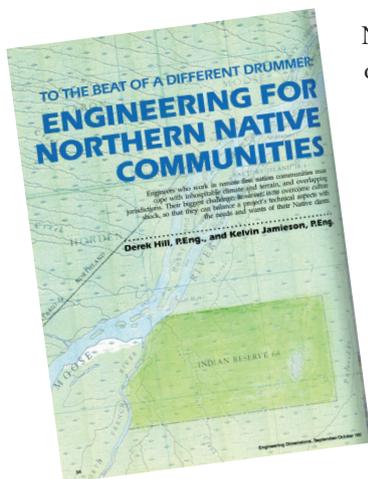
In the May/June 2016 issue, I was disappointed to see the letter from a fellow engineer entitled “Fuel cells at what cost?” (*Engineering Dimensions*, p. 77). As a practising engineer and a member of my governing council for my First Nation, reading this letter in my professional magazine is, to say the least, upsetting, as it is a stark reminder of how deeply-embedded myths surrounding First Nations continue to misguide the profession.

The letter perpetuates several myths, including:

- Taxpayers pay for everything on First Nations;
- The UNDRIP will impede natural resource development;
- Any development involving First Nations will cost development companies millions; and
- First Nations lack the capacity for management and operation.

While it is not my purpose here to provide a history lesson to my profession regarding First Nations in general, the letter contains many fallacies and assumptions about First Nations that are concerning. To obtain factual information on these issues, I would invite my fellow engineer to start by reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report and move on to the history of treaties in general within Ontario.

My purpose here in responding is twofold. The first is to express my deep disappointment that *Engineering Dimensions* would allow such a letter to be printed in the first place. The letter does not directly address the technical merits of the aforementioned article itself but rather presents unsubstantiated statements as though they are fact. The letter may be considered as a propagation of hate speech as defined by the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. The comments can be viewed as vicious, dehumanizing and marginalization against an ethnic population. It is no longer sufficient to hide behind a general disclaimer that “The ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of the association...” Propagation of hate speech through any media that allows for it must be held accountable, especially professional publications.



My second purpose is to provide a voice for my fellow First Nations engineering professionals who are currently practising or ones who are considering an engineering career. We come from a number of unique and distinctive First Nations cultures in Ontario with inherent rights and a long and rich history of traditions and language. Yes, there will be individuals with skewed perceptions of the reality of our people but there are professionals who do educate themselves with fact, and we as First Nations professionals have a role in that education.

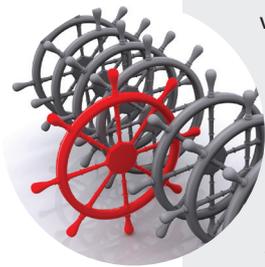
One of my fondest memories still remains the publishing of articles that I wrote for *Engineering Dimensions* in September/October 1992 outlining my work for First Nations communities as an engineer. I would encourage ED to reprint my platform article as it is still relevant today as it was in 1992.

The letter from my fellow engineer illustrates the alarming level of misconceptions that remain in our profession. It is incumbent as professionals to ensure we fully understand the social, historical and human elements of an issue before we allow ourselves to speak on it.

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OUR PRIVILEGED SELF-REGULATION

The May/June 2016 issue of *Engineering Dimensions* contains an inaugural address by President George Comrie, P.Eng., FEC, of profound importance to all PEO members who aspire to sustain our self-regulated profession (“What it means to be a self-regulating profession,” p. 3). Self-regulation for Canadian professionals is not guaranteed as recently discovered in British Columbia as errant real estate professionals are now under direct government supervision.



This privilege, granted by permissive provincial legislation, was accompanied by responsible graduate Canadian engineers who, with the Kipling oath, pledged their services in both technical and professional practice to the safety and well-being of society.

President Comrie’s leadership guidance for members strengthens the pursuit of PEO for developing and maintaining excellence in their fields of practice. Such excellence is fostered by initial and sequential examination of member competence in their practice with assurance of continuing education in a world of rapidly changing technological sciences and society objectives.

With dedicated commitment, PEO in plurality with designated officials and committees, accept our “social contract” by executing and updating its key legislated duties with assistance of skilled and trained staff. This includes recognition of the minority membership directly serving the public,

who have statutory regulation. This execution is accompanied by input from a wider swath of the profession, including a geographical representative chapter system and with volunteer-staffed committees supported and guided by managerial staff.

An update of the human resources policy for volunteer qualifications and their longevity on specific advisory committees can also be appropriate as part of social concern for ongoing training and education. By putting our house in order, as called for by President Comrie, we will have an improved position for maintaining public confidence in professional engineering.

President Comrie in the May/June *Engineering Dimensions* has also responsibly called on the provincial government to reconcile their apparent inattention to the long-standing “industrial exception” with the risk it sustains for non-registered persons to practise applied science and engineering without identified measures for public safety. Without such measures, public safety is at risk as evidenced recently with the insufficiently tested Tesla automobile on automatic pilot resulting in death. While corporate responsibility prevails for such failures it is always after the fact, dealing only with compensation as a substitute for preventing injury and death.

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CORRECTION NOTICE

In “Order of Honour recipients celebrated at gala,” *Engineering Dimensions*, July/August 2016, page 14, we incorrectly stated that Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne appeared in a video message at the gala. Rather, it was Steve Orsini, secretary of the cabinet and head of the Ontario Public Service, who attended and spoke on behalf of the premier. Deputy Minister of Transportation Stephen Rhodes also attended the gala as a special guest.

Letters to the editor are welcomed, but must be kept to no more than 500 words, and are subject to editing for length, clarity and style. Publication is at the editor’s discretion; unsigned letters will not be published. The ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions and policies of the association, nor does the association assume responsibility for the opinions expressed. Emailed letters should be sent with “Letter to the editor” in the subject line. All letters pertaining to a current PEO issue are also forwarded to the appropriate committee for information.

Address letters to naxworthy@peo.on.ca.