

Submission #18

Thank you to the Law Society of Alberta and the My Experience Project for creating and holding this space to receive our experiences.

During my career, I have experienced racial discrimination and stereotyping in various forms, all of which have had a lasting impact on me as a lawyer, a Commissioner, and as a human being.

While serving as counsel [REDACTED] who regularly dealt with Indigenous peoples, General Counsel would often derogatorily mimic a “native accent” when matters involving Indigenous peoples arose, and she would make stereotypical and racist assumptions about the motivations and credibility of Indigenous peoples involved in adjudicative processes, which tended to carry through to the advice being given to decision-makers.

While serving as in-house counsel to oil and gas companies, I frequently and regularly encountered racial discrimination and stereotyping towards Indigenous peoples from my General Counsels as well as Executive Teams. The most common themes included:

- Indigenous peoples only want money, are lazy and have no rights or interests worthy of protection or respect;
- Indigenous people are all drunks (or worse) and can’t be trusted;
- Indigenous peoples will accept whatever is thrown their way and should be grateful that anything is even thrown their way;
- Indigenous peoples have worldviews and beliefs that are primitive and nonsensical;
- Reconciliation is pointless and can never be achieved so no sense bothering to try; and
- Indigenous peoples don’t have it that bad so why can’t they make something of themselves.

I truly hope this project will shed some light on the issues facing the Alberta legal community in this area and serve to acknowledge and validate that these things have happened and continue to happen to us. I also hope that the dialogues and lessons from these experiences will light our way going forward on the reconciliation path and enhance our collective journeys upon it.