

Wisdom of Our Elders: The Contempt for Memory in Canadian Indigenous Policy

By Peter Best

What do children owe their parents? Love, honour and respect are a good start. But what about parents who were once political figures - does the younger generation owe a duty of care to the beliefs of their forebears?

Two recent cases in Canada highlight the inter-generational conflict at play in Canada over Indigenous politics. One concerns Prime Minister Mark Carney and his father Robert. The other, a recent book on the life of noted aboriginal thinker William Wuttunee edited by his daughter Wanda. In each case, the current generation has let its ancestors down and left all of Canada worse

William Wuttunee was born in 1928 in a one-room log cabin reserve Saskatchewan, where he endured a childhood of poverty and hardship. Education was his release, and he went on to become the first aboriginal to practise law in Western Canada: he also served as the inaugural president of the

National Indian Council in

Wuttunee rose to prominence with his controversial 1971 book Ruffled Feathers, that argued for an end to Canadian's Indian Reserve system, which he believed trapped his people in poverty and despair. He dreamed of a Canada where Indigenous people lived side-by-side all other Canadians and enjoyed the same rights and benefits.

Such an argument for true racial equality put Wuttunee at odds with the illiberal elite of Canada's native community, who still believe in a segregated, race-based relationship between Indigenous people and the rest of Canada. For telling truth to power, Wuttunee was ostracized from the native political community and banned from his own reserve. He died in 2015.

This year, William's daughter Wanda had the opportunity to rectify the past mistreatment of her father. In the new book Still Ruffling Feathers – Let Us Put Our Minds Together, Wanda, an academic at the

University of Manitoba, and several other contributors claim to "fearlessly engage" with her father's ideas. Unfortunately, the authors mostly seek to bury, rather than praise, Wuttunee's vision of one Canada for all.

Wanda claims her father's desire for a treaty-free, reserve-free Canada would be problematic today because it would have required giving up all the financial and legal goodies that have since been showered upon Indigenous groups. But there is a counterfactual to consider. What if Indigenous Canadians had simply enjoyed the same incremental gains in income, health and other social indicators as the rest of the country during this time?

Ample evidence on the massive and longstanding gap between native and nonnative Canadians across a wide variety of socio-economic indicators suggest that integration would have been the better bet. The life expectancy for Indigenous Albertans, for example, is a shocking 19 years shorter than for a nonnative Albertans. William Wuttunee was right all along about the damage done by the reserve system. And yet nearly all of the contributors to Wanda's new book refuse to admit this fact.

The other current example concerns Robert Carney, who had a long and distinguished career in aboriginal education. When the future prime minister was a young boy, Robert was the principal of a Catholic day school in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories; he later became a government administrator and a professor of education. What he experienced throughout his lifetime led the elder Carney to outspoken become an defender of Canada's nowresidential controversial schools.

When the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) attacked the legacy of residential schools, Carney penned a sharp critique. He pointed out that the frequent claims that students were there against their will; in fact, parents had to sign an application form to enroll their

children in a residential school. Carney also bristled at the lack of context in the RCAP report, noting that the schools performed a key social welfare function in caring for "sick, dying, abandoned and orphaned children."

In the midst of the 2025 federal election campaign, Mark Carney was asked if he agreed with his father's positive take on residential schools. "I love my father, but I don't share those views," he answered. Some Indigenous activists have subsequently accused Robert Carney of residential school "denialism" and "complicity" in the alleged horrors of Canada's colonial education system.

Like Wanda Wuttunee, Mark Carney let his father down by distancing himself from his legacy for reasons of political expediency. He had an opportunity to offer Canadians a courageous and fact-based schools were not jails despite perspective on a subject of great current public interest by drawing upon his intimate connection with an expert in the field. Instead, Mark

Carney caved to the requirements of groupthink. As a result, his father now stands accused of complicity in a phony genocide.

As for William Wuttunee, he wanted all Canadians - native and non-native alike - to be free from political constraints. He rejected racial segregation, discrimination and identity politics in all forms. And yet in "honouring" his life's work, his daughter misrepresents his legacy by sidestepping the core truths of his central belief.

No one doubts that Wanda Wuttunee and Mark Carney each loved their dads, as any son or daughter should. And there is no requirement that a younger generation must accept without question whatever their parents thought. But in the case of Wuttunee and Carney, both offspring have deliberately chosen to tarnish their fathers' legacies in obedience to a poisonous ideology that promotes the entirely un-Canadian ideal of permanent racial segregation and inequity. And all of Canada is the poorer for it.

Region 5% hike in 2026 utility bill

Durham Regional Council has approved the 2026 Water Supply and Sanitary Sewer User Rates, with a combined increase of 5 per cent, or approximately \$5.24 per month for an average household. The 2025 water supply and sanitary sewer user rates were also raised by 5 per cent. The region also proposes to raise by 4.8 per cent the 2026 property tax.

"I totally disagree with the Durham Region increase that was by-lawed on Wednesday regarding water and sewer rate increases," said Regional Councillor John Neal from Oshawa Ward 1. U "It is unacceptable to the homeowners of the Region of Durham to increase water and sewer rates, and by the way, the increase is well above the rate of inflation. With so many homeowners that are facing unreasonable property tax increases both at region and city, and now this increase which is on top of the property tax increases," said the councillor. "This will affect renters and business owners right across the Region of Durham, who are just trying to survive in this economy," Neal added. A Region of Durham statement said the increase supports accelerated infrastructure needs to meet provincial housing targets, ongoing maintenance and operation of the water supply and sanitary sewer systems, and several major projects including upgrades and expansion of the Whitby Water Supply Plant, and upgrades at the Corbett Creek and Courtice Water Pollution Control Plants. The approved user rates will take effect on January 1. Continued investment in the aging municipal water system is required to protect public health and the water environment to meet obligations under the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Ontario Water Resource Act. The region said the Durham water and sanitary sewer rates are below the average rate for large Ontario municipalities and are reviewed on an annual basis, with recommendations made to regional council in December. "Safe drinking water and the protection of our water environment are essential to daily life. Continued investment in these efficient and effective regional services ensures we deliver safe, reliable, and financially sustainable solutions for our residents and growing communities as mandated by the Province of Ontario in the Clean Water Act," said John Henry, Regional Chair and CEO.

Proposed 2026 Durham Property Tax Increases Durham Region: 4.8% (including DRPS) City of Pickering: 3.49% own portion

Town of Ajax: 1.28% own portion Town of Whitby: 3.49%

City of Oshawa: 3.98% own portion

Municipality of Clarington: 3% (own portion 0.99%)

Township of Scugog: 4.12% own portion

Township of Brock 4.87% (own portion 3.79%) - Township of Uxbridge: 1.28% own portion. The above tax increases may have to be approved or may automatically come into force.