

April 19, 2010

## B.C.'s 'miracle' chief as Canada's next governor-general?

By Roy MacGregor

Globe and Mail Update

*Here's to a vice-regal who would call for an end to outdated colonial notions like a British 'Queen's Representative'*

The only certainty in predicting the next governor-general is that it won't be a journalist - the launching pads for both former governor-general Adrienne Clarkson and soon-to-be-former Governor-General Michaëlle Jean.

So who better than a journalist to pitch the biggest shift in GG direction since 1952 when, finally, *Canadians* began taking over what is supposed to be the highest-ranking job in the country?

And who better to land that job than someone already more closely connected to the Crown than anyone else in the country?

A native Canadian.

**The rest of us might point to the repatriated constitution of 1982 or the British North America Act of 1867 as linkage, but the native connection goes all the way back to King George III's Royal Proclamation of Oct. 7, 1763, which is often called the "Charter of Aboriginal Rights" and is even referred to in Article 25 of the Constitutional Act of 1982.**

**In other words, it's still active.**

The names of a great many first-rate status, Metis and Inuit individuals have been suggested - former Assembly of First Nations chief Phil Fontaine, prairie native activist Jim Sinclair, Inuit leaders like Mary Simon and Sheila Watts-Cloutier - but there is a unique opportunity here for Prime Minister Stephen Harper to correct two shortcomings with one simple announcement.

Nor has there ever been a British Columbian named to the vice-regal post.

One name that keeps bubbling up - perhaps to the alarm of some native leaders and various federal bureaucrats - is Chief Clarence Louie, architect of the Osoyoos "Miracle" in B.C.'s Okanagan Valley.

Respected Vancouver Sun columnist Stephen Hume has thrown Mr. Louie's name out, and Hemas Bill Wilson, a hereditary chief of the Kwawkwewlth of Vancouver Island and a key negotiator of native rights in the constitution, says there couldn't be a better choice.

"Why not do it?" says Mr. Wilson by telephone from north of Williams Lake, where he has been attending hearings on a mine development.

"We should. But you need someone who, first and foremost, is instantly identifiable as a native. He or she should be educated, of course, and have experience - but also be photogenic. That's important for the image. That's why Clarence Louie would be perfect. He's young. He's handsome. And he won't take crap from anyone."

So true, so true. The 47-year-old Mr. Louie - who has said for years he has no national ambitions - is already a bit of a legend in native circles on both sides of the border for his no-nonsense approach to native thinking.

He took a bankrupt band and made it self-sufficient in five years. The Osoyoos have their own vineyard, golf course, resort and convention facilities - and are now considered an economic powerhouse in the B.C. interior.

But Mr. Louie is just as recognized for what he says as what he has done.

With a riveting blend of humour and "tough love," Mr. Louie's speeches are sprinkled with comments only he, with his band's success, can get away with.

"The biggest employer shouldn't be the band office."

"Blaming government - get over it."

"Indian time doesn't cut it. My first rule for success is 'Show up on time.' My No. 2 rule for success is 'Follow Rule No. 1.' "

"Our ancestors worked for a living, so should you."

"He's amazing," says Mr. Wilson, "He tells people 'Either get off your ass and work or else - 'cause you're going to be getting off welfare.' "

The prospects of such a lively personality as governor-general are intriguing - in no small part because Clarence Louie has equally strong opinions about the government and the long-standing native connection to the Crown.

He says that he and his band elders have decided it is time for all aboriginals to get off the "funded teat" of government. He recently kicked a federal official off Osoyoos land for daring to call it "the Queen's land." He says the concept of being under any protection of the "Great White Mother" is a "colonial nightmare" that still rules the lives of native people. He'd ditch the Indian Act in a heartbeat, if he could.

Historical precedents, he says, are like "wooden hockey sticks - okay for their time but useless in today's game."

If he were ever named Governor-General of Canada, Chief Clarence Louie says, he wouldn't be collecting a paycheque for winning and dining and greeting people. It wouldn't be for photo ops and reading Throne Speeches.

Instead, he'd use the office to spread his message that the time has come to move away from old colonial notions - even that of a British "Queen's Representative" in Canada - and join the real world of education and jobs and working together for the good of all.

"Quit your sniffing," he sometimes says, and has been misinterpreted as some right-wing ranter, which he is not. What he is saying is collectively let's roll up our sleeves and put an end, finally, to the unemployment rates in native communities that "make the Great Depression look like prosperous times."

"Unless I can be the 'Don Cherry' Governor-General," he says, "I don't want it. I'd probably get fired. But maybe like Don Cherry, I'd have a hell of a good ride."

So, too, would the country.

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