

Reflections on “Rupture”: Mark Carney’s New World Order & an Indigenous Response

by Janna Wale & Michaela M. McGuire

ACCORDING TO Prime Minister Mark Carney’s speech at the World Economic Forum, “if you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.” But what does that mean for Indigenous Peoples, who have long demanded a seat at the table, only to find that the table itself has been set by others – that their territories, governance, and futures remain on the menu?

Carney’s address in Davos, Switzerland earlier this month was widely praised, resulting in a rare standing ovation. It referenced “a series of crises in finance, health, energy, and geopolitics” and argued that the rules-based order that “middle powers” relied on, is no more. He argued that countries like Canada must seek alternatives to a system that can be exploited by the powerful. Coincidentally, Carney’s words reflect parallels to the relationship of power and exclusion that underscores Canada’s treatment of Indigenous Peoples.

From Davos to DRIPA

In our home province of British Columbia (BC), Premier David Eby has recently stated his government’s intent to amend the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA). Citing ill-informed and unfounded concerns about private property rights following the Quw’utsun (Cowichan) decision, Eby also plans to appeal the court decision. All of this, in addition to new provincial legislation designed to circumvent Indigenous rights, and a growing residential school denialism movement.

The recent developments in BC demonstrate the frailty of Canada’s “reconciliation efforts.” Carney’s address does not mention Indigenous Peoples, of course, or climate change – instead noting his own plans to fast-track energy projects which will exacerbate the overriding of Indigenous rights and title.

Since contact, Canada’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples has been unbalanced, extractive, and harmful. These historical patterns are rebranded through time, from taming the wilderness in the contact era to the more contemporary idea of economic necessity – all in the service of legitimizing resource extraction. When Indigenous rights and title stand in the way of the “national interest,” Canada turns to legislation, the courts (when convenient), and political discourse.

Make no mistake, the system of intensifying great power Carney warns about *is* Canada – still a part of the same “rules-based order,” but in many ways, the description of “great powers” is more convincingly apt when applied to Canada.

In his remarks, Carney reaffirmed Canada’s stated “commitment to fundamental values: sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the prohibition of the use of force except when consistent with the UN Charter and respect for human rights.” At the same time, the urgency of present political moments can make it difficult to discern ongoing violations of our human rights (Whyte 2019). In the United States, this is unfolding in real time, with the threat of state-sanctioned armed violence from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). As tensions continue to escalate, there have been increased concerns on both sides of the imposed border about the violations of our Indigenous and human rights. Engaging with Carney’s call to be “clear-eyed,” we have an opportunity to reflect critically on the relationship between public commitments and their realizations in practice.

Canada has a long history of using militarized law enforcement to quell Indigenous resistance at home – UN Charter, human rights, UNDRIP, even Canadian law (a rules-based order) notwithstanding. This is justified by appealing to the “national interest.” The Oka Crisis, the Mi’kmaq Lobster Fishery Dispute, Fairy Creek Blockade, and the Coastal Gaslink conflict all represent militarized conflict over the extraction of natural resources within Indigenous territories. Given this worrying trend, communities who oppose the most recently green-lit Prince Rupert Gas Transmission (PRGT) pipeline construction are concerned about troubling times ahead.

The intensification of the climate crisis, escalating geopolitical tensions, and continued undermining of Indigenous rights all contribute to the disconnections that are rapidly becoming apparent within and between Nations. As Carney observes, “we are in a rupture, not a transition.” The hypocrisy in this statement is apparent to Indigenous people who have faced the brunt of Canadian power. But there is more than hypocrisy here – there is an erasure of Indigenous participation in Canada’s approach to the post-rules based order.

If there is one key difference between the international order and the Canadian order, it’s Carney’s reference to “rupture.” There has not yet been a rupture in the rules governing Indigenous people and the Crown. But, there should be.

New Constellations of Co-Resistance

It is time for Indigenous people to seriously seek out alternatives; to turn our attention towards forming what Leanne Simpson calls constellations of co-resistance (2017). These constellations uphold our responsibilities to each other and to our territories; a re-framing that will involve active, practical work as well as intentional political engagement (Gould, Martinez, and Hoelting 2023). It is in these constellations of co-resistance, these relationalities, that we can work towards our collective liberation (Simpson 2017; Starblanket and Stark 2018).

Recentering relationality offers a more sustainable path forward: one grounded in responsibility, reciprocity, and shared authority rather than accommodation, coercion, and legislative strong-arming. Now is not the time to succumb to the powers that be, or to fall prey to divisionary state tactics we see increasingly on display in the era of

“economic reconciliation.” Instead, we need to move beyond incremental changes to begin to address the power structures and oppressive systems of the “old world order” that we are still very much living in.

Indigenous internationalism and solidarity involve challenging imposed and figurative borders, and “decentering the state” (Corntassel, 2021, p. 73). By doing so, we actively resist the colonial norms of individualism, cognitive imperialism, and extractivism. As Alley (2025) argues “solidarity is...both our greatest strength and our greatest weapon in our common struggles for liberation, self-determination, justice, and human rights (p.165).” Accountability and responsibility to our Nations, relationalities, and Indigenous internationalisms has transformative potential. Of course, this is a vision many of us subscribe to. Now we must do the work of realizing it in tangible, practical terms.

Just as Carney proposes to middle powers – it is time to strategize. To take our territories, governance, and futures off the menu by resisting the fragmentation of our relationalities within and between Nations. This resistance will not be without challenge. As Starblanket and Stark (2018) note, “through our choices we have the potential to actively change the world we inhabit (p.177).” Coalition-building, coming together in real time and space, building our Nation-to-Nation and international constellations of co-resistance is still possible.

Let us – Indigenous Peoples – take one sure thing from Carney’s address:

“the powerful have their power. But we have something too – the capacity to stop pretending, to name reality, to build our strength at home, and to act together.”

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