

Canada Day 2022: Mourning the Victims of the Nations “Residential Schools”

Evolving our national narrative with Kari Polanyi Levitt and Richard Sanders.
With Transcript

By [Michael Welch](#), [Kari Polanyi Levitt](#), and [Richard Sanders](#)

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Repeat broadcast from July 2, 2021.

On June 14, 2022. Friends and family met up to celebrate Kari Polyani Levitt’s 99th birthday.

While Kari’s health is fragile, she constitutes a powerful voice in the understanding and analysis of the global political economy. here first book, entitled with tremendous for

Below is the transcript of her interview with Michael Welch in July of last year

“Many “corrections” are still needed to rid Canada of the structural violence and systemic racism that has evolved here over the past five centuries. One step in this process is to revise our understanding of history and to do away with national creation myths that portray Cartier and Cabot as heroic founders of Canada. We should instead acknowledge them as the official founding criminals of this fictive nation which has been built on a captivating web of myths that continue to deceive.” – Richard Sanders, quoted in Press for Conversion #69

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The 154th anniversary of the birth of Canada as a country was marked not by festive celebrations, but by rallies crewed by [community members dressed in orange shirts](#) to mourn the far too many victims of the nation’s residential schools.

Thousands showed up in gatherings in several cities including [Regina](#), [Toronto](#), [London](#) and [Montreal](#). Vancouver actually had [city hall and the Burrard Bridge lit up](#) in lights of orange. There was a [massive day of revelation](#) full of sacred pipe ceremonies, healing dance and rows of the shoes of little children on Parliament Hill in the capital of Ottawa. And in Winnipeg, in addition to the hundreds of people marching in the downtown, a [small group actually defaced and then toppled the statues](#) of two very famous monarchs, the past Queen Victoria and the present Queen Elizabeth.

It seems unusual to abandon, in some cases, the usual fireworks in favor of sentiments regretting the mistreatment of an entire people. Although it is well deserved. The historical persecution of those people from whom this land was gifted to us must once and for all register on those people who are rewarded for the mortal sins of our fathers.[2]

And what kind of a future can we look forward to? As the nation's elite seemed to find wealth in more and more continental integration with the United States, a string of initiatives from growing dependence on US foreign direct investment to 'free trade' deals and the like saw this country seeming to lose its sovereignty to Uncle Sam.

The prime minister said days in advance that Canada Day should be a day of reflection rather than a day of merriment:

“Many, many Canadians will be reflecting on reconciliation, on our relationship with Indigenous Peoples and how it has evolved and how it needs to continue to evolve rapidly. We have so many things we need to work on together and I think this Canada Day, it will be a time of reflection on what we've achieved as a country but on what more we have to do.”[3]

Looking at ourselves through the mirror of an honest ethical inventory is the theme of this week's special audio portrait on the Global Research News Hour.

In the first half of the show we have the great pleasure of having Kari Polanyi Levitt join us. She focuses her attention on how Canada is losing its sovereignty and its independence on the world stage and on how we might be able to claim the soul of a proud nation once again.

In the second half of the program, we are joined once again by Richard Sanders. He outlines more about the way we have continued to elevate our country's history on narratives which like those that animated the Church-run residential schools, are fictitious.

Kari Polanyi Levitt is a Canadian economist and Emeritus Professor of Economics from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, as well as the daughter of the famous thinker Karl Polanyi. Her books include [From the Great Transformation to the Great Financialization: On Karl Polanyi and Other Essays: Kari Polanyi Levitt \(2013\)](#), [Reclaiming Development: Independent Thought and Caribbean Community \(2005\)](#), and [Silent Surrender: the Multinational Corporation in Canada \(1970\)](#).

Richard Sanders is the coordinator of the [Coalition Opposed to the Arms Trade](#), and has a history of involvement in anti-war activism that spans three decades. He is also a researcher and the publisher and editor of [Press For Conversion](#) Magazine. In 2017 he released issue #69 dealing with what he calls [Fictive Canada: Indigenous Slaves and the Captivating Narratives](#).

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Transcript- Interview with Professor Polanyi Levitt, June 30, 2021

Global Research: Since you wrote that article 50 years ago to the present, there seems to have been more integration between our two countries, right?

Kari Polanyi Levitt: There has been, yes.

GR: I mean is it something that you may have foreseen way back when? Or is this more of a, I mean, from the time you wrote that book to today, is this pretty much the kind of result you would have expected?

KPL: Well, yes, I think those of us who were concerned about the way in which Canadian business was selling themselves out to American multinationals, we were concerned that it would lead to a loss of sovereignty. And I think it has. It has happened. We have less sovereignty than we had some time ago.

GR: The growth since that time, I mean, we've had their Free Trade Agreements, right? In the 1980s the Canada US Free Trade Agreement, the NAFTA, and we had military...our militaries became more and more tightly connected. Which strengthened continentalism even further. Where all of these separate decisions just added onto US investments to increase US control of Canada or was it part of the same pattern. First you increase investment then you try more and more integration—

KPL: I would think, yes, part of the same pattern.

GR: Yeah, so are you saying that, what I'm asking is, how far back had the various stages of integration been planned? Is it kind of like a timeline where you say, now this, and then, and then we're going to throw in a Free Trade Agreement when the time is right? Or did this idea of free trade and then other aspects of integration just sort of come along when the time was right?

KPL: Well, the Free Trade Agreement of the kind we're talking about were a global phenomenon they were not unique to Canada. But we had what they like to call globalization which really meant they... the power of international capital, particularly the financial capital. What I would like us to talk about is that as we are approaching Canada Day and many people are questioning whether they should celebrate or rather concern themselves about the phenomenon of the residential schools and the young people in the unmarked graves. I like to talk about the present and what happened since I wrote that book. It is an important book. And it remains important.

GR: Well for certain, I mean, in 2021 we are recognizing now that the residential schools have definitely had a, have been a horrific part of our past. But have we really come to the point where...is something special happening now, or are we just seeing our whole, are we just seeing our whole... just finding a way of shifting our dependence on the residential schools to something else. Because it seems as if, for all the acco-... everything that the prime minister is saying, Indigenous peoples are still being subjected to brutal things like

the higher-than-average representation in the jails for example. What is your take on that?

KPL: The fact is that the way that this country was built, it was built by, by people who saw the Indigenous people in a very negative way. And the residential schools would never have happened if it were not part of the culture of this country. And I think many people are seeing that this is regrettable and bad. And that something should be done to improve the relationship between the settler communities that constitute the Canadian population and the Indigenous people.

GR: Yeah, do you...do the signs show that we are going to be going in that direction?

KPL: I'm not sure. There are obviously an increasing number of Canadians who are only now learning about this, and they are concerned. But to tell you the truth, when you called me about discussing foreign policy, I thought that's what we were going to do. And what I think is that Canada, in many ways, has a good name in the world but we are not acting on our own initiative. We are following in the wake of the United States in foreign policy. And I think that this is a very dangerous situation because no matter how much I consider the existence of challenges facing humanity, one of them is how to prevent ourselves from engaging in mutual destruction by the use of atomic weapons. And because we are a party to NATO, Canada is not following an independent foreign policy but his only going along with whatever is the current concern of the United States. I would like us to exert our independence, and that is one of the advantages of having nations.

GR: The military is...there's no clear division between the militaries, but can you see the nation in any way...I mean are we so united that we can't break loose even if we wanted to? I mean, when it comes to votes at the UN on nuclear missiles or anything like that, I mean do we even have the power any more to stand up against the United States?

KPL: We have as much or as little as we ever had before. We don't have less. Although the scandal of the residential schools is a negative. It reduces the legitimacy with which Canada can play a role on the international stage. It's a blot on our record. And for all kinds of good reasons, something has to be done. But I am thinking about is more, what could Canada do as a medium power in the world with a good reputation, and its sort of commitment to the United Nations. And I think that we should examine what has been our foreign policy.

GR: Is there a particular foreign policy where we could start expressing our independent way of thinking that we could distance ourselves from the United States?

KPL: Well, the obvious one is the field of diplomacy, I mean, we had developed a lot of independent economic and political relations with China, which is the up-and-coming power in the next century.

GR: What about in terms of military policy, getting out of any relationship with the United States on shooting down missiles, well basically what NORAD does, you know, is that something we could even break out of?

KPL: Well, maybe so, but I think more to the point, we should develop our independent relations with other countries. What is clear, is that in the world, that we have to have a... what do they call it again...a world order that is multinational. In other words, there are a number of legitimate political entities in this world who have to be included in a multi-polar world. And that multi-polar world would include China and the United States and

Canada. But we should be included, not as a satellite of the United States, but on our own independence. And I think we have, we, the government of Canada made a big mistake in acceding to this demand by the Americans to arrest the lady representing the very important IT company. That was a...because what she was accused of was a violation of US sanctions against Iran, and this is not a criminal act in Canadian law, because Canada did not agree to sanctions against Iran. So that was a big mistake, and it was done entirely because our government said, under some compulsion to act in the way that it did. There was a compulsion to play a subsidiary role regarding relation with the US. And we have done huge damage to Canada's relationship with China and there are individuals now, Canadian individuals in China who are paying the price.

GR: I know that...there's an election coming up possibly this fall, I'm wondering if your views on Canada's need to distinguish itself could possibly play any role in this election and who would you need more inclined to vote towards?

KPL: I don't know...I couldn't announce it. I know I would not vote for the Conservatives. I do not trust them. So, I don't know yet who I'm going to vote for. But what I would like to see the Government of Canada do is to take some initiative in the matter of banning new nuclear weapons. And there was a motion introduced in the General Assembly of the UN some months ago to that effect. And Canada shamefully did not express an opinion in favour of what is clearly the popular view of the majority of member states of the UN.

GR: Kari Polanyi Levitt, I really appreciate everything you've had to say today, and I know that we're kind of getting to the end of her time, but I just wanted to offer you the opportunity to close with any thoughts that you may have that you, that we as Canadians can be more alert to as we move forward toward and beyond the next election.

KPL: Well, I think that Canada should certainly consider its membership of NATO because, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and it is a military alliance and in recent years it has been involved in military conflicts in the regions of the Middle East which are having really nothing to do with the North Atlantic. And I don't think that... I think we have to, we should reconsider, and the reasons why it might be difficult for the Canadian government to take a position against nuclear weapons is precisely because North America is so closely integrated with the US, and the US would never never agree to that request. I think I will just leave it there.

GR: Professor Polanyi Levitt I think we've come to the end, and I wanted to know how, I feel extremely privileged to have this conversation with you, and I wish you all the best in your coming years.

KPL: That is very kind of you, thank you. And I really like the work that *Global Research* is doing. I disagree with them about some things, about global warming, but that's it, a minor disagreement, in my opinion. And one other thing. In order as a Canadian I can again feel proud of, to be a national of this country, our government has to take some action, whether it's in the area of international diplomacy or some other area, because I do not see it as accountable to be only ashamed of the Government of Canada for what they have done relationship with the Indigenous people. I would like to feel good about the country, which has a lot of good things going for it.

GR: Yeah, that's a good way to close going into Canada Day. So that's...Well, you take care and again thank you so much for this interview.

KPL: Thank you!

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[Cowichan Valley Community Radio CICV 98.7 FM](#) serving the [Cowichan Lake](#) area of Vancouver Island, BC airs the program Thursdays at 9am pacific time.

Notes:

1. [coat.ncf.ca/P4C/69/69_8-14.htm](#)
2. Honouring for the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015); [ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf](#)
3. [www.ctvnews.ca/politics/canada-day-an-opportunity-for-reflection-pm-trudeau-1.5485651](#)

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