

Dear Friends

Following is a letter sent to the AFN by a long time friend, Lee Maracle.

Lee is an indigenous activist who supported the Palestinian struggle since the 1970's. She shared the same platform with Mahmoud Darwish and Shafiq Al-Hout at a meeting we organized in 1976 during the UN Habitat Conference in Vancouver.

Lee is of Salish and Cree ancestry and a member of the Sto:loh Nation, and is the author of critically acclaimed "Ravensong", "I am Woman", "Bobbi Lee-Indian Rebel", "Daughters are Forever" and the poetry collection "Bentbox".

Hanna Kawas

On the AFN visit to Palestine

By: Lee Maracle

I have been a consistent and clear supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people to their homeland free of Israeli occupation and annihilation since 1972, so it was with much shame and chagrin that I read that the AFN sent a delegation to Israel, to commune with the Israelis and to share culture, language, religion, tradition and values. What a shock! First, this is tantamount to laying a wreath at Vorster's grave in the interest of [honoring apartheid] or traveling to the U.S. to share the values of the Custer Committee celebrating the massacre at Wounded Knee. Just exactly what values is the AFN sharing with the Israeli's?

It does not take too much historical digging to find out that Israel is the newest colonizing settler state in the world, that it displaced several million Palestinians, corralled them into refugee camps and denied them the basest of human rights. Hunger, displacement from their homelands and lack of medical care all dog the Palestinian people: the original citizens of Palestine.

Canada was a gift from Britain to the white male settlers of Canada who cleared the land, killed the Indians and Buffalo in exactly the same way that Israel [was a gift from US and Britain to the European Jews] has cleared the land of Palestinians, expropriated their villages, farms and murdered all those who resist. Both settler populations had an obligation to dispossess and oppress the Indigenous people to maintain the settler regime. Both sets of people have done so. Does Mr. Fontaine imagine that he is essentially a Euro-settler, one of Custer's boys or is he fulfilling a puppet role for Canada in the same way that Israel serves the oil interests of the United States?

The traditional values we hold dear are freedom, the end of oppression and justice for all. We have demonstrated these values as Indigenous people [the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee, the Native Study Group, Red Power advocates and Native Youth Movement in the past have all engaged in anti-colonial activism] supporting Mandela in his struggle against apartheid, the Palestinians in their struggle for liberation and Native people in our struggle for Self-determination. We want to assure the "Indians of the middle east" that we will continue this support despite the bizarre behavior of the AFN puppets.