

Criticism of fishing agreement is based on concerns, not race

Editor:

Anyone who knows me at all knows that when I see a shovel, I call it a shovel. They also know that I won't pretend everything is all right if I think it isn't. In other words, I say it like it is and sometimes some people have a problem with that. I make no apologies for that. My thought process is that if something looks smells and sounds fishy, it usually is.

An example of that is the recent fishing agreement announced between the MNR and SON. Everyone knows full well by now my thoughts on the agreement so I am going to talk a bit about the reaction to my comments.

Most people agreed with my assessment of the fishing agreement and the long-term negative effects it will have on the sports fishery. That should be no surprise to the MNR or to SON.

But I really take issue when people who disagree with someone instantly fire out the "R" word. That's what Anne Finlay-Stewart did in an article last week. I know Anne and I think she is a caring and thoughtful person. But she was way out of line in implying that by me or others disagreeing with the fishing agreement that it was based on racism. It's not true and I totally resent the insinuation. Why is it that when someone criticizes something that has a

connection to an aboriginal issue, it always comes back around to racism? I have heard people do the same thing when it comes to someone criticizing the policies of Barack Obama or criticizing something to do with a female leader. Criticizing policy has nothing to do with gender or race. Trying to stifle debate with this reaction is not right and not fair. So I ask Ann to simply throw the R card on the top shelf and leave it there.

On a personal level, I have played fastball on the same team with a number of local natives; I have coached local native kids in both fastball and hockey. Those kids were all in my home at one time or another and of those that I see from time to time, they always stop and say hi, which is something that means a lot as their former coach.

Every November I hunt with a local native man and his son. In fact his 17-year-old son shot his first deer this past fall at our camp and I must admit I got as big a kick out of his excitement at downing his first buck as I did when my own sons got their first deer. It was fantastic.

I didn't play ball with or coach



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any of these kids because they were native or because my hunting buddy is native. In all cases these guys were and are all part of a team. It matters not to me the colour of their skin.

The reason why so many of us are so upset with the fishing agreement is the long-term result it will have on the sports fishery and I will try to explain why. Part of the \$850,000 the band will receive will be used to conduct a study on whether to continue the stocking of hatchery raised fish in Georgian Bay and Lake Huron.

We already know that the natives are opposed to stocking fish of any kind, but in particular salmon. You can bet on what the result of that study will be. It will ultimately recommend that all stocking of hatchery raised fish should cease and there goes the sports fishery along with all the lost tourism dollars and 40-50 years of tireless volunteer work of local conservation clubs.

That is why I am upset with this agreement. That is why we should all be upset with the MNR. They are the body put in place to protect the whole fishery for all of us to enjoy and for our children and grand-children to enjoy. They failed us miserably.

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