

## VANCOUVER FOR SALE

The new Prime Minister got a majority of the votes. It was easy. All he had to do was put his name on the ballot. All of the other candidates decided to pull out of the race. So, 4 percent of the vote got 100 percent of the office because Harry Malcolm was unopposed. The fair haired, middle aged, real estate Wunderkind who kept flipping houses in Nelson, Terrace and Hundred Mile in the manner of his father as a realtor knew how to turn a loss into a profit. And, as his father, uncle and students in the level 100 polysci class he taught who put him on the ballot all said that when opportunity knocks, you can't say 'come around next year because I'm in the shower now'.

Harry inherited a lot when he took the oath of office to become Premier of BC. Six million people, two times that number of mountains and a whole bunch of trees. Untold reserves of minerals under the ground that, according to the geologists, were waiting for the right person to dig them up. Elements in the periodic table that were only theoretical. And chains of fast food operations that kept the population fed, satiated and overweight. Enough lumber to build two hundred British fleets of ships. AND....most importantly, the site of a special medicine wheel which the American WOKE media called the center of the universe. Or more accurately, the Centre of the Universe. And soil which was the best in Canada and the US for growing botanicals that made people forget their daily problems as well as life aspirations. But there was one problem...Malcolm became Premier because no one else really wanted the job. Or was able to handle it. The province of Canada which had the most gold under the ground was in debt. In debt to all of the other provinces. To big countries abroad, like China. And to small ones like Malta. And....they all decided one fine day to call in their debt.

Malcolm could have done as his predecessors did when presented with the financial mess created by previous Premiers that were now his responsibility to fix. Resign for reasons of poor health, wanting to spend more time with family or the ET implant in his brain telling him to be a stand up comedian instead of an upstanding Premier. It was, for the newby politician who knew nothing about politics, a simple thing to do. Recalling how he once bailed himself out of bankruptcy by selling the fountain in his last mansion to the highest bidder so he could save the rest of the dwelling from going on the auction block, Harry looked at the map of the Province he was foolish enough to take charge of.

"There's gotta be something here that we can sell to pull us out of debt to everybody," Malcolm told himself. "Some part of this Pacific Coast paradise we can spare, that brings in big time dollars instead of chump change Loonies. Some part of BC that we can do without. And that doesn't fit into the agendas of the 'good' people of our Province. A property that has outlived its usefulness, like that fountain in the oversized front lawn of the Hermitage in Alberta that I still call home. But....what beachfront overpriced, overbuilt and dysfunctional property in this province can we get rid of for top dollar?"

It was then that the TV in the new Premier's office in Victoria switched over to a speech from the Major of Vancouver, a seasoned old hack who was promising new things for the city. Things that he was finally able to deliver, if of course he was re-elected. Main Street and Hastings would be converted from a haven for homeless people and drug addicts into a multi-ethnic community filled with arts, culture and wealth where five year olds could play on the streets day or night. A film industry which would be a center for new movies and television shows instead of a place where Vancouverites were the executive producers instead of assistants to assistants who answered to 'creative bosses' from LA, New York or Toronto. A city where a tenth rather than all of any man or woman's monthly income would be sufficient to rent or own a real house with real plumbing and utilities. A city where it doesn't rain more than 340 days a year. A town where you can get to work and return home faster by driving than walking. A community where there are more sales of pharmacological products in the stores than on the streets.

There were of course people in the crowd who thought that those things could be delivered. They seemed to be rich, their skin color mostly non-white. A whole lot of them had American flag decals on their leisure suits.

It was then that an idea occurred to Harry Malcom. Sell Vancouver. Not as a tourist destination, but as an entity that can be owned by someone else. Someone rich. Someone who, maybe, could turn it into something else...eventually. That eventually being a long time in the future that is. While in the meantime, hard earned money by folks in the Interior or on the Island could stay with them instead of being poured into the sensation-filled cesspool that is Vancouver. Or as it was really known by those who seek Enlightenment, Blandcouver.

Harry Malcom never really liked Vancouver. It was a cold, dreary place. Pathologically clean. Even at the airport, at the reconstructed canoe that greeted you when you got off the plane from somewhere to someplace else, the sterile aroma of chlorine permeated the air. But, it was an economic issue now. Who would want to buy Vancouver? And for what purpose?

The most obvious buyer would be the US of course. Vancouver would be a 'clean Seattle' which could be corrupted in ways that the people on top wanted. A place where the American dollar would always be worth more than the Canadian Loonie.

China was another candidate. The term Yellow Horde and Hongcouver were already in the dictionary of descriptors voiced by podcasters free enough to say what they meant but not refined enough to get on CBC or any other legitimate, that is legally sanctioned, platform.

The Russian oligarchs could take it on as a distant vacation spot where their color coordinated yachts and mistresses dock in the harbor. Rekindling the days when the 19<sup>th</sup> century trappers and gold prospectors

from Czarist Russia sought to extend their empire to America beyond Alaska, and in climates a lot warmer.

Celebs would be the next group of people who might be interested in buying Vancouver. David Letterman said so many times that Vancouver was the most beautiful city in the world. But he never said it was the most interesting, literate or artistically innovative.

The Germans....they do love their forests. But one thing about Germans is when they came to North America they sought to live in, or near, forests where the trees were not planted or growing in neatly symmetrically drawn out rows. Such was, of course, why so many Germans lived in Interior BC. And not in or any place near the Lower Mainland, or in Vancouverized communities in the interior like Kamloops where real estate developers took it upon themselves to build further and further up any mountain their eye could see, defying the laws of gravity, building anything and everything structural, which of course included driveways and roads which were impassible if any ice or snow hit them.

The Japanese....people who, so Caucasian round eyes said, had three faces. Imitators who somehow pass themselves off as innovators, and at times could be such. Yes, they had the money and the yen to take it over.

The North Koreans...Yes, bring them in for a look see on a sunny day, let them plunk down whatever money they do have, then set the Tesla weather making machines above them to make it rain on their military parade.

And of course there were the Indians...No, not the indigenous people who were here before the Palefaces bumped into land with their sailing ships. Pakistanis and East Indians who all looked alike to White folks, who already owned all of the seven elevens in town. And the hotels, the ones that were between two and 4 stars that is, but never the 5 star gala establishments, or the half star flea bag inns where each bed came with a free set of needles used by the last occupant and cockroaches that greeted you with hand waves and dances on your face when you were trying to get to sleep. Hindus, Moslems and Shiks who, at home in Asia, were killing each other over who was correct about who God was, but who when they came to North America agreed that the Almighty was the dollar, Loonie or Bitcoin.

“Ok,” Harry said to himself as the clock in his new office ticked down to the end of the business day. And the closing bell on the stock market which was about to close at an all time low. “We’ll hold the auction tomorrow,” he said to the image of the Hawk above his window. And with that, he wrote a press release that was to be read at the International Climate Change Crisis and World Hunger banquet dinner that night, attended by delegates who flew in on their private planes, sharing opinions and strategies while dining on filet mignon, lobster and caviar. It read ‘The Auction of the Century that no

Visionary should miss'. Hosted by American celebrities from Hollywood who had second homes, mistresses and boytoys in North Van. Lured to becoming hosts of the event at Pacific Place by Malcom offering them exclusive ownership of a newly developed device that allows you to read the minds, and hearts, of your worse enemy, and closest friends.

The auction started with a simple prize for the highest bidder. A night with the Hollywood star of your choice, with them being your servant and slave. A love letter from Adolf Hitler to his gay lover in Bavaria along with pictures of the Fuhrer in drag, perhaps real or perhaps forged by the British Secret Service. The scientifically derived and tested formula for composing a National Anthem that would make even the most Pacifist Buddhist join the Army and indulge in a kill fest of anyone designated to become expendable. Then, finally, the City of Vancouver was put on the auction block, Malcom personally taking over the chair of the auctioneer. He tried his best to do the fast talking down home Kentucky auctioneering voice, but stumbled on his own tongue.

"Hey, it's a wise and hard working person who tries to be good at something he sucks at," he said by way of explanation to the representatives of no less than 20 countries and twice as many corporations. "So, who wants to own what we all are standing and sitting on. Without the other people standing on of course," he said.

A mild chuckle came from the audience. "So, the beautiful city of Vancouver that is currently owned by the Province of British Columbia."

"And stolen from us," came from the back of the room. A man with a brown face, long braids and a fringed leather jacket emerged from the shadows and strolled up to the podium with a confident, measured gait.

All eyes turned to the First Nations Chief who found out about the auction through means unknown to Malcom.

"Just kidding!" he said with a warm and understanding smile. "After what you Palefaces, from all over the world, did to the plot of land my ancestors thought you would do something good with was, well, self destructive. You cut down the trees, polluted the water, crammed two million people into a space that could sustain at most two thousand and introduced thousands of new species of two and four legged rats and cockroaches into what was a pristine forest. And if the satellites up in the sky that you turned into toxic smoke go out, you'll be left in the dark, unable to find your own balls or other body parts. And as for what any new owner of this place would have to deal with...."

The chief went on to describe every problem Vancouver had in its history and would encounter in its future. One by one, the delegates left the auction auditorium until there were only two people left standing. "Great strategy there, Chief," Malcom said to the unexpected visitor. "I suppose you want us to give you back Vancouver."

"For a price, which you will pay me and my people for clean up which is..." the Chief replied, handing the new Premiere a folded piece of paper.

"We pay YOU?! This amount!" Malcom scoffed. "That is ridiculous."

"As ridiculous as maybe making you our new Chief?" the Old Indian offered. "You'll be a hero to my people, yours and everyone who left here. You print some more money, pay it to us, take, say ten percent for yourself, leave the next Premiere of British Columbia with a bigger debt, which he, or she, will discover after they take office. And buy your way into becoming the first ancestor of Colonizers to put an end, at least locally, to Colonialism. Admired by everybody. With a shot at becoming...the first American born Canadian to become Premier of Canada. And its 14<sup>th</sup> province, the, as they are becoming now, dis-united states of America."

Malcom considered the offer, and the permutations of such. And, yes, only a fool would turn down the opportunity to pass the buck, bill and problems of his own administration to the next schlep to take office. And with that, Vancouver was bought back by the Indians for a dollar. Who, yes, as the first act, set up a series of casinos where the house always has the advantage. Where revenue from non-Canadian sources was shared equally by Malcom and his new buds. All of whom, as was always the case, would be nameless.