

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Facts don't deter the activists

When Bernard Valcourt, the federal minister of Aboriginal Affairs, committed the unpardonable sin of introducing facts to the hyper-politicized tragedy of the murders of Canadian aboriginal women last month by telling a group of Saskatchewan and Alberta Grand Chiefs that 70 per cent of the victims were, in fact, murdered by aboriginal men, he was generally roasted from coast to coast for ?blaming the victim.? Worse. He was trying to dismiss the murders as unimportant.

Valcourt, of course, was doing no such thing. What he was doing was attempting to point out that this ongoing tragedy has its roots in the social upheaval of the aboriginal system and cannot be properly addressed without getting to the root of the problem.

But alas, when the root of the problem is not what the activists want to hear, well then, Valcourt should have been fired. At the very least.

As you likely know, the opposition parties and various activists have been pushing for a national inquiry into the murdered and missing aboriginal women ever since the RCMP reported that between 1980 and 2012 some 1,017 aboriginal females have been murdered or are missing. No matter that some 90 per cent of those cases have been solved ? which obviously is of small comfort to the families involved, but is nonetheless virtually the same percentage of solved cases in the general population, putting the lie to the oft-repeated accusations that the RCMP ? and by extension the ruling Tories ? are racists because they don't put the same effort into solving aboriginal murders as they do other murders.

What's more, aboriginal men are at even greater risk of being murdered than their female counterparts ? and again, most of the murderers are also aboriginal and either family or close acquaintances ? but nobody is calling for an inquiry into that because it doesn't fit with the narrative that aboriginal women are victims of racism.

When the RCMP actually came out and supported Valcourt's figures ? after native leaders and opposition parties accused him of making them up ? several aboriginal leaders continued to pooh-pooh the statistics.

Grand Chief Bernice Martial of the Confederacy of Treaty 6 Nations said she was ?appalled? and believes the statistics are ?inaccurate and untrue.? What should appall her is the notion that 70 per cent of these women are murdered by close friends and family and are themselves aboriginal. There is, of course, racism against aboriginal women, just as there is against most segments in society. But there is no particular evidence to support the thesis that the RCMP gives a giant ho-hum when a murder victim is an aboriginal.

This notion that women are at great risk in our patriarchal society is by no means restricted to the politicizing of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

You will all be aware of the spate of sensational stories about the so-called ?rape culture? on university campuses in Canada and the United States. Never mind that statistics show that women in both countries are less likely to get raped on campus than those who are not at university ? and never mind the absurd statistics people toss around to exaggerate what is obviously a concern but nowhere near the epidemic proportions advocates would have you believe.

This search for promoting the university-women-at-grave-risk scenario led directly to a celebrated ? and appalling ? feature story in Rolling Stone magazine, purporting to describe in lurid detail the horrendous gang rape of a woman by a group of fraternity animals at the University of Virginia.

As soon as the story came out, of course, everybody assumed it was true and the university president closed down the fraternity.

That led to a series of stories across the country about how fraternities are composed of sexist pigs whose main goal in life seems to be to drink to excess and abuse any women they can get their hands on. It sure fit the feminist narrative.

It turned out, after several extensive investigations by various authorities and news outlets, that the story was a complete fabrication.

Despite that, however, and in the wake of a damning indictment of the story after a forensic review by Columbia University's Journalism School, nobody at Rolling Stone lost their jobs and in fact the feminist author of the piece ? who has admitted she took the story on faith without checking anything out ? is still welcome to write for the magazine.

Indeed, in the wake of what should have been a journalistic disaster for the special interest groups promoting the notion of a rape culture epidemic, many concluded that well, even if the story wasn't true, it could have been true, and it likely is true somewhere. There was a time in journalism and even in politics, where facts meant something. Now, alas, it's the facts that don't mean much unless they support the central thesis.

