

my friends Intototemak

Summer 2008 Vol. 37, No. 2



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Photos courtesy of MC Canada Communications

Richard Twiss, a Rosebud theologian from Washington state, brings a new perspective of faith and culture.

Bridging the Cultural Divide

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good (Genesis 1:31)

World cultures did not develop by accident. Each one, uniquely placed, exemplifies some facet of the Great Creator. Unfortunately, we tend to be more judgemental of other cultures and perspectives than we are accepting of them. We like what we like and we want everyone to feel, think and behave as we do. But that isn't how God meant it to be.

Richard Twiss, a Rosebud Lakota theologian from the state of Washington, is bringing new perspectives of faith and culture to aboriginal communities across North America and around the world. Through Wiconi

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Truth CAN Bring Reconciliation

For many of us, summer is full of inspiring and busy days, as well as days of relaxation and enjoying family and friends. Some of us will venture out of our “comfort zone” and enter new situations and territory and meet new people. May we use these opportunities to see the face of Christ in those we meet

and as opportunities for learning more of God’s revelation to other cultures in a respectful way. Each one of us needs to be willing to listen for truth, be willing to be on the “journey to reconciliation”, and be prepared to offer God’s gift of healing and hope to those around us.

We look forward to meeting and visiting with some of you at two special events in July – the times of worship, fellowship and seminars during the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly sessions in early July, as well as the adjoining bi-national Summit here on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University.

Also, while attending Native Assembly 2008 in Clinton, Oklahoma the end of July. This is always a week of challenging speakers, pertinent workshops, great fellowship, and seeing firsthand the geographical context of our hosts, which will be the Oklahoma Fellowship of Indian Mennonite Churches, whose members are mostly from the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal groups, this year. A busload is driving to Clinton from Winnipeg and several other Canadians are either driving or flying on their own. We look forward to a great week together.

March 10, 2008 was a powerful evening in Winnipeg. Leaders of the four major denominations who were responsible for delivering the residential school program of behalf of the Canadian government – the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United (Methodist) – joined with Assembly of First Nations leaders in a fashion similar to gatherings earlier in the week in Ottawa, Vancouver and Saskatoon. As Elijah Harper, Member of Parliament from Manitoba, told the gathering at the Forks, with tears in his eyes: “The wounds left by residential schools are like a nail stuck in your back, festering. But when you remove it, you know what true forgiveness is.”

The road to reconciliation is a long and painful one, but necessary for healing and forgiveness to even take place. As we were reminded a number of times that evening, residential school survivors and their families are at different places in the grief process – some are very angry and others

are more willing to forgive. It was acknowledged by several people, however, that “even though we will forgive, we will not forget.”

These four mainline churches gave formal apologies to Aboriginal people during the 1980s and 1990s, but the leaders now expressed confessions of what their residential schools had meant to Aboriginal people. Ted Quewezance, executive director of the National Residential School Survivors’ Society, urged his people to forgive and accept the sincerity of the church leaders. He recounted that when he saw church leaders shed tears during this Truth and Reconciliation process and express their own personal grief at what had taken place, he, in turn, shed his own tears. Healing was beginning.

The lack of response from the political leaders of our country has been a real disappointment for residential school survivors, their families and Aboriginal leaders across the country for many years. Now, as we write this, we have received news that the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, will be making a statement of apology to former residential school survivors on June 11, 2008 in the House of Commons.

Bringing about change is never easy. Those in power want to hold onto the power they have and it is inconceivable to relinquish it. The result of Aboriginal and church leaders working together to bring about change and start a reconciliation process has been the establishment of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The government-endorsed initiative was launched to uncover Indian residential school experience in Canada from several perspectives or disciplines: socially, culturally, politically, economically, educationally, and as a justice issue.

Chief Justice Harry Leforme of the Ontario Court of Appeal, Canada’s highest ranking Aboriginal justice official, has taken on the job as Commissioner of the TRC, which will spend the next five years uncovering and telling the stories

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Neill and Edith

—Neill and Edith von Gunten,
Co-Directors, Native Ministry



Intotemak translates as *my friends* or *my clan* and are people who walk together as friends. Intotemak is a quarterly newsletter featuring news items of interest to friends of Native Ministry, published by Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

Purpose statement of Mennonite Church Canada Witness... is to lead, mobilize and resource the church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world, thus aligning the being and the doing of the church with God's work.

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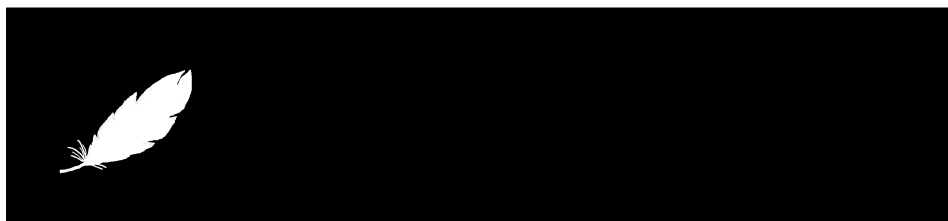
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VISION HEALING & HOPE

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.



Native Assembly July 28 - 31, 2008

Begins Monday evening – Concludes Thursday evening

Location: The Frisco Conference Center, Clinton, Oklahoma

Hosted by the Oklahoma Fellowship of Indian Mennonite Churches (Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho)

Theme: Unity and Service: In the Name of Christ (Philippians 2:1-11)

Speakers:

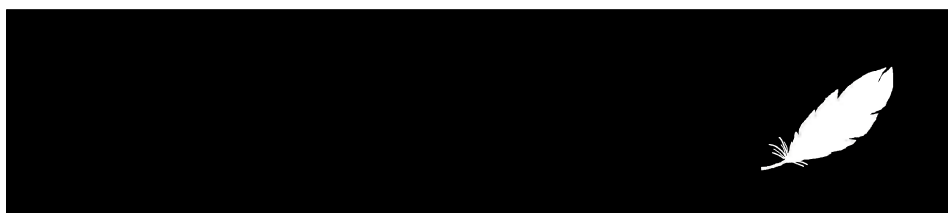
Adrian Jacobs, of the Turtle clan of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, pastor and MCC staff person, Brantford, Ontario. **Zoughbi Zoughbi**, Palestinian Christian and peacemaker from Bethlehem. **Anita Keith**, Mohawk/Algonquin author and educator, Winnipeg, Manitoba. **Iris deLeon Hartshorn**, Director of Intercultural Relations, Mennonite Church USA.

Co-Sponsors:

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Eagles Nest

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from this black period in Canada's history – the experience of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in this country's residential school system. Two more Commissioners are yet to be named. Leforme says, "Bottom line, this issue has been neglected for far too long." As the TRC holds hearings across Canada, survivors of the residential school system will be asked to share their experiences -- to open up the wounds again so that healing may begin. "It is my personal opinion that the very act of separating a child from his family and community is damaging in itself, let alone

the physical and sexual abuse and the cultural suppression which took place," said Laforme. He goes on, "The devastating impact that dysfunctions created by residential schools had an enormous effect on the children and grandchildren of the survivors ..." (Quotes taken from *Grassroots*, May 26, 2008)

Our prayer is that the apologies given by the churches and the government will reinforce the work of the commission and that together all of us in Canada will begin a new chapter in the relationship of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the church and larger society – a relationship founded on renewed hope, faith, mutual respect and trust.

That is all we have for now.
Migwetch.

Cultural divide

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International, a ministry he co-founded with his wife Katherine in 1997, Twiss encourages indigenous people from North America to New Zealand to use appropriate aspects of their unique cultural traditions for expressing Christ-centred theology. Twiss believes that doing so will free them to live the abundant life that Jesus came to provide. Wiconi – pronounced we-cho-nee – is the Lakota/Sioux word for life.

Twiss's work is based upon a study of theology that freed him personally from the confines of what he refers to as "white man's religion." He says that "From an aboriginal perspective it [Christianity] looks white, acts white, sounds white, behaves white and for all practical purposes and intentional purposes it very much is an ethnocentric faith still bound in the assumptions of a Western worldview." As long as theology is bound in those assumptions, Twiss suggests it won't become an embracing statement of God's revelation to Aboriginal people that "affirms, recognizes and empowers us to be fully devoted followers of Jesus in the context of who God created us to be."

Respect for individuals and their roots is also central to the work of Mennonite Church Canada Peacebuilders, Daniel and Joji Pantoja. They are developing a Peacebuilders Community in the Mindanao region of the Philippines where longstanding issues of land distribution and intolerance have resulted in decades of violence between Christians and Muslims. But the Pantojas, devout Christians who have come to embrace the Muslim people and to appreciate their deeply-felt faith, have found ways of avoiding Western Christian traditions while still glorifying God and bringing together people from diverse groups. As a result, fruitful relationships are blossoming.

"Don't call it church-planting," Daniel Pantoja cautions. The words "church" and "Christianity" have negative connotations in Mindanao related to colonialism and land issues, so the Pantojas use approaches that respect Muslim traditions and culture. They allow Muslim

Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry and Mennonite Church Manitoba invited Lakota theologian, Richard Twiss, to Winnipeg for the March 7 – 9, 2008 weekend's spring Partnership Circle meetings. Richard shared his humour and theology with a wide audience in several venues beyond the Partnership Circle meeting throughout the weekend. This weekend was a rich opportunity for many of us to think about how we came to faith in Jesus Christ and how our cultural background influences who we have become.

culture to inform their dialogue. "We pray that Salam [holistic peace] communities of Isa Al masi [Jesus Christ] will be formed, but don't ask us what they will look like. We don't know," Pantoja says.

The Pantojas' respect for their Muslim neighbours has resulted in opportunities to facilitate peace training seminars for Muslims and Christians alike and to help draft peace proposals for Muslim and evangelical leaders in the Philippines. "I wish I could say I planned this all, but no, things are happening beyond our hands," Daniel says. "God seems to be widening the doors for peaceful relationships between Christians and Muslims."

Although the Twisses and the Pantojas are located thousands of kilometres apart and working in different situations, they share a common approach to following Jesus. They have put aside traditional Western worldviews of Christianity in order to share the Good News of Christ with those of other traditions. They are simply speaking "Jesus" in another language.

When Twiss first began to suggest using appropriate aspects of traditional indigenous cultures to express Christian faith, he was called a syncretist. "I was continually accused of trying to blend Indian religion with Christian faith, resulting in a hybridized, mongrel religion that was neither one nor the other." He cautions that integrating culture and theology requires discernment and as an example, refers to the example of worshiping God with sweet grass smoke. "Praying with sweet grass smoke can be idolatry or worshipful. If you thank God for giving smoke power, it's syncretism." He goes on to explain that using smoke as a symbolic representation of prayers rising to God in heaven can be worshipful and meaningful in a cultural context. It is only when a cultural tool is worshipped in and of itself that it becomes dangerous.

Twiss points to Numbers 21:1-9 and the story of the bronze snake. The Israelites were bitten by venomous snakes as a result of sin. When they repented of their sin, God instructed Moses to "make a snake and put it on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." The snake was a symbolic reminder of God's power to heal – and forgive. However, when the people began to attribute the power of healing to the snake instead of God and began to worship it, the snake became an idol which King Hezekiah later destroyed. (2 Kings 18:4)

Despite 500 years of Christian mission in the US, Twiss says there are no nationally recognized Native American leaders. He links this to the negative impact of Eurocentric theology on Native cultures. "The problem for us as aboriginal people is the incongruity between the notions that God loved us so much that he allowed his son to be killed, coupled with this other notion that he loves us but he doesn't like us," Twiss says. "Doesn't like our drums, doesn't like our music, doesn't like our dance, doesn't like our regalia – but he loves us."

Twiss is exploring theology in depth; he's a Doctor of Missiology candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky. This study has strengthened his theological perspectives and those of a handful of other North American Natives who are pursuing higher theological education. "We've finally come to the conclusion that one of the things that makes Christianity unique is that it can be expressed equally well in any culture. It's not cultural, it's not confined or bound to a culture biblically and theologically – though in practice it very certainly is..." But attitudes are changing. Although even some Native people are still hesitant about embracing their own culture because they have been led to believe it is inherently evil, Twiss notes that there are others who say "man, we can finally be Indian and Christian. Nobody



Richard Twiss



Neill & Edith von Gunten presented a star blanket to Thelma & Norman Meade who offered a blessing to open the Friday evening gathering.

ever told us we could be both.”

Shahina Siddiqui, Executive Director of The Islamic Social Services Association of the United States and Canada (ISSA), was exposed to Christianity at a very early age through her attendance at a Roman Catholic school, which offered the best educational facility available to her family at the time. She professes a personal understanding and respect for Christianity, but she says no one can force her to change her faith. She raises the question; what makes one truth any more real than another?

The Wiconi website states; “Jesus brings power and hope for a better tomorrow. He does not bring religion, legalism, shame, oppression or paternalism, though sadly, Christianity often does.” Twiss acknowledges that he is a Christian, but he seems to prefer using the phrase “The Jesus Way” and he speaks of “Jesus the Waymaker” or the “Creator.” There is no doubt that he is speaking of our Christian God, but he chooses to use terminology that his focus audience will be receptive to. For the same reasons, the Pantojas refer to Allah when they speak to their Muslim friends. Both they and their Muslim friends know who they are speaking about, but the reference is respectful and less threatening, less divisive – and it doesn’t stand in the way of Christ.

Daniel Pantoja speaks of one Muslim friend who has dedicated his life to Isa Al masi. This friend does not want to

be called a Christian because of Christianity’s negative historical implications. Instead, he refers to himself as a true Muslim – someone who has submitted himself to Allah through Isa Al masi.

Twiss points out that diversity is a biblical theme and without it, we cannot possibly express the fullness and richness of God. In the beginning, God created a bountiful and varied tapestry of plant, animal and human life in an infinite universe. In the Bible’s concluding chapter, Revelation, the future is foreseen with “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” worshipping God. (Revelation 7:9)

Siddiqui notes the importance of diversity as well, and refers to questions posed in the Qur’an. “Do you think it’s not in God’s power to make all of you the same? He chose not to,” Siddiqui says. “It [the Qur’an] goes on to say he made individuals and nations different so that they may know each other. It’s a test. Are you going to hate each other because you’re different? Or are you going to accept each other?”

To close a presentation to Mennonite Church Canada workers during a recent visit to Winnipeg, Richard Twiss sang part of a Lakota song which he says predates the coming of Christianity. He offered a translation of the verse; “Someone up above is sacred, therefore we pray.” He referred to Romans 1:20;



Cree pastor, Howard Jolly provided special music on Friday evening.

“Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made...”

“So,” Twiss concluded as he played his traditional Native drum, “Long before the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sailed over on the boat, he was already here.”

The Bible makes it clear that God created diversity and bestowed free will upon humankind. We limit our understanding of God when we pack theology

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Aboriginal Bridge Building

An exercise in active listening

Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) BC co-sponsored a series of Listening Circles in the Lower Mainland from March 12-14, 2008. Here is the experience of one of the congregations.

“**W**hat pieces of land are important to you?” asked Darryl Klassen, coordinator of MCC B.C.’s Aboriginal Neighbours Program.

Perhaps they’re birth places, memorable vacation spots, the open prairie, or secluded mountain valleys. Aboriginal guests at Highland Community Church, Abbotsford, B.C., identified abandoned Native villages where the spirits of ancestors could be felt, the solitude of the mountains, and a spectacular waterfall in an area where Native medicines were discovered.

With stained glass windows depicting an eagle and a tree, Highland’s sanctuary was transformed into a “talking circle” March 14, where Aboriginals Stanley Boyd, and Dennis and Cathy Patrick told stories to help the church understand the “meaning of the land.”

Boyd is a member of Carrier First Nation, and has also served as a treaty negotiator, native court worker, and former chief of Lhooskus and Nazko bands near Quesnel.

His territory of Carrier extends west of Highway 97 to the coast at Bella Coola, where part of a large Athabaskan language group that stretches all the way from the Yukon to the Navajo and Apache tribes in the United States.

Boyd recalls travelling an ancient trail as a child that extended from Bella Coola to Prince Rupert, known as the “grease trail,” where they brought home the ooligan catch. Ooligan oil was a diet staple, known as “winter sunshine,” providing Vitamin D for people living in this rainy, cloudy coastal and inland climate. Recently, the “grease trail” has become a training ground for Aboriginal youth learning basic wilderness survival skills and traditional native practices from elders.

The Carrier territories were rich in animal life that provided a livelihood to the Native people throughout the year. They jokingly referred to the initial European explorers to the region as the “first tourists” to their lands, and in graver tones described how the confiscation of lands and property, and the rail and logging development, harmed their natural food sources.

Residential school and game warden abuses were also noted. Cathy Patrick once had her hair washed with DDT for lice, which ran into and injured her eyes. By contrast, she shared how her giftedness with native medicines healed her wounds and helped others. Heartwarming stories of restorative justice measures without the intervention of police or court systems were shared, including that of a murder of a young person and subsequent provision of a replacement son by the offender’s family to the victims.

Dennis Patrick recalled the famous “constitutional train,” dispatched by Native people to Ottawa in 1982 to lobby for inclusion of native rights at the time of repatriation of the Canadian Constitution. After being told that the cost of the train was \$300,000, guests were asked what the trip had accomplished. With humour and chagrin, they replied, “Three words: Aboriginal, rights, and title – \$100,000 per word”!

According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, a total of 277 unresolved land claims have been filed in Ontario and 522 in British Columbia against the federal government.

Participants at the talking circle said they were challenged by language and communication styles of Aboriginal



Aboriginals Stanley Boyd, and Dennis and Cathy Patrick told stories to help the church understand the “meaning of the land.”

people.

“Our culture is largely bereft of storytelling, leading us to run roughshod over Aboriginal people, and even each other,” said one participant. “Their stories invited me to slow down and take time to listen. This was of great value.”

“Perhaps a shortfall of the evening was that the stories only went one way,” said another. “Significant bridges might be built if we shared stories with them of how Mennonites also lost their lands, developing mutual empathy and understanding.”

In closing, Klassen presented gifts of appreciation to the Aboriginal guests – blankets made by MCC volunteers, and “fairly traded” coffee produced by farmers in underdeveloped countries, supported by MCC.

Also present were Neill and Edith von Gunten, co-directors of Native Ministry at Mennonite Church Canada, who have seen the impact these discussions have had over the years. “In Vancouver there was a young couple that was about to go on overseas missions, but instead decided to live in a native community. The meetings help bring about understanding, and dispel myths. We don’t often hear their side of the story.”

*—John Konrad
Abbotsford, BC*

A First Nations Question

The long-standing land dispute over the Haldimand Tract, roughly 400,000 hectares on both sides of the Grand River in Ontario, made the national news again earlier this month. Leaders of the Six Nations of the Grand River sent a letter to municipalities in the area, reminding them of the 1784 treaty their peoples made with Frederick Haldimand, the British governor-general, in which the Crown agreed to hold these lands in trust “for the use and benefit of the Six Nations, and their posterity . . . forever.”

“We are going to go out and identify specific areas where it’s clear there’s been no surrender and no payment, and go and advise people this is not your land,” said Aaron Detlor, as quoted by CBC.

The injustices and suffering of First Nations people are a concern for all Christians, but this particular piece of land and the struggles of the Six Nations to get justice — and to have the terms of the Haldimand Treaty honoured — are of particular Mennonite interest. The large group of Mennonites that settled in this part of Ontario in the early 1800s paid 10,000 British pounds for their

homesteads in the Haldimand Tract, revenue that was to go to the Six Nations but was actually mostly diverted by government representatives into other purposes.

Adrian Jacobs, the pastor of Faith Victory Church in Six Nations, was recently hired by the MCC Ontario Aboriginal Neighbours program as community liaison (he is from Six Nations himself).

I went to Faith Victory Church last year to be part of a corporate repentance and communion service, and had the chance to meet him. We later had a long interview and I asked him what he would like to say to Mennonites.

“One of the things that Justice Linden [of the Ipperwash Inquiry] said was that people in Canada must realize that everybody in Canada is a treaty person, aboriginal and non-aboriginal. The treaties are between First Nations people and Canada.

“Native people do not have a problem. Canada has a huge problem, in that they have taken land, violating their own legal system, beginning with the 1763 Royal Proclamation. . . . The land is native land and it cannot be surrendered to

individuals, but to the Crown, and only willingly by First Nations people. Canada has squatted on land and laid claim to it against the whole legal system.

“I hear these things all the time, that treaties gave native people land or money. . . . Treaties were native people giving up something. There has never been a true payment concerning full value of that native people gave up.

“In the first place, Six Nations said it’s not about money, it’s about the land. We need the land for our future generations. Establishing [land] leases was for the ongoing provision for Six Nations people. When I went to university and had my education paid for by Indian Affairs I do not consider that the generosity of Canadians; that is my people’s money paying for [my] education.

“Canada has a huge problem. That’s what B.C. [British Columbia] is all about. . . . [B.C.] was native-owned until it was surrendered and it was never surrendered. If native people wanted to be militant, they could say all of B.C. is our territory and you can just leave.

“Native people have been extremely gracious. That’s what is so irritating about the reporting, about angry natives. . . . We’ve been making accommodation after accommodation. Finally, we said ‘no.’ That is a healthy thing. When [you] finally say no to the abuser, that is the best thing. This is Canada’s opportunity to repent and make things right.

“My appeal to Mennonite people is what do you think about this? This is your government. You are a treaty person. We can’t just blame the Conservative party or the Prime Minister. This is a nation-to-nation thing. It is between us as native people and Mennonite people face to-face, and the rest of Canada.

“My question to the Mennonite community is what are you going to do about this? If you knew someone was sexually abusing a child, you would go into action about it to protect the child. We’ve had the same thing happen nationally. What are you going to do about it?”

*Tim Miller Dyck, Editor/Publisher,
Canadian Mennonite*

*Used with permission. Editorial in the
January 21, 2008 issue.*

Cultural divide

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into cultural boxes. The experiences of Twiss and the Pantojas suggest that we can help to bridge cultural divides by respecting the free will of others. This means avoiding the temptation to crush diversity by “making” others view God as we do. Perhaps we should trust that those who worship Christ through different cultural expressions are honouring God in their own way. The God of Creation can understand them, even if we can’t. We might also have faith that God is still at work in others in ways we cannot see.

—Deborah Froese
Mennonite Church Canada staff

If you are interested in receiving a DVD of Richard Twiss’ presentations, please contact the Native Ministry office by phone or e-mail.

The “Church Matters” interview with

Richard Twiss can be found at www.mennonitechurch.ca. Click on “Church Matters (podcast)” under the Highlights column on the right side. Click on Church Matters: Episode 15: Jesus the Way Maker, Guest: Richard Twiss, and download.

An audio of Richard’s sermon at Bethel Mennonite Church on March 9, 2008 can be found at www.bethelmennonite.ca.

For more information on Richard Twiss and Wiconi see <http://www.wiconi.com> and/or read Twiss’s book, *One Church Many Tribes* (Regal Books, 2000).

Further information on the Pantojas and their Peacebuilders Community in Mindanao can be found at <http://www.peacebuilderscommunity.org>.

Update from Grand River - April 29, 2008

The following article comes from a person living in the Grand River Six Nations community south of Brantford, Ontario. Her sharing also mentions events happening at that time in their sister Mohawk community of Tyendinaga, and gives a glimpse into the "side of the news" that we rarely receive from mainland media outlets.

Somehow in two days we've gone from a peaceful demonstration to barricades. And you can thank the OPP [Ontario Provincial Police] for that.

A Six Nations peaceful demonstration against the action of the OPP in Tyendinaga, after they had beaten and arrested at least 10 people, and then surrounded a handful of others at gunpoint around the quarry in Mohawk Territory; was turned into a standoff and barricades shortly after 7 p.m. Saturday night.

A men's council was called at Grand River on Friday April 25th, after a call had come from Tyendinaga informing that the OPP had guns pointed at men and women in the Quarry.

The men decided that regardless of who, why or what had happened, the fact that the OPP moved into Mohawk Territory, beat up, dragged out and arrested some of our people; was a reason to show support for those who found themselves surrounded at gunpoint and in a very volatile situation.

And that was the OPP's first mistake. They had to have known that taking action against ANY of our people, whether they were right or wrong, justified or not justified; the OPP moving in and attacking Haudenosaunee People at gunpoint, in an area that had been home to peaceful demonstrations on Mohawk Territory, lands acknowledged by the Crown as a 'claim' and the basis for negotiations between the Crown and the Tyendinaga Mohawks for months; on top of what they have already supposedly learned from Kahnsetake, Ipperwash, Kanonhstaton, ... they HAD to have realized that if they moved in, the people would re-act.

The Six Nations Police and the OPP were contacted, and they were advised that a peaceful demonstration was going

to be set up on Hwy #6 bypass, and the OPP closed the road at either end to prevent any traffic from coming through.

A message was sent out from the women involved in negotiations in Tyendinaga advising that this had been sparked by an isolated incident, was not related to the negotiations, and that their peaceful demonstration had concluded at 7 pm that evening. They could not support actions of violence and they were imploring the people to keep the peace. Contact was made with the women there and a message was sent from the men at Grand River "this demonstration at Grand River has nothing to do with Shawn Brant, its against the action of the OPP and in support of the people who were surrounded".

Communications continued between the men at Tyendinaga and Grand River with the OPP to see if there was a way to bring the stand off in Tyendinaga to a peaceful resolution. To make sure that no one else was hurt or worse. The OPP near Tyendinaga were asked to back off a bit, to bring a tense situation to at least a more calm atmosphere. They backed off to the corner of each side of the boundary road leading into the quarry. An OPP press statement was sent out. That statement was their second mistake. They issued a statement that the Mohawks in the quarry were armed. The statement was false.

It immediately brought to the minds of the people, haunting memories of Ipperwash and how the Government of Canada used false propaganda to justify police action against the people there and an unarmed Dudley George was shot and killed.

Saturday morning things seemed relatively quiet. The people in Tyendinaga had had a good night. Others were able to get in to bring them supplies on 4 wheelers and overall, spirits were good. Saturday afternoon, as part of the discussion between the Mohawks at Tyendinaga and the OPP, a proposal from the OPP was put to the people, "you walk away, we walk away". But having heard that statement the day before, and witnessing the arrests of others, trust did not exist.

As a counter offer, the OPP were asked to publicly retract that statement about the people being armed. That way the people felt it would eliminate any possibility of another cover up and potential for planned police action against the people inside.

The higher ups in the OPP went into a 'behind the doors' meeting. The message they brought back was not one of a resolution, but another ultimatum. "In the interest of public safety, the road must be open. In 15 minutes surveillance cameras will be sent down and anyone attempting to obstruct traffic in any way will be charged". And that was their third mistake.

Calls went out. The local radio station was contacted. The Six Nations people responded. Memories of April 20th 2006 resounded in the minds of the people, and our people responded immediately. Factions of religion and politics did not exist. The people stood united and ready. Once again the OPP were going to try and use force rather than peace.

The situation was tense. 6th Line [road] was lined with people. The men had lined themselves across the bypass. The OPP had sent down their camera van and another cruiser. They were stationed a few hundred feet from the men.

At the same time, Six Nations Elected Chief Bill Montour put a call into Minister Bryant. A strong message of unity was delivered to Mr. Bryant and he was advised to re-think the position they had taken. "If our people are harmed, all Iroquoian communities are going to rise up".

Minutes later, the OPP turned and retreated back to their position at the lights at the end of the bypass. The road was not worth the fight. But the damage had been done.

Immediately, the men went into action and the barricades went up.

Early Monday morning, amid rumours that the swat teams were moving in on the people at the quarry, to gossip of barricades are down at the bypass in Grand River, things began to slowly work their way through.

Around 8:50 a.m. the OPP had

Reaching up to God our Creator

This summer Mennonite Church Canada is launching a new Aboriginal resource, *Reaching Up to God our Creator*.

In traditional aboriginal settings, elders have been the keepers of wisdom and tradition for the nation and passed this down from generation to generation.

Elders are still those older people who have vision for the people, are willing to serve their community by sharing their vision, and who work in caring and loving ways toward achieving it. We hope these sessions will supplement the ongoing ministry of elders in Aboriginal communities and that they will introduce this wisdom tradition to many who lack the opportunity of learning directly from Aboriginal Christian elders.

While a resource box such as this can never take the place of respectful engagement with the elders, it does set forth a vision for reaching out to God together as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Christians. This resource box has been produced out of our desire to serve and connect these faith communities in loving and caring ways.



A preview of the new *Reaching Up to God our Creator* resource can be found at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcescentre/>

To introduce you to this resource, please download special preview materials, including:

Introduction, What others are saying, Session plans for clubs, Sunday morning, and day camp settings, Session overviews, Sample sessions (session 3), Snack list, Seven Sacred Teaching Posters, Maskipiton excerpt, Teaching the Sacred Tree excerpt, Closing celebration suggestions, Logo for use on posters and t-shirts

Also, check out the lending and purchasing information and the related KidsPak material.

The books, *Maskipiton* or *Teaching of the Sacred Tree*, can also be borrowed or purchased from the Resource Centre or from the Native Ministry office (imiller@mennonitechurch.ca)

moved their swat team to only about 5 feet from where the people were on the road outside the quarry. OPP wanted the road opened. Those that were at the barricade agreed to let them open that part of the road to allow the non-Native people access. They went back to the barricade closest to the quarry and joined the rest of the people there. They would move no further. They were on Mohawk Land.

Little by little throughout the day, the OPP tactical team slowly disengaged to the point where there was only about 30 cruisers left in and around the area. The OPP assured the people they were not going into the quarry. By 4 p.m. the OPP, the swat team and the helicopters were all out of site. The situation at Tyendinaga had come to a peaceful resolve.

Throughout yesterday and early this

morning, through the course of many meetings and discussions; and after feeling they had accomplished what they had set out to do And that was to ensure that the people in Tyendinaga were able to leave that quarry safely and freely The decision was made to open the Highway #6 by-pass.

The men had honoured their word. They had upheld their responsibilities to the Creator and in their understanding of the Law, to protect the Land, the Law and the People Regardless of geographical boundaries, political differences or religious beliefs. Peace was once again restored in Haudenosaunee Territories.

*In Love, Light and Peace,
Hazel E. Hill
Ohsweken, Ontario*

Lawrence Hart honoured

Lawrence Hart of Clinton, Oklahoma was inducted into the Oklahoma Historical Society's Hall of Fame on Friday, April 18, 2008. The honour was awarded during a luncheon meeting of the Society. Lawrence is a highly respected Cheyenne Peace Chief and a Mennonite pastor. He and his wife Betty have spent countless hours to keep the Cheyenne story alive for future generations and the general public.



Lawrence Hart

Three historical accomplishments in more recent years include:

- The establishment of the Cheyenne Cultural Centre in Clinton.
- Helping establish the Return to the Earth project, which brings the remains of Indian people back to their homeland and people from places such as museums, and a strong commitment to give each remain a proper burial (A cemetery is on the Cheyenne Cultural Centre for this purpose and to provide a place for those remains that cannot be identified as to tribe.)
- Ensuring that there is government recognition of the massacre of Black Kettle's people at the Washita River near the community of present-day Cheyenne

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and helping plan the resulting new interpretative centre near the site.

Lawrence Hart also received the Peace Pitcher from the Peace and Justice Support Network during the Charlotte 2005 Mennonite Church Canada and USA Assembly.

Congratulations, Lawrence, for being honoured in these ways. Thank you for your dedication to your people and to the church of Jesus Christ.

Matheson Island School Visits the Legislative Building

The Matheson Island School students performed two original songs and a dance on the steps of the Manitoba Legislative Building, as part of Manitoba Music Month, on April 16th, 2008. Almost every parent came out to support the students, who did a wonderful job of representing their community with two songs about their island and the South African Gumboot Dance.



This is the first year that these students have sung together in front of an audience besides their parents, and they, in the words of one observer, “stole the show” with their exuberance, originality and obvious pride in their community. The two songs they performed were co-written with their teacher, Susan Phillips, and artist, Kate Ferris. In between the two songs, students performed the South African Gumboot dance, which originated over 100 years ago as a response by South African gold mine workers to their racial oppression under apartheid. Students wore gumboots to demonstrate not only that Matheson Island is a fishing community but also to

show they were worn by South African miners under very different and difficult circumstances.

As part of a Social Studies unit, the older students are designing a web page to promote youth voting. Following their performance, which coincided with other Manitoba Music Month performances, students and their parents and teachers took a tour of the Legislative Building. The tour was led by an excellent guide named Daisy, who took us into the gallery for question period, where we heard Members of the Legislative Assembly make presentations to each other.

Obituaries

Patrick Owen passed away at the age of 48 years on March 14, 2008 after a long battle with cancer. Though the cancer slowed him down for a bit, it did not stop him from hunting, trapping and many other activities. When cancer took over again he was admitted to Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg in early March, where he passed away. Patrick had taken a step of faith to follow the Lord.

He leaves to mourn his wife Violet, his children as well as many friends and relatives. Albert Eaglestick officiated at Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba.

Kyle Owens, son of Mary Ann Owens of Pauingassi, Manitoba passed away by choice on March 28, 2008 at the age of 23 years. He was predeceased by his father and three siblings, leaving his mother, eight siblings and many friends to mourn his early passing. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owens officiating.

Cory Keeper, son of Jonas and Karen Keeper of Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba passed away on March 28, 2008 at the age of 24 years. He was taking some courses in Winnipeg at the time of his death. Several masked fellows suddenly entered the house where he was at the time and opened gun fire.

He leaves to mourn his premature death, his parents, siblings and many

friends. He was buried at Little Grand Rapids with Albert Eaglestick officiating.

Dorothy Mae Kroken of Hnaua, Manitoba died suddenly on May 7, 2008 at the Gimli Community Health Centre at the age of 74 years.

Dorothy will be lovingly remembered by her husband Norman; children, Melvin (Joan), Harvey (Lenore), Sharon (Albert), Sandra (Sylvan), Doreen (Stuart), David (Marcel), Marvin (Kim); stepchildren, Carol, Rita, and Andy (Gail); Stan Monkman; two sisters; one brother; 20 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren; and other friends and relatives.

Dorothy married Haraldur Johnson in 1952 and they farmed in Geysir, MB until his passing in 1977. She married Norman in 1978 and they lived at Victoria Beach until moving to Riverton in 2005 to be near her family.

The funeral service was held on May 13 in the Riverton-Hnaua Lutheran Church with Pastor Trudy Thorarinson officiating.

Gerald Wayne Oddleifson of Winnipeg, Manitoba passed away on May 8, 2008 at the age of 57 years.

Left to cherish his memory are daughters Tamara and Noilah; parents Bob and Gladys; sisters, Sharon (Harley) Jonasson, Roberta (Ken) Pruden, Pat (Alphonse) Noschese, and their families.

Gerald's job kept him in Winnipeg, but he never lost his passion for Lake Winnipeg and Loon Straits, where he commercial fished for many years.

A celebration of Gerald's life took place at the Gilbert Funeral Chapel in Selkirk, MB on May 10 with Pastor Trudy Thorarinson officiating.

Tammie Lynn McQuoid completed her life's journey on Saturday, May 10, 2008 at Riverview Health Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba, following a brief illness at the age of 49 years.

Tammie will be sadly missed by her parents, Gerald and Silvana McQuoid of Snow Lake, MB, one brother and three sisters and their families.

Tammie began her journey in North Bay, Ontario and spent her life seeking



adventure. She became a teacher and loved imparting her knowledge and wisdom to her children. She loved making a difference in their lives and in the lives of their families. Tammie found much joy in photographing the many places she lived, especially Matheson Island, MB.

The students of Matheson Island School were invited to sing at the funeral service on May 15 at the Thomson Funeral Home in Winnipeg.

Della Mae Seymour, age 64 years of Seymourville, Manitoba, left this world on May 14, 2008 with the same dignity, grace, and humor that she brought to each and everyday of her life.

Della leaves behind her loving husband of 43 years Ted Seymour; eight children, Warren (Debbie), Ardel, Brian (Norma), Darren (Nadine), Hugh (Monica), Cynthia (Randy), Keith (Leslie), and Anthony; 35 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren; four sisters and three brothers, and numerous relatives and friends.

Della was a beautiful and loving person whose kindness and caring touched the hearts of her family and friends. She was the inspiration and soul of our family. Della will be greatly missed by all who had the privileged to know her. We find peace in knowing she is in the hands our Lord.

The funeral service was held at the Seymourville Hall in Wanipigow, Manitoba on May 20, 2008. Interment followed at the Anglican Cemetery in Hollow Water, Manitoba.

Ruby Melrose Rosser (nee Rundle), age 73 years, of Riverton, Manitoba died suddenly on May 20, 2008, in Arborg, Manitoba.

Ruby was born in Fisher River and resided there until she went to school in Birtle. She settled in Riverton in 1973. Ruby worked as a cook for many years and her food graced many special occasions. She was a talented crafts person and her many leather and beadwork articles were beautiful to behold.

Ruby will be lovingly remembered

by her sons, Fred (Wendy) of Hay River, NWT, Kelly (Debbie) of Dauphin, and Michael (Tamara) of Clandeboye; daughters, Phyllis (Jim) of Clandeboye, Bev (Ernie) of Riverton, Sharon of Riverton, Corinne (Lorne) of Riverton, Sandra (Trent) of Esterhazy, SK, and Donna (Duane) of Riverton; 28 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren; her brother, Harvey Hodgins of Riverton; and her extended family and friends.

The funeral service was held on May 24 at the Steven's Memorial United Church in Fisher River with John Halcrow officiating. A memorial service was held on May 25 at the Riverton Fellowship Circle, with Trudy Thorarinson officiating.

Lorne Alvin Sayer, Jr. (Shoonie), age 39 years of Winnipeg, Manitoba, died suddenly on May 24, 2008 as the result of a vehicle accident. Shoonie was predeceased by his Father Lorne and is survived by his mother Corinne (Eddy); two sisters, Dana (Cory) and Sue (Joshua) and their families; as well as many friends and family members.

Shoonie was employed by Ace Signs as a labourer/electrician and was looking forward to further advancing his skills as an electrician.

A celebration of Shoonie's life was held on May 29 at the First Nations Community Church in Winnipeg. Cremation followed and interment was on May 31 at St. Luke's Cemetery in Balsam Bay, Manitoba, where he was laid to rest with his father.



A Note from Native Ministry... Help us continue to bring you news featuring items related to Native Ministry. Donations towards the cost of publication lets us continue our walk together. Contact Ingrid Miller at imiller@mennonitechurch.ca

Events Calendar

July 6-18, 2008

"Christianity in Native Cultures", a two-week summer school for Training for Leadership in Ministry, is held at the Vancouver School of Theology in British Columbia. Each week has different courses to register for.

The ecumenical Native Ministries Consortium that plans the summer school is under First Nations direction and develops courses for lay and ordained people involved in Native ministries.

July 7-8, 2008

Mennonite Church Canada annual delegate Assembly, Canadian Mennonite University campus, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

July 8-10, 2008

People's Summit for Faithful Living, a special joint gathering of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada that will focus on the theme of "the church living faithfully as a contrast community in our global reality" with direction from the theme text of Deuteronomy 4:1-9. Canadian Mennonite University campus, Winnipeg, Manitoba.



July 28-31, 2008

Native Assembly 2008, Frisco Conference Center, Clinton, Oklahoma, hosted by the Oklahoma Fellowship of Indian Mennonite Churches. Theme: "Unity and Service", based on Philippians 2:1-11. For more information, contact Native Ministry office at 204-888-6781.

August 23-24, 2008

Bridging the Gap, Siksika Nation, Alberta.

September 5-7, 2008

Manigotagan Family Camp, hosted by the Manigotagan Community Chapel, Manigotagan, Manitoba.

September 9-18, 2008

World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People in Jerusalem, Israel. See their website for more information, www.wcgp.com

For more events visit www.mennonitechurch.ca/events. Native Ministry related events can be submitted for the calendar. Submit events in writing to the mailing address on page 3, or email to imiller@mennonitechurch.ca.

