

# my friends Intotemak

Fall 2007 Vol. 36, No. 3



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*A fun summer of VBS and Camp*

Read about VBS at Cross Lake, Pauingassi, Matheson Island and Manigotatan and Camp at Matheson Island. See pages 6-9.



## An Attitude of Thanksgiving and Reconciliation

Our vegetable and flower gardens no longer have their profusion of produce and blossoms and the evenings are cool so our thoughts turn to fall – the season we celebrate Thanksgiving and make preparations for the upcoming winter months. For some of us our routines become more “normal” again; for others of us, fall is a time of new beginnings in school or jobs.

We too often take the blessings of life, health, food, shelter, family, friendship, etc. for granted and celebrate Thanksgiving as an annual one-day event of feasting instead of living a life of thankfulness each and every day. When we worship God instead with a daily attitude of thanksgiving for everything and everybody in God’s creation, our life becomes an expression of respect and gratitude for God’s action within and around us each moment.

We are constantly aware of how dwelling on the negative feeds into stereotypes and reduces our ability to learn to know and understand each other in respectful, helpful ways. Building on the strengths and positiveness in a situation or community is so much more helpful and brings about the energy and focus needed to tackle the hard issues and problems.

The First Nations community of Pauingassi here in Manitoba is a recent example because of the death by drowning of a local six-year old boy. The reality is that there are many social problems in the community, many brought on by alcohol abuse and the resulting dysfunction; however, that is not the total population by any means and widespread news coverage in August ignored those who are productively employed in the community, those who are working hard to curb the addictive behaviour that causes chaos for many, those who are trying to provide a wholesome life for their family members, and those who are reaching out to the children and youth. They deserve our respect, support and encouragement to persevere and meet the challenges – not our condemnation and disdain.

Hearing and reading the articles and comments of condemnation and criticism of the northern Manitoba community that have been made by journalists and other outsiders across North America have been hard on the otherwise quiet and private people of Pauingassi.

One mother shares, “Our people didn’t make some con-

*Hearing and reading the articles and comments of condemnation and criticism of the northern Manitoba community that have been made by journalists and other outsiders across North America have been hard on the otherwise quiet and private people of Pauingassi.*

scious decision to become addicted to solvents, then alcohol. All the pain, suffering and wrong behaviours that go with that it happened slowly over generations and because this community, our ways and everything we once could be proud of was stripped away leaving many of us with no real identity or sense of purpose.”

A community leader explains, “Many in the community are sick and wounded we’re not denying that but it didn’t happen all on its own and we need real long term help and commitment not short term see-you later approaches where the support comes and goes.

“We certainly don’t need to have people with no interest in us other than the next gory story or bloody headline to visit for a day or two and have the arrogance to think they know what’s going on.” (quotes taken from *Grassroot News*, August 21, 2007 issue.)

It is time that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society acknowledges that Aboriginal cultural values (in Pauingassi, these would be Ojibway values) have a vital, important role to play in community life and that the elders need respect and the opportunity to teach the young people (and the “not so young”) those values and their heritage.

We all need to ask ourselves these penetrating questions:

- Are we open to learning the “rest of the story” in situations such as these, rather than believing that mainstream media reports tell the full story?
- Are we willing to walk alongside our brothers and sisters of all tribes and nations on the journey toward physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing and as each one strives to regain the strong values of their heritage?

God our Creator was active in the lives and culture of Native Canadian people (and all people groups of the world) long before Jesus’ earthly life. His ministry, as recorded in the Gospels, offers a way of peace and reconciliation that is “Good News” for all people and cultures. John 3:16-17 tells us, “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

*Eagles Nest continued on page 3.*

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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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.



# The Power of Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says “Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.”

Permit me to share with you this attribute of love and forgiveness as I personally experienced it during the 1980s in the life of Bruce (not his actual name).

Bruce, in his late fifties, has been a man of faith for many years. He resides on a Canadian reservation with his wife and family, the same one where he was born and grew up. His main occupation has been commercial fishing. Though he still carries a license, he is not out lifting nets anymore due to his failing health. His heart has given him problems for quite some time. Medical help is not an alternative for him seeing his convictions are that the Lord alone is his healer. Some years ago when he did go to the hospital for medical attention, he felt quite guilty about it. His easy-going disposition, however, serves him well. He has also been a local councilor for many years and does a lot of taxiing for his friends.

Bruce once shared that his aging father had never made a commitment of faith as he himself had, but often encouraged him (Bruce) to continue faithfully in his walk of faith. Two of his father's siblings also live there on the reserve. I have often visited them in their homes



and  
contact  
delightful.

found my  
with them

In December of 1983, during the wee hours of the morning, Bruce was awakened and urgently called to come immediately to his father's house, which was some seventy-five feet away. Entering his father's room together with his uncle, his aunt and others, they were struck with horror. His father, at age 83, was stabbed to death in his sleep. The anguish, pain and fear present were hard to describe. How could it be? What could be the motive of such an act? The many questions remained unanswered. The old man was gone.

As soon as the RCMP could get into the community, an investigation was

*Power continued on page 5.*

# Eagles Nest

*Continued from page 2.*

For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior.” Unfortunately not everyone has experienced Christianity as “Good News” in their lives over the years and we as followers of Jesus need to repent for that failure.

We can celebrate, however, the wide cultural diversity and expression within the larger Christian church that helps all of us to understand more fully Jesus' message to us.

We have a busy fall of travel to meet

many people in a wide variety of settings. We are thankful to each one of you who so generously opens your hearts and lives to us.

That is all we have for now.  
Migwetch.

*Neill and Edith*

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



# Churches Recommit to Justice for Aboriginal Peoples

Representatives of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee, together with representatives of numerous Canadian church organizations, marked the 20th anniversary of the signing of a document entitled *A New Covenant: Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada* here on June 21.

Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, and Lois Coleman Neufeld, Director of National Programs for Mennonite Central Committee Canada, jointly made the following statement: "We commit Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and Mennonite Church Canada, to the vision of a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples, based on sharing, respect and the recognition of rights and responsibilities." Representatives of other bodies committed themselves with the same statement, substituting the names of their respective organizations.

The invitation to the event came from KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiative, and the Anglican Church of Canada, and welcomed several Aboriginal groups to attend including representatives of the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, Manitoba Métis Federation, and Native Women's Association of Canada.

The original *Covenant* was presented at a special Aboriginal Summit in Toronto on February 5, 1987 (see [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/396](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/396)). In addition to the general message of righting Aboriginal injustices, the document included the statement "Many of these Aboriginal peoples, whose ancestors have inhabited this country since time immemorial, are members of our churches." The *Covenant* further pledged Church organizations to support Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in their continued struggle for justice and self-determination.

The signing this month is a renewal of that commitment. Leaders also committed themselves to draft a *New Covenant* by December 2007 as a collaboration of churches and Aboriginal



Lois Cole Neufeld and Robert J. Suderman were invited to join the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, along with other church bodies, in a joint statement of recommitment to Aboriginal justice in Canada.

organizations. This initiative is guided by Kairos on behalf of its member churches.

The commemoration event was part of a day of joint meeting and reflection between the members of the governing bodies of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. About 800 delegates of these two church bodies were in attendance.

Among the churches and related bodies present at the commemoration were the Anglican Church of Canada,

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Canadian Council of Churches, Christian Reformed Church of Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, and United Church of Canada

—Dan Dyck, Mennonite Church Canada

## HIV/AIDS: Awareness-Raising in Canada

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta will be hosting their third annual World AIDS Day event on Saturday, November 10, 2007, with guest speaker Chief Ovide Mercredi, and performer Tom Jackson. The event will be held at the MacEwan Hall Ballroom at the University of Calgary, beginning at 7:00 pm. Tickets are \$25.00 each.

Chief Mercredi is Cree, a lawyer, a negotiator, an author, a lecturer in Native Studies, and an activist on behalf of First Nations people in Canada. He

served two terms as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, from 1991 to 1997, and is currently serving as Chief of the Mispawistik First Nation, Grand Chief of the Swampy Cree Tribal Council, and National Spokesperson for Treaties 1 through 11. Chief Mercredi is the recipient of numerous awards and honours, including: the Order of Manitoba, the Gandhi Peace Prize, and has received honorary degrees from Bishop's University, St. Mary's University and Lethbridge University. He is the subject of two Canadian documentary films.

# Power of Love

Continued from page 3.

started. A young female was found to be a suspect and taken out to the police station.

I was having real difficulty with my voice at the time and needed rest to get over my cold. But, in spite of all, I immediately went to the reservation to be with the community, and especially the family, during these difficult days. I stayed in the house during the day and participated in the wakes during the evening. I was not sure at all that Bruce would make it due to his heart problem. We prayed for him that his faith might be strong and that physically he might be preserved. After the funeral I went back home to rest and get myself in shape again. Later, as Bruce looked back at this traumatic time, he said to me one day, "If it had not been for faith, I would not have made it."

At the police station I was granted visiting privileges with the accused female. Many questions were asked during that visit: questions about the funeral, about death, life after death, forgiveness, etc. It was a tense visit but I wanted to give support and attempt to convey the profound love of God. Her charge was assault and murder.

In the meantime, the women's jail became her place of abode, but not for long. The women in a near-by church community had taken on a profound project, namely to gain credibility at the

jail in order to befriend the inmates in the name of Christ. Some couples also opened their home to her until the time she would be sentenced. She enjoyed her stay in these homes. The community poured out their love on her. It was during this time she made a commitment of faith and put forth every effort to live by it. At the same time, the agony of all that had happened, plus the sudden death of a younger sibling, left her in a constant state of anguish.

The unknown of the upcoming trial also created restlessness. At the same time there was a feeling of "let's get it over with." The following spring the judge considered the time she had already spent in these foster homes, as well as the conscious effort made to live a new life of faith. Consequently, she was sentenced for a five-year term in a major penitentiary for second-degree murder.

The transfer to penitentiary was a difficult one in that it was a tough place. The lifestyle of the foster homes was hard to keep up in these surroundings, and for a time she found herself lost in the confusion. This confusion, however, was sorted out and in the midst of a rough place she was seeking to live a life of faith. When someone came from behind to try and pick a fight, she refused to get involved. This then gave an opportunity to share her position as to why she did not want to fight.

In June of 1985 she wrote me a letter. Among other things she said the following: "I'm still keeping in touch with God. I read my Bible every morning and ask God to help me not to miss so much of my family and to give me strength each day of my work. I'm doing good time but most of all I want to get out. Henry, I know you're the only person I can ask to do me a favor, since I can't write to these people (i.e. Bruce's family), because I don't know what to say after all I've done to them. I would like you to tell them that I'm sorry for what I've done and I feel very bad about it. Please tell them when you go up there again.



I'm asking them to forgive me. When I think of this sometimes at work, I cry that I am very sorry and I feel bad. I keep asking myself this question, "Why me, Lord?"

It was August by the time I could return to the settlement to see

Bruce. It was a joy to take this message. As I shared it with him, he listened very intently and answered with the following: "I'm very happy that you have come to tell me this. Often I think of her. I feel like reaching out to touch her; to shake her hand and tell her that I hold nothing against her. My number one aim (with his finger pointing up) is to follow Jesus. I pray that the Lord might forgive her because I hold nothing against her. Tell her this when you write to her."

And so the power of love, of peace and forgiveness in the Lord continues in many miraculous ways. Praise His Holy Name.

—Henry Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB  
Story told with permission  
of the persons involved.

## Postscript:

Bruce went to be with the Lord on February 28, 2001.

The female has been out of prison since June 1988. Shortly after her release, she went to "Teen Challenge" in Michigan to learn more of God. In April 1992 she spent time with "Youth With A Mission" in Montana. Being diagnosed there with diabetes, she could not go on a mission to Kiev so she gave her accumulated money to a fellow participant that was able to go. She received professional counseling for a year or two.

I (Henry Neufeld) had the privilege of officiating at her wedding on June 22, 1996. She and her husband were later baptized upon confession of their faith in a Pentecostal church.

Tom Jackson is an accomplished musician and actor dedicated to helping the less fortunate. Mr. Jackson was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2000 for his music and humanitarian work, received the Humanitarian Award in recognition for his positive contributions to the social landscape of Canada. *Time* magazine named him one of Canada's best activists. As a singer/songwriter, Mr. Jackson has recorded 14 albums and is a Juno Award nominee. The Dreamcatcher Tour, which Mr. Jackson created after the suicide of a friend, has run for eleven years, in 170 urban and reserve locations across Canada, and

**HIV/AIDS** continued on page 15.

# A fun summer of VBS and Camp



Pauingassi VBS, July 22, 2007.



Photos by Luke Enns

## VBS Week in Pauingassi

I had the privilege to travel to Pauingassi (Manitoba) First Nation on July 22, 2007 with five others: Henry and Elna Neufeld, their daughter Lila and her husband Tim, and my wife Angie. We went to lead a five-day Vacation Bible School for the kids of the reserve. We taught them songs about God, including songs like “I’ve got peace like a river” and “God is a good God”. We told some main stories from the Bible including the story of Moses in Egypt, the story of Samuel and Eli, and the story of Abraham and God’s promises. We also made crafts and played sports with the kids every day. Baseball, swimming and bracelet-making were the most fun activities for the kids.

We were exhausted after spending three to four hours each day with the kids, but we felt that the week went without a hitch and was a success. Some of the kids were able to pick up a bit of the songs and stories we shared, though a lot of the time it was like we were speaking different languages. And we really were ... most of the kids in Pauingassi don’t

have a good handle on English.

But that was not worth despairing over. In the people there, you can see more of the spectrum of God’s creativity. There he is creating people whose identity branches from a very far away trunk, and whose perception of things seems obscure and unimaginably different. But connecting points are born out of sharing, and this week we could share a part of our faith in God. We could share ourselves.

Our teammates Tim and Lila were great. They did all of the cooking for the team, prepared Bible stories and crafts for the older kids, and planned out all of the outdoor games that we played with the kids everyday after the singing, Bible study and crafts. Ang and I had the job of leading some singing and preparing Bible stories for the younger kids.

Our team leaders, Henry and Elna, were perfect interpreters for us and graced us with a huge amount of knowledge about the people and spaces of Pauingassi. Their decades of experience and humble attitudes were examples to the

rest of us on how to engage this community. It’s an attitude of patience, of non-judgment, of fearlessness toward rumors of danger, and above all, it’s an attitude of hope. Anyone who thinks they know something about Pauingassi will tell you that this place is like hell. But it’s not. It’s a community. And anyone prepared to let their guard down with these people will see this.

While we were in the airplane approaching Pauingassi, our pilot received a call from the RCMP warning us not to land in Pauingassi. They said there was a gun fight and someone was being held hostage. A SWAT team was involved and it was dangerous. Henry persuaded the pilot to drop us off near the community and we were able to take boats the rest of the way. A dock full of happy kids defied our anxiety and we found out that the situation had been blown out of proportion. It’s hard to imagine how close we were to missing out on the blessing of this experience, had we run back to Winnipeg.

—Luke and Ang Enns, Winnipeg, MB



Matheson Island VBS, August 6-10 2007.



Photos by John and Margaret Klassen.

## VBS at Matheson Island

The week of August 6 – 10, 2007 was Vacation Bible School week at Matheson Island, Manitoba. This year we studied the Ten Commandments, as found in Exodus chapter 20. There were 22 children and five adults all learning and having fun together. We sang, heard Bible stories, memorized verses from the Bible, had craft time and played games each day. The ladies from the community provided us with snacks

all week.

Andrew Lehman was a great help in many ways, including playing his guitar for our singing times. Harold and Mandy Klassen from Winnipeg came with their children Stephanie, Tyler and Brayden, and were of great assistance to us as well. They had to leave later on Wednesday so we had a weiner roast that evening. Unfortunately we were probably not clear enough why we were having

it then because our attendance was down the next day. The tradition is to have a weiner roast the last day so some of the children thought that VBS was over on Wednesday evening.

Thank you to everyone who made this a good week!

—John and Margaret Klassen  
Grunthal, MB



Photo by Neill von Gunten

Andrew Lehman of Berne, Indiana spent the summer as a volunteer at Matheson Island, Manitoba this year. He helped with camp week, VBS in Matheson Island and Pine Dock, and participated in church services and community life in a variety of ways. Thank you, Andrew!

# More summer VBS and Camp fun



Manigotagan VBS, August 14-19, 2007.



Photos by Ruth Martin



## Manigotagan VBS

Another year of VBS in Manigotagan (Manitoba) has come and gone for our Steinbach Mennonite Church Senior Youth group. The VBS program was from August 14 to 19, and kids from within the community as well as surrounding communities and Winnipeg came to fill our program with excitement, all-around craziness, and so much love you can barely stand it.

Youth Pastor Randy Hildebrand and youth Samantha Thiessen, Federic Hiebert, Ashley Berard and I all packed ourselves into a van on August 14 and started out to Manigotagan. Simply driving into the community made me so ecstatic but what really got me excited was the fact that as we drove up to the church we saw a group of kids just waiting for us to come. The even better thing was, as this was my second trip to Manigotagan, I recognized so many of them and later I found out that they remembered me, too, and that they were ready to get the show on-the-road.

VBS was held each day for five crazy hours! Of course these were hours well spent and we had a fantastic attendance

this year, a record-breaking 53 kids one day.

When the kids would come at 10:00 a.m., they would get sent to the field to play some crazy games and afterwards we would head into the church to do some rowdy singing. Songs like “God is a Good God”, “God Loves a Picnic”, and “This Little Light of Mine” were among the favourites. Then Randy would pull out a Veggie Tales movie and the kids would watch a video about selfishness, trust, obeying or helpfulness. Once the video was done, the kids would split up into two groups: the older kids were ages 10-16 and the younger kids, ages 4-9. One group would be sent to crafts and the other would stay and do drama games such as “I Have Never” and learn more about the lesson, and then the groups would switch.

Soon enough it would be lunch-time and the kids would bring out their packed lunches and we would eat together. We finished the afternoon by playing games like Boogaloo, Brown Squirrel, Manigotagan Squish, parachute games, Cat and Mouse, and soccer. We also

played a large Clue game; had a Carnival with a beanbag toss, limbo, soccer, ring toss, and an obstacle course; and played water games with balloons. The younger kids would be sent home, but the older kids (10+) would be invited back for the evening from 7 – 9 p.m. to play high energy games like Prisoners Base, Capture the Flag, and football.

During the short hours in between play and more play, we as youth spent some time swimming with the kids at the dock, cliff jumping and swimming to the falls. We also ventured to Lake Winnipeg and spent a few minutes wading in the water.

Spending these hours each day with the kids was undoubtedly work but it was definitely worthwhile. The kids soaked up every last bit of love we could give them but we also got a deep sense of satisfaction from them as well. They fall in love with you and you with them, and the hardest thing to do is leave.

We will pray for the kids and their families, and we hope that we’ll all be back together again next year.

—Kayla Thiessen, Steinbach, MB





Matheson Island camp, July 17-20, 2007.



Photos by Kyle Penner

## Camp at Matheson Island

A summer Bible camp was held for the children of the Matheson Island, Manitoba area on July 17-20, 2007. For the second year in a row, a group youth and young adults from Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg spent the week swimming, eating, sleeping, pillow fighting and

worshipping with 27 children from the island.

Highlights included renewing and building friendships, creating memories, growing in faith and the Springfield Heights group getting beat (bad) in a game of street hockey.

—Kyle Penner, Winnipeg, MB

*See you at VBS  
and camp next  
summer!*

## VBS in Cross Lake

A group of eight adults and six children from East Zorra Mennonite Church in Tavistock, Ontario traveled to Cross Lake, Manitoba on August 6, 2007. We had been invited by the Living Word Church to run a Vacation Bible School (VBS) for the children of their community.

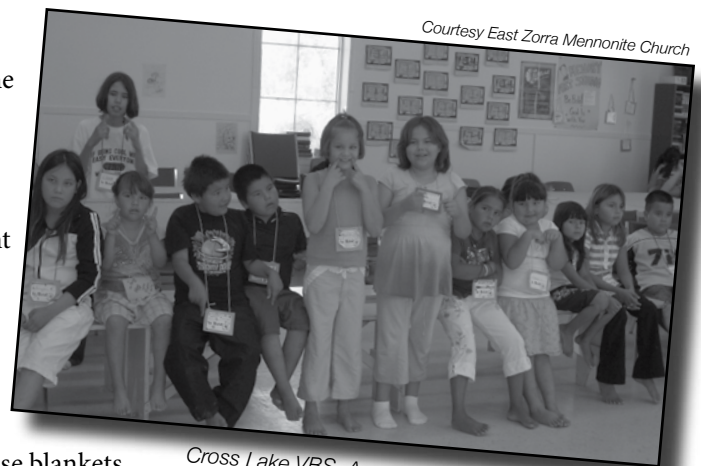
The VBS ran from Monday – Friday in the afternoons and there were approximately 50 children each day. The theme for the week was “Be Bold! God is With You.” Each day began with a worship time with singing, dramatic stories, and memory work. The children learned lots of new songs including “Be Bold! Be Strong!”, “Fear Not” and “Trading My Sorrows,” along with old favorites.

After the worship time, the children were split into three classes: ages 6 and under, ages 7 – 9, and ages 10 and up. During this time the children did a vari-

ety of activities related to the “Be Bold!” theme. The two older groups also participated in “Courage Connections,” where they made crafts and did an assortment of other activities.

Some highlights from the week were comforter knotting, where the children learned how to knot comforters and heard stories of people who need these blankets. Another activity that all the children participated in was tie-dying bandanas, which the children were able to take home with them. A favorite for a lot of the children was playing different games with the entire group.

The week went by very quickly, and the group from East Zorra made many good relationships with the children.



Courtesy East Zorra Mennonite Church

Cross Lake VBS, August 6, 2007.

Florence was our church contact and she expressed the Living Word Church’s gratefulness to have VBS at their church this summer. The East Zorra group, in turn, was grateful to have this opportunity to go to such a wonderful community.

—Twila Schumm, Tavistock, ON

# Thanksgiving, Repentance, Reflection and Celebration

Faith Victory Church in Ohsweken, Ontario (situated on the Six Nations Reserve) was literally filled with worshippers from all walks of life, race, culture and faith on Sunday afternoon, June 24, 2007. Local pastor Adrian Jacobs, who is also the Mennonite Central Committee representative on Six Nations, was instrumental in organizing this event.

I attended this event with my husband and two young children and felt in my heart that many things were happening in the lives of the participants that afternoon:

- Thanking Creator God in the tradition of a Strawberry Festival for the gift of the first-fruits of the land.
- Engaging in a time of corporate repentance. This involved vulnerability in sharing, active listening, empathy and understanding, and forgiveness. A number of individuals, whether individually or on behalf of a group, publicly apologized for acts that violated trust. Reconciliation and restoration of relationships was witnessed, and ongoing fellowship through the relationships was encouraged.
- Entering into a time of celebration through music. Providing music were some of Six Nations' very own talented musicians: Sakoieta Widrick on his Native American Cedar Flute, and Lorrie Gallant and Randell Hill as they reflected and shared their thoughts through song. A special highlight was the presence of Cindy Ruakere, a gifted Maori singer and speaker from New Zealand. It was evident through her sharing of song that her heart is for reconciliation.
- Examining our hearts, reflecting on broken relationships, and entering into a time of corporate unity with our Peacemaker through Communion.

- Sharing our gifts of food with each other.

Gavriel Geffen, a Messianic Jew from the Jewish Quarter of the old walled-city of Jerusalem (Israel), came to the gathering as a special guest. He shared his personal story and what reconciliation means to him. As host for the World Christian Gathering on Indigenous People in Jerusalem in September 2008, Gavriel personally invited the people of

Six Nations to attend and build a long-house in expression of their faith and culture.

I noted that a range of feelings were expressed and experienced by those participating in the afternoon's gathering. Underlying all the emotions, however, seemed to be a sense of comfort, peace, unity and reconciliation with each other and with the One we all call Peacemaker. Though termed with a variety of names unique to our particular culture, it became evident that we all share in the same belief that the One we call Peacemaker has been blessed to us by Creator God.

—Jenny Jutzi, Parkhill, ON

## Nairn Event with Sakoieta

Some of us had the opportunity to meet with, and learn from, Sakoieta Widrick and his wife Dawn at Nairn Mennonite Church, Nairn, Ontario, on April 21, 2007. He made beautiful music with his traditional cedar flute.

Sakoieta opened the day with an outdoor ceremony around a small fire to thank and honour the Creator. We moved indoors to gather in a circle and listen.

Widrick explained that the reason early missionaries to the Americas were able to convert many Aboriginal people to Christianity was because the Christian message was so similar to their own beliefs. Many First Nations groups had stories of 'the Peacemaker' and of 'the resurrected one' so it was not hard to accept the story of Jesus. We look at differences and think that we are offering something new, instead of seeing the similarities and asking what we can learn. Sakoieta made it clear that we need to listen with open minds and with acceptance of how God has been speaking to and relating to Aboriginal people long before we Europeans showed up on their shores.

Sakoieta told a story of a pastor that tried to persuade an Aboriginal elder he needed to accept Jesus as the only way to salvation. The elder offered the pastor a fruit salad, but before he gave



Gavriel Geffen, a Messianic Jew from the Jewish Quarter of the old walled-city of Jerusalem (Israel)

it to the pastor he put it through a food blender. The pastor asked, "What's this?" The elder explained that it was like what you get when you say there is only one way to God – you miss the taste of the individual fruits.

Another aspect of Christianity that creates difficulty for Aboriginal people is the way it has become institutionalized. Institutions are focused on preserving themselves and thus maintaining the status quo. Our church institutions have, at times, been very destructive in the way they have dealt with people, while trying to preserve the institution. Sakoieta pointed out that if we want to truly relate to Aboriginal people, that our religious institutions will need to change. His own experience with Mennonite institutions has been very hurtful, and he knows that he is not alone in that experience. If we want to understand Aboriginal people, we need to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the hurt that has been done, often to those who are trying to build bridges of understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

We need to be ready to listen to the pain expressed by Aboriginal people without being offended or defensive.

—Don Procter, Belgrave, ON

# Circle of One Book Forum

**D**elve into the writings of Native American authors and see how their stories intersect with your own.

The Circle of One book forum invites readers to a new experience – a seasonal approach to reading and discussing books, a new way of talking about them and likely new material to discuss.

Each year, the book forum recommends four books, one for each season, and provides discussion questions and suggestions.

Selections for summer, fall, winter and spring are meant to encourage readers to be more aware of the rhythms of the seasons while introducing Native American authors and giving readers an opportunity to experience Native American perspectives and storytelling.

“Over the years the bulk of our stories are told by white authors. I think it’s important to highlight Native authors who are telling stories from our experience,” said Harley Eagle, co-director of the MCC U.S. Anti-Racism Program.

Eagle, along with Ruth Yellowhawk and Lily Mendoza y Ducheneaux, are co-creators of the Indigenous Issues Forums, a relationship-based group of Native facilitators, mediators, writers, producers and educators who create safe, respectful and family-centered forums to talk about complex issues.

Indigenous Issues Forums is a partner of MCC Central States, and MCC Central States is also promoting the Circle of One book forum, which grew out of the trio’s work and conversations.

“The idea for the book group began several years back, just from our common way of reflecting what we were learning from indigenous authors, and from wanting to put some of our elder’s teachings into action,” Yellowhawk said.

“We wanted to promote Native books by Native authors so we can all get educated together, whether we’re Native or non-Native, an adult, a child,” Yellowhawk said. “I think it’s really important to access different ways in understanding how the world works.”

The trio decided to shape selections around the seasons, recognizing that many in the United States and Canada live the bulk of our lives indoors, with

little sense of the passing of seasons.

“The program is designed to root us in a more natural rhythm of life,” Yellowhawk said. Summertime picks celebrate creativity. And in fall, the harvest time, selections focus on putting, or harvesting, ideas into action. Winter is a time of reflection. Spring selections are about new ideas. “Spring is a time for new growth. It’s hard to change the rut our minds get into. Our picks for the spring are to always challenge that pattern,” Yellowhawk said.

The forum provides far more than simply book suggestions. Materials also guide participants through book discussions using what is often known

as a circle process. Each person has an opportunity to answer a discussion question. The speaker holds a talking piece – whether a stone or a quilt or a piece of fabric. All others listen until the speaker finishes and passes the talking piece on. “It’s really important to us that everybody is seen as knowledgeable, everybody is seen as bringing something,” Yellowhawk said. “For us, the process of how we talk is equally important, if not more important, than what we talk about.”

The forum is designed so people can use the material at home, in school, at church or in a community setting.

—MCC news release.

## Bridging the Gap

“Bridging the Gap” was held at the Siksika Memorial Arbour, Siksika First Nation, Alberta, on Saturday and Sunday, August 25-26, 2007. This annual gathering is designed to bring Native and non-Native people together for two

days of praise and worship of our Lord Jesus Christ through singing, testimonies and visiting over delicious meals. The singing group that travelled the furthest was Ed, Anna Marie and Willy Prince of Peguis First Nation in Manitoba.



(left) Youth attending the gathering (On the left are John and Nicole Munro, children of organizers Todd and Simone Munro.)



(below) Alvin Lepp of Rosemary, Alberta visiting with Celeste and Horace Bull Bear of the Siksika Nation.



(left) Ed, Anna Marie and Willy Prince providing special music.

Photos by Neil von Gunten



## Community news

### Celebrations

**Henry and Elna Neufeld (below)** of Winnipeg, Manitoba celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on July 12, 2007. Congratulations! We wish you many more years of serving the Lord together!



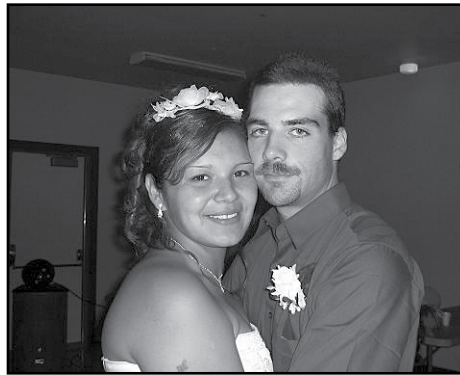
**Teri Olafson and Robin Turnbull (below)** of Sudbury, Ontario were married on June 30, 2007 at the Riverton Heritage Centre, Riverton, Manitoba.

Their parents are Murray and Gwen Olafson of Riverton and Arnold and Cheryl Turnbull of Snow Lake, Manitoba. Congratulations, Teri and Robin!



**Candace Hudson and Corey Spring (below)** of Pine Dock, Manitoba were married on July 7, 2007. Father Rheil Forest preformed the ceremony at the Pine Dock Community Hall. A fish fry followed at the beach and a social was held in the evening.

The groom's parents are Shelley Spring and Don Magnusson of Pine Dock. Candace's uncle, Eric Kennedy of Bloodvein River, Manitoba gave her



away as part of the wedding ceremony. Congratulations, Candace and Corey!

**Jaclyn Gulay and Clinton Whiteway (below)** of Arborg, Manitoba were married on July 21, 2007 at the St. Philips Roman Catholic Church in Arborg.

Jaclyn's parents are Patrick and Julia Gulay of Arborg. Clinton's parents are Melvin Whiteway and Susan Bruce and Kevin Mowat, all of Matheson Island, Manitoba. Congratulations, Jaclyn and Clinton!



July 21 of this summer (2007) was a special day for **Priscilla Meeches and Clifford Boulanger** of Winnipeg, Manitoba. After several earlier attempts to establish a date and place for the wedding, the participants could all be brought together on this beautiful day. Approximately 100 people came for the celebration. The presence and active participation of the couple's four children – Andrea, Tristan, Samuel and Ashton – did much to complete the wedding event.

The choice of July 21 had an added



meaning since this was also the birthday of Clifford's late father, Ernest Cook of Bloodvein, Manitoba. The wedding took place at the Sargent Avenue Menno-nite Church in Winnipeg. The formal ceremony began at 2 p.m., followed by a photography session at Kildonan Park and a reception meal in the church basement at 4 p.m.

Gratitude was expressed for the use of the church and for extra help from several church members. Sound engineer, Rudy Dahl, recorded the proceedings, regulated the sound and provided appropriate recorded music, while Henry Enns and Helen Toews coordinated use of the facilities. Rose Enns is acknowledged for negotiating the arrangements.

Members of the wedding party included three women, Delores Sawanesh and Caroline and Nicole Cook, standing next to the bride; three men, Clayton Cook, William Young and Mitchel Boulanger, supported the groom. Five children bravely walked to the altar, Andrea Boulanger and Tatiana Hamilton brought flowers, and Ashton, Triston and Samuel Boulanger were ring bearers. The entire wedding party looked splendid, all dressed in wedding attire. The groom's mother, Margie Boulanger, coordinated the reception and meal.

Long-time pastoral friend, Menno Wiebe, provided the wedding meditation and conducted the marriage vows. A suitable poem, written and presented by the groom's cousin, Audrey Cook of Brandon, added much to the wedding ceremony. The Boulanger family plans to continue living in Winnipeg.

—Menno Wiebe, Winnipeg, MB



**A Love So Strong**

*Marriage is meaningful and strong  
As one ... together is where you belong  
A life filled with hope, love, faith and grace  
For this is clearly expressed upon your face*

*Life has its ups and lows  
And still your love for each other grows and grows*

*But you two already know this  
As it turned your life into a wonderful bliss*

*So I'd like to take the pleasure  
To say that this is the time to treasure  
The laughter and love you share  
Always remember to show you care*

*Each long and hard step you two take  
This love and relationship no one can break  
As it is ... an unbreakable stone  
And now you'll never be or feel alone*

*When I look at both of you  
I see a family ... a family that is true  
A love that is eternal like fire  
This kind of love that is always a desire*

*Anyone can clearly see  
You have a beautiful family  
Now all you two have ... is to gain  
A devoting love that goes deep in vain*

*It might be a little scary  
But just think of granny ruby and granpa harry  
The long life they shared together  
And their love that lasted forever*

*No one can comprehend  
This love that will never end  
This love you two share  
The love no one can compare*

*The love between you two is so clear  
Finally the time you two waited for is here  
For both Man and Wife  
To be together for life*

—Best wishes from  
Audrey L. Cook, Brandon, MB



**Reginald Scott and Tanya Thompson** (above) of Winnipeg, Manitoba were married on August 31, 2007. Henry Neufeld officiated at this important event in the Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Reginald and Tanya made their vows of allegiance to each other in the presence of God and together with their family members (including their three children) and friends. In total they had twelve attendants and two ring bearers. A wonderful meal was served to all the guests after the service. Reginald is originally from the Hollow Water reserve in Manitoba and Tanya is originally from Ontario. We wish the couple many blessings as they continue with their family in Winnipeg.

—Henry Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB

**Obituaries**

Maheo summoned home **Victoria Long Jaw Walks Along** (Victory Woman) “Hase’hoveoøe” of Lame Deer, Montana on the morning of June 27, 2007. Grandma Victoria, as she is affectionately known to her family and to many of the young people in the community, was one of our Lord God’s humble servants who was a demonstration of devotion to her family, church, community and the Northern Cheyenne Nation. She married Joe Walks Along, Sr. in 1955 and together they committed their lives to serve God as faithful servants, as a pastor and Sunday school teacher, at the Lame Deer Mennonite Church.

Grandma Victoria was noted for her beadwork, her cutting of dry meat,

teaching Sunday School to small children, accompanying Reverend Joe, Sr. at community events and Christian gatherings, having a grandchild or two in tow, tending to her black cows, and zooming around on her purple PT Cruiser. Her most memorable journey in carrying the good news of Jesus Christ was when she traveled with Dad to Guatemala in 1992 to share, worship, pray and encourage the Native Indian people who were being persecuted by government “death squads” for being Christians. They too became Joe and Victoria’s church family.

Joe, Sr. and Victoria became respected elders and spiritual leaders amongst us and have participated in many of the prayer meetings, weddings, funerals, and many other public, Tribal and private family events they were respectively called to attend. They touched the lives of many people and God protected them in their commission to carry the word of hope and salvation to those in need. They were blessed with eight children and many grandchildren who have been or will be called to leadership positions as part of their living legacy. She told some of her family and friends that she was not afraid of death, that it was only the pain she endured during her battle with cancer that gave her discomfort, but more importantly, it would be a happy day when she went to join Dad. Victory Woman missed her “soul mate” dearly and they are now holding hands on the other side in the presence of their savior Jesus Christ and the almighty Creator.

Survivors include her eight biological children, ten adopted children and one adopted grandson, two sisters and three adopted sisters, 42 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews, and the entire Cheyenne Nation and their friends were her extended family.

Traditional wake services were held on Sunday, July 1 at the Lame Deer Mennonite Church. The funeral service was held on Monday in the Lame Deer Allen Rowland Gymnasium, with interment following in the Walks Along family Cemetery.

*Taken from the obituary written by her family.*

**Community news** continued on page 14.



**Adam Fernandez Keeper** of Pauingassi, Manitoba drowned at the age of 6 years on August 7, 2007. He had been pushed into the water by some older children and was unable to save himself. Adam is survived by his sorrowing parents, Harvey Owen and Rosalie Keeper, and his extended family members and friends. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owen officiating.

To our friends at Pauingassi who have lost little Adam through the events of a very sad mishap: I pray for the healing of your broken hearts. I pray that you might experience the love of God who alone can help you to carry this heavy load. Psalm 121:1 says, *I look to the mountains; where will my help come from? My help will come from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

A writer once wrote these words,  
“Leave the HOW with Jesus,  
He will comfort bring;  
Thro’ the storm He’ll hide you  
Underneath His wing.”  
God truly is a loving and forgiving God.  
—Henry Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB

**Albert Young-Skye** (Paan), a life-long resident of Bloodvein River, Manitoba, died on August 20, 2007, at the age of 84 years. The funeral service was held at the Bloodvein River Roman Catholic Church on August 24, Father R. Forest officiating, and interment followed in the Bloodvein River Cemetery.

Albert raised his children with strong Anishinaabe family values (respect, kindness, sharing, courage and love), and he worked hard to provide for them from the land by hunting, trapping, fishing, cutting pulp, and growing a large garden. He enjoyed playing the fiddle and finding ways to make people happy.

Albert is predeceased by his wife Sarah, whom we lovingly cared for while she was ill, and is survived by seven children: Mary (Ted) Cowley, Martha Bushie, Rebecca Bushie, William (Bonnie), Doreen (Larry) Raven, Linda (John) Ford and Herman (Delilah); 43 grandchildren; 46 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren; his

adopted sisters and daughters: Edna Hardisty, Beatrice Moneyas, Isabel Beckett and Shirley Pinter; and numerous nephews, nieces and friends.

**Harry (Lux) Boulette**, age 87 years, of Manigotagan, Manitoba died on August 23, 2007 at the Pine Falls Hospital.

He is survived by eight children: Joyce (Paul) Grimard, Linda (Dennis) Daniels, Lloyd (Faye), Adele (Charles) Rempel, Harry (Darlene), Donald (Terri), Edward and Harvey; 52 grandchildren, 43 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

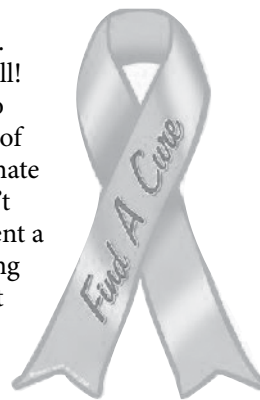
The funeral service was held in the Manigotagan Community Centre on August 28, with John Zacharias and Norman Meade officiating. Burial followed in the Manigotagan Cemetery.

### My Journey with Breast Cancer

This is one journey that I will never forget! When my doctor called on August 14, 2006 to say that my test had come back positive, I asked him, “Where to from here?” He assured me that he would look after things – and he did.

My lumpectomy operation was on September 15, 2006. Everything went well! The next step was to have six treatments of chemo. I was fortunate the treatments didn’t make me sick. I spent a couple of days resting and then just took it easy. I met some wonderful people during this time. They always had a word of encouragement and a smile or hug. These treatments were given every 21 days and finally ended on February 28, 2007.

My radiation treatments started on April 2, 2007. This is where the hardest part came because I would leave home on Monday morning for Winnipeg and return to Riverton on Friday afternoon.



*My family, my church family and friends from all over Canada and the United States helped me through all of this by supporting me with words of encouragement, thinking-of-you notes, phone calls and visits.*

It was hard to leave my family, especially my two grandchildren. My family, my church family and friends from all over Canada and the United States helped me through all of this by supporting me with words of encouragement, thinking-of-you notes, phone calls and visits. I finished my 29 treatments of radiation on May 15, 2007 and headed for home.

I saw at least four doctors and had all kinds of tests from August 8, 2006 to May 15, 2007. It was only the grace of God and many prayers that helped me get through all of that. Many, many thanks to all of you for your prayers, love and support and for walking with me through it all. A very special “Thank You” to my wonderful friends, whom I believe God sent to be with me, Walter and Hilda Franz. Your care and love will never be forgotten!

Today I feel fine and back on track with things. The doctors said everything looks good and they will see me again in the fall. I thank and praise God for taking care of me! Now I will continue to do what it is that God has for me.

Again, thank you to all of you and may God continue to bless us all.

Love and peace,  
Barb Daniels, Riverton, MB



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](mailto:imiller@mennonitechurch.ca)

# HIV/AIDS

Continued from page 5.

brings a message of empowerment for communities suffering the loss

of young lives to suicide.

The November 10th event will be an awareness/fundraising event for Mennonite Central Committee's AIDS work locally and internationally ([www.mcc.org/aids](http://www.mcc.org/aids)). MCC has worked internationally with HIV/AIDS for about six years, and now are we beginning to support partners working with AIDS locally. Ann Kaciulis of Thompson, Manitoba, was a guest speaker at an MCC AIDS fundraiser a few years ago in Calgary. Her experience, both personal and professional, with AIDS and the courage and tenacity in how she lives and works are inspiring to us. In the past two years she and her colleague, Pamela Groening, have begun the Northern AIDS

Resource Centre and Camp Hope, a place for First Nations kids to go who have been impacted by HIV/AIDS in their families or extended families. Most of Ann's work is with First Nations people in urban settings.

Our hope is that Chief Mercredi and Tom Jackson will educate us here in Alberta about the First Nations experience in Canada in relation to HIV/AIDS, and perhaps identify for us the parallels of this experience with many indigenous people around the world, and what it is that Albertans can do to change our own attitudes and assumptions and begin to work together towards solutions.

For more information, or to purchase tickets, please call MCC Alberta at 403-275-6935.

—Kim Thiessen, *Generations at Risk*  
Co-coordinator, MCC AB, Calgary, AB



## Resources

***Finding My Talk: How Fourteen Native Women Reclaimed Their Lives after Residential School*** by Agnes Grant. Fifth House, 2004.

"The experiences shared by these fourteen Aboriginal women, all survivors of the residential school system, are thought-provoking and emotionally stirring. *Finding My Talk* tells some of the multitude of stories that can and should be shared. This book is a vital step in the healing of First Nations, who suffer not only the direct but also the generational effects of the residential experience. (Phil Fontaine, National Chief, Assembly of First Nations, Ottawa, Ontario) ...

Dr. Agnes Grant's painstaking research and interview methods ensure that it is the women's voices we hear in *Finding My Talk*, and that these women are viewed as members of today's global society, not only as victims of their past." [taken from the back cover of book]

***Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian - White Relations in Canada*** by J. R. Miller. Third Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

"... the first comprehensive account of Indian-white relations throughout Canada's history. J.R. Miller charts the deterioration of the relationship from the initial, mutually beneficial contact in

the fur trade to the current impasse in which Indians are resisting displacement and marginalization.

This new edition is the result of substantial revision to incorporate current scholarship and bring the text up to date." [taken from the inside cover of the book]

***Two Families: Treaties and Government*** by Harold Johnson. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2007.

Harold Johnson, a lawyer in La Ronge, northern Saskatchewan, wrote this book in response to a student asking him what treaties mean. "Treaties were the instruments that gave Europeans the right to settle here, share resources, and build a relationship of equality with those who were here before. ... In an easy to read style, the author presents his eloquent personal view on what treaties between First Nations and governments represent. *Two Families* is a passionate plea for the restoration of harmony and equality between First Nations and the rest of Canadian society." [taken from the back cover of book]

***Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin: The Creator's Sacrifice***. Documentary DVD. 43 minutes. Birdsong Communications, 2006.

This documentary film follows Cree

## Events Calendar

### October 19 – 20, 2007

Manitoba Partnership Circle meeting, Steinbach Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Manitoba.

### October 25-27, 2007

Native Mennonite Ministries (US) and Native Ministry Canada joint meeting, Clinton, Oklahoma.

### November 4, 2007

Riverton Fellowship Circle's 9<sup>th</sup> annual Country Gospel Jamboree, Riverton Recreation Centre, Riverton, Manitoba – 1 p.m.

### November 10, 2007

World AIDS Day event in Calgary, Alberta, with guest speaker Chief Ovide Mercredi and performer Tom Jackson. Held at MacEwan Hall Ballroom, University of Calgary, 7 p.m. For more information, or to purchase tickets, please call MCC Alberta at 403-275-6935.

### November 29 – December 1, 2007

NAIITS (North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies) Symposium 2007 at the North American Baptist Seminary, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Theme: Redemption, Reconciliation, and Restoration: Journeys Toward Wholeness.

For more events visit

[www.mennonitechurch.ca/events](http://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](mailto:imiller@mennonitechurch.ca).

artist Ovide Bighetty as he paints "Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin: The Creator's Sacrifice" – 17 scenes of the Easter story from the Gospels – in his unique Woodland Cree style. Filmmaker Donald List explores Ovide's creative process that takes him through layers of traditional First Nation beliefs to a place in his heart where his Christianity and traditional values come to rest. What we see on canvas is the result of this harmonious union of mind, body and spirit. The Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in downtown Regina, Saskatchewan, commissioned Bighetty's work and this film.



# The LORD Will Protect His People

I look to the hills! Where will I find help?  
It will come from the LORD, who created the heavens and the earth.

The LORD is your protector, and he won't go to sleep or let you stumble.

The protector of Israel doesn't doze or ever get drowsy.

The LORD is your protector, there at your right side to shade you from the sun.

You won't be harmed by the sun during the day or by the moon at night.

The LORD will protect you and keep you safe from all dangers.

The LORD will protect you now and always, wherever you go.

Psalm 121

Contemporary English Version

መብረሃል 121:1-8

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### Keep Looking Up!

There is a story told about the young man who FOUND a "townie" [Canadian two-dollar coin] one day as he was walking along the road.

He spent the next 20 years of his life walking with his head down. He was hoping he would find another townie. But all he found was 29,516 buttons and pins, 54,172 nails and screws, and 12 cents.

His back became so humped that he could not lift his head. He LOST so much!

He missed seeing the beautiful sunsets. He didn't see the fluffy white clouds in the blue sky always changing in shape and size. He never saw the stars in the night sky. He didn't even see the pussy willows in the Spring. He didn't look up to see the geese flying south in the Fall.

Most of all, he missed seeing the smiles of his friends. And, he lost the joy of living.

Taken from the June 2007 *Muskeg Moccasinograph*  
Reprinted by permission.

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ጌራርጊት ከምን ላለግክ? ምን ላለግክ? ጌራርጊት ከምን ላለግክ? ምን ላለግክ?  
ጌራርጊት ከምን ላለግክ? ምን ላለግክ? ጌራርጊት ከምን ላለግክ? ምን ላለግክ?