

my friends Intotemak

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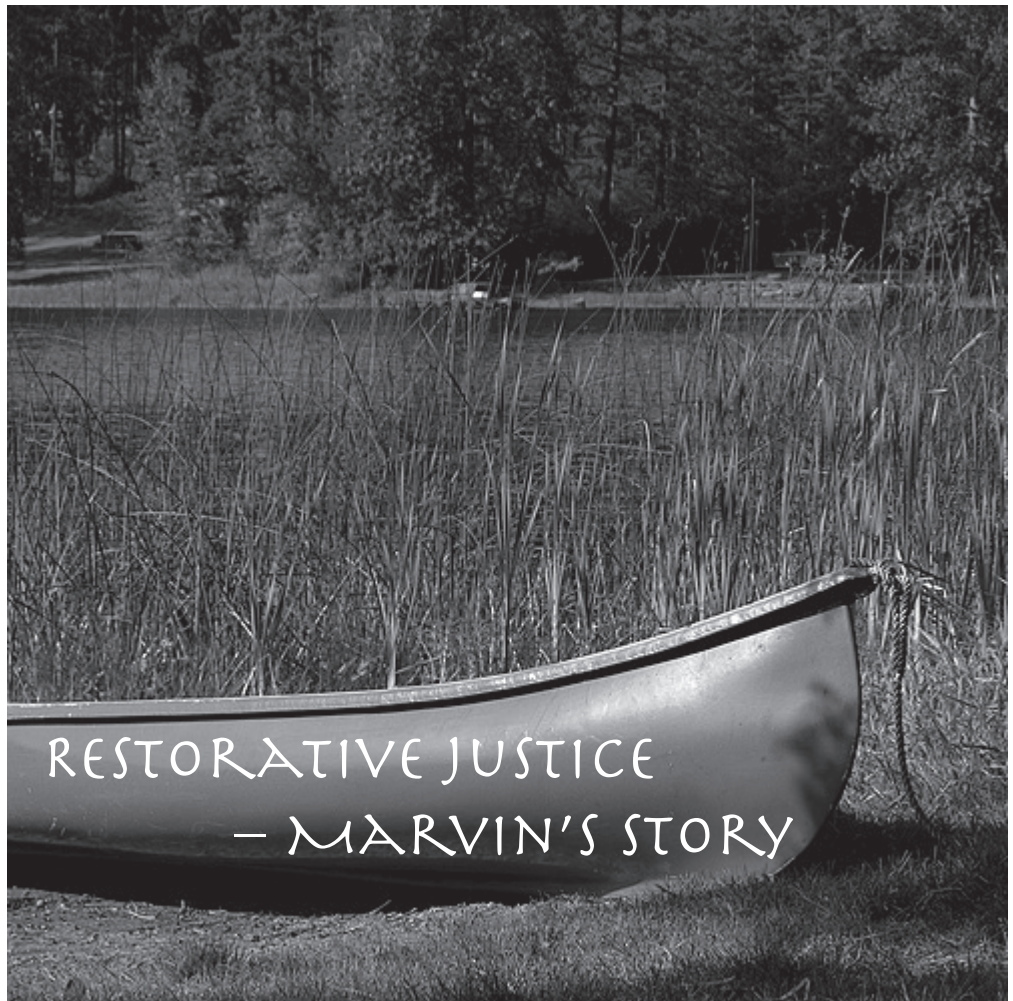
Inside

Quilts give warmth
and healing...4

Resources...10

Reuniting...11

Meditation...12



I stood exhausted beside the casket from the uphill struggle to carry the coffin over the slippery, muddy ground to the top of the hill where the cemetery overlooked the mighty Churchill River in this northern Manitoba community. My friend, a very close friend, had passed away, and I was shocked. Only a few days ago I had unknowingly had my last visit with him.

The journey of this friendship was unlike the pathway most friendships take. Marvin was one of over seven hundred inmates I had accepted into the prisoner visitation program I co-ordinate in the Saskatchewan Penitentiary. As he sat across from me in the interview cubicle, neither of us could have predicted the turbulent, yet wonderful, path of friendship that would evolve.

Not only was I shocked at the death of my friend, but also at the haste in which I arrived in this community; I had no idea when I woke up in the morning that I would be so far from home and at the funeral of my friend. Was I not in the huge Centennial Auditorium, where over two hundred of Saskatchewan's best singing Mennonites had gathered for the much-anticipated "Song Fest" only last night?

See Marvin page 5



Witness



Justice and Reconciliation go Hand in Hand

As we write this column on a bitterly cold winter day, the sunshine coming through the office window gives hope that spring and warmer days are really on the way! We believe that the seasons will continue to follow the plan ordained

by our Creator God. The earth that is now frozen and covered with snow will eventually thaw and the dormant bulbs and sprouts will spring to life once more!

Isn't the Easter story also full of hope? The darkness and despair of Good Friday is overtaken by the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour on Easter Sunday. The disciples who came to the tomb that first Easter morning were surprised and puzzled to find the tomb empty, but they were even more totally amazed when Mary reported to them that Jesus had appeared to her as she stood outside the tomb. Did these disciples dare to come out of their locked room and believe that Jesus was, indeed, alive again? As we read on in the Gospel story we discover that yes, their hope and faith were revived again and the disciples went on to proclaim Christ's message and ministry throughout their known world.

Darkness is all around us, too, in 2009. Violence, dysfunctional lifestyles, abuse of many kinds, hurt and pain, and even fear of each other — They all bring despair into the lives of people. They keep us away from each other. The struggle can keep us from reaching out for support to begin the journey of healing.

But, there is also hope in the midst of struggle. We can live with the hope and desire that Christ's call for reconciliation and His ability to tear down walls between people is possible even in our world today -- 2009. Attitudes can change! Healing is possible! This same hope motivates us to work diligently towards removing barriers and building bridges among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people within the parameters of Mennonite Church Canada and beyond.

We are privileged to have two articles in this issue that share real-life examples of reconciliation and healing. "Marvin's Story" is an example of the power of Christ at work — in changing a person's life away from the overwhelming layers of hurt and pain

We can live with the hope and desire that Christ's call for reconciliation and His ability to tear down walls between people is possible even in our world today.

to being able to accept the love, acceptance and fellowship that are offered by others. We also recognize the presence of Christ at work when individuals can reach out to another person with respect, love and a gentle touch, and see that person as Christ sees them — with no strings attached.

The second article — "A Native View of the Church and Reconciliation" -- opens our eyes to the hurts and pain that has gone on far too long within the wider Christian church community and its contact with Aboriginal people. People often ask us in our travels, "How can we learn to know each other?" This author helpfully offers practical ideas of how reconciliation and healing can happen and how we can begin the journey of becoming true brothers and sisters within the church and beyond. May this article be eye-opening, thought-provoking and bring us hope that change is possible! Where is there a better place to proclaim this than in the church, the place on earth that is called to follow the example of Jesus Christ?

When you look at the Events Calendar on page 9, you will notice that many events are happening this spring and summer in an effort to break down walls, build bridges of respect and understanding, and provide opportunities for hope to spring forth with renewed vigor! Are there other things happening in your area that you can share with us?

May this hope of new life, healing and peace live in your life and encourage you on your journey!

That is all we have for now. Migwetch.

Neill and Edith

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



Intotemak

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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.

Intotemak staff

Editors – Edith & Neill von Gunten
nativeministry@mennonitechurch.ca

Editorial Assistant – Ingrid Miller
imiller@mennonitechurch.ca

Art Director/Designer –
Carpe Diem Designs, Tammy Sawatzky

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Please send all communications to:

Intotemak
Mennonite Church Canada
c/o Native Ministry
600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, MB
R3P 0M4 204.888.6781
Toll Free 1.866.888.6785
Fax 204.831.5675
www.mennonitechurch.ca

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VISION HEAL- ING

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.



Granny's Magical Eggs

My family's Easter message that year came unexpectedly. Tindy, our gray-and-white Persian Mcat, leaped nimbly to the kitchen stool and from there to the refrigerator top. She sniffed at the hard-boiled colored eggs that had been left in a rack to dry. CRASH! The eggs, intended for the children's Easter baskets, rolled on the floor. I gathered them up, but cracks and lines now spoiled the colorful surfaces.

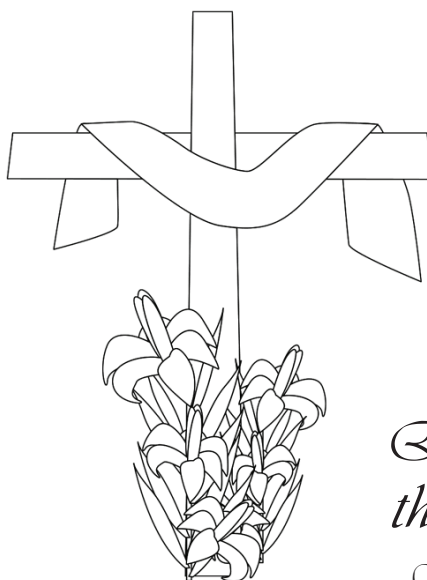
"They're ruined!" cried Jenny. Granny thoughtfully studied the situation. Then she sat down, picked up an egg and a wax crayon and began following the crack with a line of green. Soon a vine circled the egg. Then she added tiny green leaves and red, yellow and blue flowers. Like magic, the cracks were transformed. She then went to work on the others and soon all were bright with colorful designs.

"Why, they're prettier than before," Jenny said.

And they were.

The Easter message? Broken eggs, like broken people, can become more beautiful than ever. The eggs needed Granny. Broken people need Jesus Christ.

-Author Unknown.



*Easter spells out beauty,
the rare beauty of new life.*

-B.D. Gordon



Quilts provide Warmth and Healing along the Way

The story starts eight years ago in Grunthal, Manitoba, where Gertie Braun was looking for ways to use the surplus clothing from the local Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift shop.

"I couldn't handle throwing them out and so I talked with the other volunteers about cutting them up for quilts," said Braun.

So Maria Funk started cutting the squares and Braun, with her factory sewing machine, sewed the squares together for quilt tops. Over the years, she has sent their creations to various missions.

Recently, the quilt tops have brought delight to students in the northern First Nations community of Cross Lake, Manitoba. When between 80 and 100 of these heavy quilt tops accumulate, Norm Voth, director of evangelism and service ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba, arranges for them to be delivered to Cross Lake.

Florence Benson-Umpherville, a leader in the Cross Lake Living Word Church (an MC Manitoba congregation) and principal at the local school, has discovered creative ways for the quilts to continue their journey. In her school, which has students from nursery-aged to Grade 9, she developed a character education program; as part of this program students work together in groups to finish the quilts and then send them to MCC.

Several of the quilt tops completed by the Cross Lake students found their way last spring to the remote community of Pauingassi, Manitoba, where they were used in healing circle.

Ten families met at a retreat centre and each family unit was given a quilt to complete.

"Every couple and their children worked on a quilt," said Eric Kennedy, a member of the Pauingassi community, in a phone interview. "They were encouraged to make the quilt so that it would have significance to them. Each one was different. A lot went into the making of each quilt. It brought families together on a project. There was interaction with each other."

While the event took place last April, Kennedy noted that these families continue to cooperate and come together in ways they didn't before. "We hope to do the same thing at a community level," he said. "We want to have someone come in and teach us how to make the quilts from scratch. We already have a heavy industrial sewing machine."

This year, Benson-Umpherville gave the quilt tops to a group of her older students, who are sewing them for elders in the community. "They will each choose an elder in the community to give it to," she explained by phone from Cross Lake. "They are not to give it to someone in their family, but will present it to someone they feel is deserving."

Braun said that, while it is hard work and it takes time to put the quilt tops together, she plans to continue making them as long as they are meeting needs along the way to their final destination.

-Evelyn Rempel Petkau, Manitoba Correspondent

Taken from the January 5, 2009 issue of the *Canadian Mennonite*. Used with permission.



THE POMP AND CEREMONY OF THIS GATHERING BOASTED A CHOIR CONDUCTOR IN A TUXEDO, AND A PIPE ORGAN IMPORTED FOR THIS EVENT FROM OREGON. IN DISBELIEF AND STARK CONTRAST TO THE FOLLOWING EVENING, I FOUND MYSELF SURROUNDED BY ABOUT ONE HUNDRED OR MORE CREE-SPEAKING PEOPLE, AND I BEING THE ONLY WHITE PERSON.

Marvin cont.

Instead of a mass choir and pipe organ, four Native women with muddy rubber boots strum guitars at the traditional wake before tomorrow's funeral. Miraculously, I arrived at the airport in The Pas, Manitoba with only minutes to spare, to learn that someone had just cancelled the last seat and I could have it.

When I arrived at the airport at Pukatawagon, I was able to catch a ride as the last passenger in a truck; otherwise, I would have had to walk seven miles into the community on a muddy road in the dark. When we arrived in the community of 2000 people, I was taken to the top of a hill where I would have to find the home of a lady I had phoned from my office in the morning, who said I could stay with her if I couldn't find any place else to stay. I got out of the truck with no idea which way to go, and so I started to walk to a lady I saw in the middle of a cluster of houses to ask if she could direct me to the right home, to which she responded, "I'm _____" (the woman I was looking for).

My friend Marvin and I had just about nothing in common when we met. Like most inmates my volunteer visitors and I relate to, Marvin was Aboriginal. In fact, twenty years earlier when I started in prisoner visitation, a Native lawyer told me that she didn't think the Person-To-Person program would work because she said, "most of your visitors will be white, and most of the people they'll be visiting in prison will be Native." Marvin and I had crossed some barriers others had considered insurmountable, and we had become friends.

Now, as the graveside service started, my eyes drifted over this small reserve known as Pukatawagon, and I began to think about the things Marvin used to tell me about this place. Once he showed me a Reader's Digest article that described Pukatawagon as having the highest homicide rate anywhere in North America. In fact, what had driven Marvin from this community which he was never able to return to again until his funeral twenty-three years later, was a homicide he was alleged to have committed, but was later overturned to a lesser charge of manslaughter. Though Marvin

spent over ten years in prison on this charge, he explained the courts offered no proof of his guilt other than he was the last person to leave the house where the deceased was found the following day. He told me he was a frightened 17-year-old who understood little of what was said in court and basically agreed to anything, just to get everything over with. At the time of Marvin's death, he and I were involved in the process of attempting to establish his innocence of the manslaughter charge.

Because the graveside service was conducted in the Cree language, which I don't understand, my mind continued to drift, and I looked out across the majestic Churchill River. Both Marvin and I had many experiences on this river, but never together. Marvin grew up on the shores of this river, not far away from Pukatawagon, in his grandfather's cabin, which served as a post to attend a trap-line in winter and the fishnets in summer. Marvin was five when he came to live with his grandfather and grandmother after his father died and his mother was unable to care for the seventeen children alone.

Marvin remembers being badly mistreated by his alcoholic grandfather. He was always cruel, but especially when he was drinking. Several times Marvin remembers his grandfather pushing him up against a hot woodstove to amuse his drinking buddies while they laughed as Marvin squirmed, struggled, and grabbed his seat where he had been burned.

Once, as an eight-year-old, when Marvin knew he'd get a beating for coming home late from tending the fishing nets, he shot at his grandfather with a 22-rifle as the old man approached Marvin with a stick to beat him. Marvin ran but was apprehended by police, who flew him to a strange place for delinquent boys in a big city, where older boys and even staff abused him.

After several months, a social worker returned him to a spot along the Churchill River where his grandfather picked him up in a canoe. While his grandfather acted nice to Marvin in the presence of the social worker

and police, Marvin says that once they turned a bend in the river out of sight of the police and social worker, he received a sharp crack by a paddle to the side of his head, which caused his ears to bleed. His grandfather told him that he would kill him if he ever pointed a gun at him again.

Marvin fought back towards a cruel world with as much violence as he could muster in his early teens as he was placed in Brandon, Manitoba's home for delinquent boys many times. Then at seventeen, he was charged with murder.

While in the remand centre, he searched for cigarette papers for the tobacco he had salvaged from several cigarette butts he had found. Someone said that the thin onion-skin paper from a Bible was good for rolling smokes. So, he took the tobacco and Bible to his cell to roll cigarettes that evening. When he selected some pages from the Bible to pull out for cigarette papers, he started reading the pages instead, and continued reading until midnight. Something stirred within him, and although he did not understand, he knew that answers to his damaged soul seemed to speak to him from these pages. Until Marvin's death from flesh-eating disease in late March 2000, his life was a see-saw battle between his struggle with addictions and violence, and his desire to live righteously and responsibly in accordance with his faith.

My friendship with Marvin, and the friendship of those who visited him in prison, as well as the warmth and acceptance of his many friends in Grace Mennonite Church (Prince Albert, Saskatchewan) where he started to attend, gradually gained greater prominence over his life than alcohol.

Being Marvin's friend was not easy. Marvin had a great deal of healing to do from his abusive childhood and from the hurt he had caused others as he unleashed his own unresolved pain. He engaged in programs such as "Choices for Men" in an attempt to curb his own violence and he experienced many successes.

See Marvin page 6

ONCE WHEN HE SPOKE AT ONE OF THE MANY CHURCHES HE AND I WERE INVITED TO, TO PROMOTE THE WORK OF PERSON-TO-PERSON, A WOMAN HUGGED HIM AFTER HE SHARED HIS LIFE STORY.

On the way home, he broke down in the car with me, started sobbing, and said, “Why did it take so long in my life for someone to hug me and tell me that they love me?”

Through Marvin’s contact with me and many people who became a healing presence in his life, Marvin began to heal. However, it takes an incredible amount of love and nurturing to undo the harm caused to someone like Marvin. How much restoration and healing does it take?

“But let justice roll like a river and righteousness like a never-ending stream.” [Amos 5:24]

The Churchill River Marvin grew up on is noted worldwide by canoeing enthusiasts for its pristine beauty, rugged wilderness, and challenging rapids and waterfalls. Nistowiak Falls on this same river is one Saskatchewan’s most spectacular sights. As a canoeing and whitewater enthusiast myself, one thing I have noticed among the many people I have taken to this spot, is that people don’t talk a lot when they come upon the sight of the falls suddenly from the obscurity of the bush trail that leads up to them. They are overwhelmed and mostly stand silently in awe. Nothing describes power and plenty like a waterfall! The power, strength, and the enormity of a waterfall cause us to almost be drawn into it; nothing else matters for the moment. A never-ending stream produces a huge abundance of water. If we really practiced justice to this extent, what would this do for family, church, and international relationships between nations?

Justice, in its best definition, and the one the Bible gives to it, is righteousness and righteous relationships. Justice has nothing to do with establishing blame, with punishment, and seeking revenge. It was only when Marvin saw righteousness, and was treated righteously that he started to heal. Believe me, it took as much righteousness and real justice as there is water that flows over Nistowiak Falls.

Part of living righteously and practicing healing justice with spiritually and emotionally wounded people like Marvin is treating them with extreme gentleness. It is having a gentle touch!

My experience in these years of dealing with seven hundred federal inmates and attempting to be a healing presence among

them is that you cannot respond to the facade of toughness they present. Injured people develop a hard exterior to protect the fragility and brokenness of their inner spirit. “A bruised reed He will not break, a smoldering wick He will not snuff out.” [Matthew 12:20] Aside from all I have learned about the human spirit from being in the presence of people, much has been learned in my many times in nature.

Once when a group of canoeists and I struggled hard against the pounding waves in a storm on a huge lake of the Churchill River, we reached the shelter among the reeds of

the shore in a state of total exhaustion. As the water lapped against the side of my canoe, I watched the reeds and I reflected on the Scripture verse, “A bruised reed, He will not break.” [Isaiah 42:3] A water reed is a spongy mass of vegetation with little more tensile strength than an overcooked length of spaghetti. With an effortless twist, even a healthy reed would break effortlessly. One can only imagine how easy it would be for a bruised reed to break. To handle a bruised reed without causing it to break, one would have to handle it with extreme care.





IT IS WITH THIS SAME EXTREME GENTLE TOUCH THAT CHRIST CALLS HIS FOLLOWERS TO DEAL WITH THE BROKENNESS AND FRAGILITY OF A WOUNDED HUMAN SPIRIT.

We must practice a gentle touch, with steadfast perseverance, because often it is against those who care most for the emotionally broken, that the emotionally broken lash out against in their anger. Gentleness always wins out over the long haul though. Remember, rugged rocky coastlines are turned into beautiful sandy beaches by the soft, persevering, lapping action of waves. It would seem then, that as caregivers, our gentleness must be as plentiful also as a never-ending stream, and a touch so gentle that would not even cause a bruised reed to break.

Now the graveside service is over and it is time to bury my friend, Marvin. I am asked to help in the arduous task because I am one of the pallbearers, and so the Native men and I start to fill in Marvin's grave. The task is difficult because the frozen lumps of clay are sticky and thawing in the morning sun. I am relieved as one of the women approaches and presents to me the guest register from the funeral, as a gift to me and the congregation in Prince Albert who accepted Marvin as a friend. On the cover of the register is an eagle in flight against the clear blue sky. I thank her, set the gift down, and continue shovelling, but realize all is still and the other men have stopped shovelling, and are gazing skyward in reverence.

Overhead, an eagle descends in ever-tightening circles, until it is unusually close to us and directly overhead. "That is a good sign," one of the men says, as we inwardly acknowledge God's presence and spirit around us.

I am reminded as I gaze skyward also of

the psalmist in Isaiah 40:31, "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Marvin was now free like the eagle overhead, his spirit was no longer bound by the suffering and hurt he had known on earth. Now his spirit was soaring joyously overhead and it almost seemed like he had returned to bid me the farewell he never had a chance to say when he parted from this earth.

Marvin's story is a shining example of hope for all of us. Healing justice can repair the ruins of broken lives and turn them into a beautiful creation. Marvin's life was changed because he chose to engage righteously with others, and in turn, he was lovingly surrounded by a community of people who treated him with a gentle touch.

It is not only prisoners that are healed with the gentle touch of friendship, but their families are as well. Incarceration of a family member, in many ways, is like a death in the family. Loved ones are physically removed and the loss leaves the rest of the family in mourning.

This week a grieving wife phoned me in desperation, with a pleading in her voice. She wanted me to go to the penitentiary because her husband had just been transferred to the penitentiary from a remand unit in the provincial correctional centre. With only a few questions of her, she unloaded her very sad and disheartening story, amid tears and sobbing so grievously, that at times it was hard to understand her. Her last request of me also caused

me to choke up, she said, "Could you please tell him that I love him." Later that afternoon I told him.

Last summer an equally distraught mother called me, asking me to see her son. He would be arriving from a Manitoba prison, and could I see him just as soon as he arrived at the penitentiary in Prince Albert. She feared for his life in prison because of the type of crime he had committed. Amid her tears and sobbing were words of grief and guilt and questions of where they had gone wrong as parents.

Crime and incarceration does not always happen to others, like the story I told about the little Aboriginal boy who grew up on the banks of the Churchill River in northern Manitoba. The last two stories, about the disheartened wife and mother, come from churches that make up Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

Person to Person – better known as P2P – is a ministry of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan that offers healing and hope to broken people. In fact, were it not for MC Saskatchewan churches, there would have been no voice at the other end of the phone line when these desperate women called me.

Continue to pray for P2P, support the P2P visitors that you know, or better yet, become a P2P visitor yourself.

Dale Schiele, Provincial Director
Person to Person Prisoner Visitation program
Prince Albert, SK

A Native View of the Church and Reconciliation

Although reconciliation is such a complicated topic with many different perspectives, for me it all has to do with agape love, acceptance, patience and tolerance. This may sound childish and naïve but every time I have gotten involved with organized religion, whether it is denominational or non-denominational, I have always run into the same facts and experiences:

There has always been ulterior motives and thought out intentions other than true fellowship. These issues include:

- Lack of trust toward and with Native people.
- The treatment of Native people like a parent to a child.
- The inability to see us as co-workers and equals.

- The attitude toward us like we don't know or have read the Word of GOD, thus they are the teachers and we the students.

- Lack of communication skills — they do all the talking and we do all the listening.

- An unwillingness to want to listen to us because they think they have all the answers and, of course, want all the credit. They want their own feathers in their hats (no pun intended).

- Preconceived ideas of what Native people are, mostly gotten from the Lone Ranger and Tonto or Hollywood's concept of Indians.

Lack of knowledge of neighboring Tribe/s.

- Not understanding or supporting Sovereignty and Treaty Rights as guaranteed by the government (Canada and the United States).

- No compassion — their attitude is for us to forgive, forget, give it to GOD, and move on. Or, "It happened in the past so it has no bearing on the now."

- Always using Scripture that pertains to their pre-conceived ideas so that they have the authority to chastise us and tell us our drums drum up the devil, or that we worship the sun, moon, stars and animals. How do they know? Where do they get these ideas? It has been passed on from one generation to another for centuries and they see what they want to see. ... My goodness, they couldn't be wrong could they?

These are just a few of what I have come across. My goodness, if it wasn't so real I would laugh at such outrageousness. But because this happens all the time, it isn't funny because it hurts our people. Then they, the Church, wonder why Native people don't want to go to their church or fellowship with them.

I probably have repeated what others have said in a different manner but it all adds up the same. We are the bad guys and they are the



good guys. What a pity.

Even though all this has happened I still fellowship when invited or asked, or if I personally know who the priest or pastor is. I am careful to set up my boundaries and be in tune to what is happening around me, and that means to keep my eyes open when things don't quite seem right.

How Do We Change These Things and What Can the Church Do to Help with the Reconciliation and Healing?

- Develop dialog.
- Don't judge or criticize.
- Listen with an open heart and mind.
- Be of service and help and find out what needs are within the tribal community and meet those needs. "Being doers of the Word."
- Ask questions and communicate before leaving or giving up on us! Healing, trust and developing relationships and friendships takes time.
- Persevere — walls take time to tear down.
- Love us as Christ loves us, treat us as Jesus would. Love us unconditionally and we will love you unconditionally.
- Ask permission, use common courtesy and common sense.
- Volunteer! We will help you too.

- Develop relationships and friendships, show the Jesus that dwells in you outward towards us and we will return the respect, courtesy and thoughtfulness.

- Be patient with us, we have centuries of distrust, pain, hurt and tears to overcome.

- Find out why we have the distrust, hurt, pain and tears.

- We don't need pity but empathy is accepted.

- Validate us and who we are as a people, God's people. We all bleed red and breathe the same air. We all go home to the Father.

- Let's stand together on equal ground with mutual understanding, integrity, and respect.

- Allow us to be who we are, Native people who love God and who loves us just as we are. We are all saved by HIS GRACE.

Please be tolerant with me as my intent was to not offend anyone or hurt anyone. I just spoke what I have seen and experienced, and will continue to pray that a relationship will be developed with no more fears of what and who we are or how we choose to worship God the Father and HIS Son.

Written by the Hon. Carol Hunter. Taken from *Our Daily Frybread*, January 11, 2006. Used with permission



Katherine Owen



I'm Katherine Owen. I just want to write a few words about my life.

I was born in Pauingassi (Manitoba). I was six or seven (years old) since I know Henry (Neufeld) and his family, and his kids and some other kids. We used to play and slide down the hill. It was fun.

And then in 1967 I got married to Charlie and we have kids. All these past years I was sick. In 1974 some guys prayed for me to change my life. Somewhere in 1996 I was backslide. I didn't know what I was doing. Nobody talked to me. And I got sick again last year. A lady came to visit me in a hospital and she prayed for me and I gave my life to the Lord. It helped me a lot.

I am diabetic and go to dialysis three times every week. My foot got all black in 2007. Then on November 23 my leg was amputated. After that my other leg got all black. On October 19, 2008 my other leg got amputated. From the hospital I now moved into Quest Inn on Ellice Avenue in Winnipeg. This is my new home.

I read the Bible every day. I pray for my kids. I wish they could be saved for the Lord; not just them, everybody I pray for. I have something here everyone should know that Jesus is coming soon. 2 Peter 3:9 - 10, *The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that Day the heavens will disappear with a shrill noise, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed and the earth with*

everything in it will vanish. -As told to Henry Neufeld and translated from Ojibway.

Obituaries

Gladys Sarah (Monkman) Oddleifson, age 80 years of Petersfield, Manitoba, passed away at the Selkirk General Hospital on November 9, 2008. Gladys was born at Matheson Island, grew up at Loon Straits, and lived in Arborg and Selkirk before moving back to a little log house they called the Sugar Shack in Loon Straits in 1973.

Gladys is survived by her beloved husband of 61 years Bob, daughters Sharon (Harley) Jonasson, Roberta (Ken) Pruden and Pat (Alphonse) Noschese; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren; sister Ruby Sveinson, brother Jack Monkman, sisters-in-law Elsie, Deanna and Joyce Monkman, and numerous nephews and nieces.

Gladys was a valued employee at the Selkirk Mental Hospital and the Betel Home while living in Selkirk. Growing up within a large family in a small northern fishing community along Lake Winnipeg, Gladys learned the value of hard work and economy. She was the world's greatest environmentalist. Everything had value and nothing was wasted. She was always a lady with consistent high standards. Despite the challenge of raising four children with Dad working out of town, her home was always immaculate and there was never a shortage of homemade bread, baking and delicious meals to welcome everyone. Her gardens were like pictures, filled with beautiful flowers, raspberry bushes, and row upon row of vegetables. The cellar and freezer were always filled with the bountiful harvest. To Mom, family always came first. She devoted her life to her husband, children and grandchildren, and there was never a doubt in our minds how important we were, knowing her gentle love was unending.

A Service of Remembrance was held on November 14 in the Gilbert Funeral Chapel in Selkirk, with Pastor Trudy Thorarinson of Riverton officiating.

William (Bill) Barker of Winnipeg, Manitoba, passed away at the age of 62 years on November 11, 2008 at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg. Bill spent his earlier years on the Hollow Water First Nation, working in the bush and helping with the harvest of fish on Lake Winnipeg.

Bill is survived by two sisters, Rosie (Oliver) Sinclair and Thelma (Norman) Meade; two brothers Melvin (Yvonne) and Rene (Lorlei);

Continued on page 11

Events Calendar

May 1 – 3, 2009

A retreat is planned for former Mennonite Pioneer Mission/Native Ministries staff at Wilderness Edge in Pinawa, MB. The purpose of the weekend goes beyond the social interaction that so many are anticipating again to exploring "What have we learned and how best can/should we move forward?"

June 4 – 6, 2009

NAITS' (North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies) 6th Symposium on Indigenous Theology and Mission, "Indigenous Church: Expressions of Community," will be held at Trinity Western University in Langley, BC. Speakers will include a dialogue between Brian McLaren and Terry LeBlanc, as well as talks by Prabhu Singh, and Tom and Christine Sine, and an indigenous youth panel on Saturday.

June 5 – 7, 2009

Mennonite Church Canada's annual delegate Assembly 2009 in Saskatoon, SK.

June 8 – 9, 2009

Aboriginal Learning Tour in the Saskatchewan River Valley, co-sponsored by the Mennonite Church Saskatchewan Ministries Commission, Aboriginal Neighbours of Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, and Native Ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

Registration information is on the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2009 registration form can be found at www.mennonitechurch.ca. The deadline to register for this tour is Wednesday, April 15th. The tour is limited to 30 participants.

July 12 – 28, 2009

North American Indigenous Learning Tour to Paraguay and Argentina for Mennonite World Conference and visits to the indigenous communities of the Chaco.

For more events visit mennonitechurch.ca/events. Native Ministry related events can be submitted for the calendar. Submit events in writing to the mailing address on page 2, or email to imiller@mennonitechurch.ca.



Community news

Community news cont.

numerous nieces, nephews and friends; his children Russell, Kathy and a special little boy, Peanut.

The funeral service was held on November 15 at the Hollow Water First Nation Band Hall in Wanipigow, Manitoba, Reverend Richard Bruyere and Norman Meade officiating.

Edgar Wallace Johnston, aged 75 years, of Riverton, Manitoba passed away on Monday, December 8, 2008 at the Gimli Health Centre, Gimli, Manitoba. He moved to Riverton from Pine Dock after his retirement.

Edgar leaves to mourn his passing, one daughter, Patricia Nepinak; brother, Louis (Jo-An); sisters, Milly (Frank) Williams, Sarah Mowat, Vangie (Cliff) Kuzio and LaVerne (Eugene) Stevenson; three grandchildren and five great grandchildren; as well as numerous nephews and nieces and other relatives.

The funeral service was held in Peguis on December 12 at the St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Reverend Barry Bear officiating. Interment followed at the Sacred Heart Cemetery, Peguis, Manitoba.

Agnes (Owen) Pascal of Pauingassi, Manitoba passed away at the Seven Oaks Hospital

in Winnipeg, Manitoba on December 14, 2008 at the age of 68 years. Agnes and her daughter had moved to Winnipeg because of their respective need for dialysis. She is survived by her estranged husband, family and many friends. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owen officiating.

Jessie Snifeld, aged 68 years of Riverton, Manitoba, passed away on January 6, 2009 at the Health Sciences Center in Winnipeg.

She is survived by her husband of 45 years, Julius; daughters Sherry (Larry) and Tammy (Rob); sons Larry (Linda) and Les (Lori); ten grandchildren and one great-granddaughter; brother Ernie and numerous nieces, nephews, in-laws and friends.

Jessie spent her early years in Pine Dock but lived most of her adult life in Selkirk and Riverton. She loved playing bingo, family gatherings, going to the beach and going for rides. She especially enjoyed being with all of her family for her last Christmas. Jessie was a member of the Riverton Fellowship Circle.

A memorial service was held on January 9 at the Riverton Recreation Center with Pastor Trudy Thorarinson officiating. Burial was in the Hnaua Cemetery.

John Adam Keeper of Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba spent a lengthy time in the Health Sciences Center in Winnipeg, Manitoba before moving to the Fisher River Personal Care Home on the Fisher River First Nation. He passed away there on January 11, 2009 at the age of 80 years. He is survived by his wife Nora, children, grandchildren and many friends. Allan Owen officiated at the interment in Little Grand Rapids.

Tony Green, age 51 years of Bloodvein River, Manitoba, passed away on February 2, 2009 as the result of a car accident on the Pine Dock road (PTH 234) north of Riverton. Tony and his wife were returning to Bloodvein River at the time of the accident and had two of their grandchildren with them in the vehicle.

Left to grieve Tony's passing are his wife Rosalie, and his children, grandchildren, siblings and many friends. This unexpected passing is a very heavy shock for the family and the community. Former Native Ministries staff person in Bloodvein River, Abe Hoepfner, returned to the community to officiate at the funeral.



Resources

Check out the Native Ministry webpage at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/899> to read about the various Ministry Circles across Canada

- to discover what books, DVDs and other material are available for loan from the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre
- to preview the Reaching Up to God Our Creator resource box
- to read the back issues of INTOTEMAK (mid-2006, 2007 and 2008)

Visit Native Ministry related resources available at <http://www.mennonitechurch.resourcecentre/browse/868>

Thank you!

Two of the awards given out at the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre's January "Downey Award" event were because of people like you who checked out the website! Thank you for doing so!

The Reaching up to God our Creator resource box received the "Most Hits 2008" award – with 1469 clicks on the site to check

the online previews! <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/554>

The **Church Matters** radio podcast that had the most "hits" was Episode 15: "Jesus: The Way" with Richard Twiss – with 191 hits in 2008 – found at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/612>

Maskipiton: Peace Chief of the Cree can be purchased or borrowed separately from the Reaching Up resource box. It was also mentioned at the Downey Awards – as one of the top books borrowed from the Resource Centre in 2008! <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/898>

The Sharing Circle: Stories about First Nations Culture by Theresa Meuse – Dalien. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2003. 52 pages.

This book by a Mi'kmaw author and illustrator engages and informs children of all ages. We are privileged to listen in as Matthew's family teaches him about his First Nations cultural and spiritual practices in this collection of seven stories. *The Sharing Circle*

is included as an additional resource in the *Reaching Up To God Our Creator* resource box mentioned above. <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/901>

First Nations Teachings and Practices.

Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc., 2008. 30 pages. [Phone: 204-940-7020; Toll Free: 1-866-331-9561]

This educational booklet is a valuable learning resource for non-Aboriginal people, as well as for First Nations people themselves. <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/902>

These resources can be borrowed from the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre – phone 204-888-6781 or toll-free 1-866-888-6785. Check out the Resource Centre website at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre> for more resources that are available for loan.

If you are looking for beautiful North American Native products, check out www.nativerellections.com.

Reuniting intertwined spirits in Paraguay

Nearly 30 Mennonites living and ministering in indigenous contexts in the United States and Canada are preparing to connect with kindred spirits in Paraguay. This group includes 12 Canadians travelling with Mennonite Church Canada's Native Ministry.

Together they have accepted an invitation extended by three indigenous Paraguayan conferences in 2007 to visit their congregations and communities following Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly 15 in Asunción, Paraguay next July.

"We are eager to introduce you to our families, our congregations and our way of life," the invitation reads. "We anticipate hearing about your walk with the Lord and also about traditions, your stories and your experiences within the Mennonite family of faith. We genuinely believe this interchange will be good for both of us."

Nearly 1,000 indigenous Mennonites from the Paraguayan Chaco are also expected to attend Assembly 15 along with 10 representatives from Guatemala, Panama and Peru. Though indigenous people will gather from many nations, there is an underlying wonder at having a common identity and history.

Manitoban Norman Meade, Metis elder, lay pastor, and long-time friend of MC Canada Native Ministry travelled to Paraguay last November on behalf of MC Canada Native Ministry. With Willis Busenitz, pastor of White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, Mont., Meade strove to deepen relationships that began at previous MWC meetings and to make travel arrangements that will strengthen connections among indigenous people.

"Our spirits are still intertwined. The spiritual connection was quickly felt," said Meade.

To make the tour possible, MC Canada Native Ministry has been corresponding with MWC representatives and indigenous church leaders in Paraguay. By securing private donations and support from Canadian Women in Mission – a close partner of Mennonite Church Canada Witness, financial assistance is available to help cover travel expenses for Aboriginal Canadians.

Meade's 15-year-old granddaughter, Sara, plans to join the July 12-28 tour. "I want to learn about the lifestyle of other indigenous people," she said. "I am especially interested in learning about the spirituality and faith of other indigenous youth."

The Indigenous Tour is a three-part venture that will begin with participation in the MWC

Gathered sessions in the capital city, Asunción. Two indigenous young adults, one from Canada and one from the U.S., will attend the Global Youth Summit gathering being held several days earlier as part of the MWC gathering.

The second phase of the Indigenous Tour involves the trip to the Chaco area of Paraguay after MWC as a response to the invitation issued by the Mennonite-related Paraguayan indigenous conference on August 4, 2007.

Phase three will bring the tour group to visit with indigenous congregations in the Chaco region of Argentina. Janet Plenert of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Linda Shelly of Mennonite Mission Network will join the tour for phases two and three. "This meeting will bring together indigenous hearts and spirits. We may come from different countries but we share the experience of being indigenous to the land. We are never to be separated in God," Meade said.

The attending Native North American Mennonites will share indigenous music with their southern brothers and sisters. Some of it is contained in *The Cheyenne Spiritual Songbook* – a compilation of 100 original indigenous pieces and 60 hymns translated from English. In addition, the Canadian group hopes to share some Ojibwe and Cree songs.

Meade and Busenitz encountered a variety of church music styles on their November trip to Paraguay. Enlhet congregations sing a cappella in three or four-part harmony, while Nivacle Mennonites have adopted a Latin style accompanied by guitars, accordions and the Paraguayan harp.

"A cappella harmony is not indigenous to the Enlhet people, neither is Latin-style music indigenous to the Nivacle people. Maybe Native North Americans can give testimony to the way in which God's spirit gave Cheyenne Christians songs in their own music and words," Busenitz said.

The two North American church leaders also look forward to introducing their tour



North and South American indigenous church leaders gathered in Yalve Sanga, Paraguay to prepare for a gathering that will occur at Mennonite World Conference: Máximo Aranda, Manuel Mendoza, Norman Meade, Juan Ramos, Willis Busenitz, Cesar Mendoza and EstEban Antonio. Photo by Melvin Warkentin



group to another kind of worship experience when they travel across the border to neighbouring Argentina. In the Argentine Chaco, Christians incorporate their traditional music styles and cultural expressions into their worship services.

On their return to North America, tour participants will share with their home communities what they saw and learned in South America through reports, pictures and videos.

*Taken from Mennonite Church Canada News Release February 27, 2009
Lynda Hollinger-Janzen (Elkhart, IN)
with Deborah Froese (Winnipeg, MB)*



Witness