

# my friends Intototemak

Spring 2010 Vol. 39, No. 1



*Ovid Charlette, used with permission.*



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*Compositions by grade six First Nations students at David Livingstone School, Winnipeg, MB.*



# We are all created in *God's* Image

**W**e are all created in God's image. There is great power and affirmation in those simple words. First Nations, Latin American, European, African, Asian, everyone on earth, male and female. How do we best accept and respect this great honour? How do we do it in an increasingly multicultural, multi-faith society?

A significant part of the answer, I believe, can be found in getting to know ourselves and in getting to know others, in treasuring what is good from our own traditions and discovering what is good from others' traditions.

I am the curator at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg. The gallery hosts exhibitions which change, as a rule, every two months. We place an emphasis on featuring a mix of artists of faith and artists from stereotyped and marginalized communities -- from First Nations to African to inmates to artists from other religious communities, Hindu and Muslim, for example. As well, we run a school and community program which happens mostly outside of the gallery. This year our school

programming is part of a project supported by the Winnipeg Foundation called "In the Spirit of Humanity."

Indo-Canadian Hindu artist Manju Lodha, Sudanese-Canadian Muslim artist Isam About and I, a second-generation Canadian Mennonite/Christian, go to schools and deliver multimedia presentations followed by art workshops. The presentation portion celebrates the fact that Canada is increasingly multicultural. We introduce students to us through images, video, music and our art. We talk about what makes us the people we are, what inspires us as artists, what we believe. All the while we encourage the students who are listening and watching to think about who they are, what they have to offer, what they believe that is good for all humanity.

When Manju, Isam and I are finished with the presentation portion, we say to the students, "Now we want to get to know you." We bring out paper, pencils, brushes and paint. We ask the students to paint something about who they are. It can be about their culture or

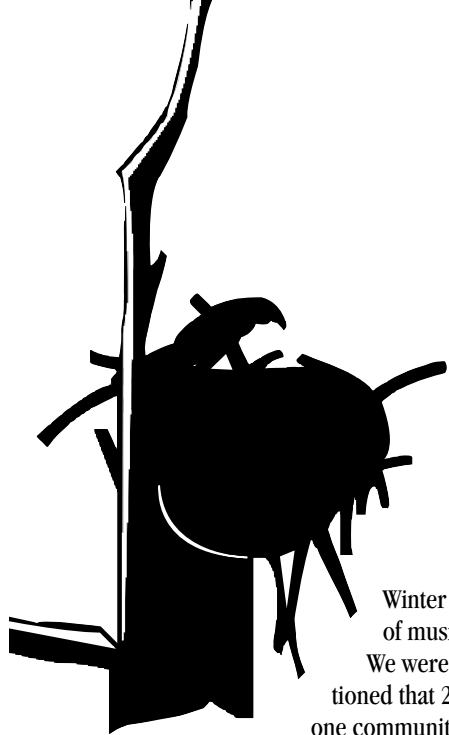
faith. It can be about an ideal they cherish. It can be about loss, what they miss, what they hope for. When the artworks are finished, we have each student come to the front and talk about what they have created.

We have brought "In the Spirit of Humanity" into schools throughout Winnipeg -- from the inner city to the suburbs, from grade two to adult newcomers in EAL (English as Additional Language) programs. Freeing individuals from the burden of words to expression on paper and canvas, encouraging them to think about themselves, telling them repeatedly "we believe in you, we know you and your culture have value, we know we can learn from you," leads to surprising, tender, funny, sometimes gut-wrenching moments. Art can be great therapy.

Recently we have worked a lot with adult EAL groups. Many of these students are refugees from the world's horror spots. One day I noticed that a woman from Kosovo was sitting in the front for the second time. Smiling, I said to her, "You've already seen this."

*See God's image page 10*





## Reaching the Past to Build the Future

In December we attended a Winnipeg elementary school's Winter Concert and enjoyed the variety of music and speaking parts immensely. We were amazed when the principal mentioned that 27 languages are spoken in this one community school that is located very close to the church we attend. The concert was held in

the church sanctuary that overflowed with lively family groups and we heard several languages spoken as people walked in and out past our pew. What a vast array of stories could be told by the children, parents and grandparents present that night – many of whom immigrated to Canada in pursuit of a better, more settled, life for their families than they had experienced in their homeland! The happy faces and congenial atmosphere told us as outsiders that the children and school staff had learned to respect and appreciate each other during their important interactions each school day.

When we look back as more “mature” adults on the history we learned as young persons in elementary and high school, we realize that we were given a very slanted perspective on the history of Turtle Island – present-day North America -- and the larger world. The stories of discovery and colonization were white-washed so that we would think of the Europeans as conquerors whose “Manifest Destiny” take-over of the land was not only justified but was God’s will. The Original People of this land were barely mentioned in class and it never entered our young minds that they were anything but welcoming and excited to have the settlers come and live among them.

Are history classes any better today? We certainly hope so . . . but we still have so much to learn from each other as different cultural groups. We must never forget that . . .

**Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.**

—Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Two articles on this topic are included in this issue:

The article “Learning Brings Hope of Justice, Restoration, and Reconciliation” tells the story of one person’s experience of facing the truths of the residential school era in Canada. As the writer continues to learn, he also finds hope that there can be healing and restoration in the future. The sharing of individuals who were affected by this sad time in Canadian history is hard for most of us to listen to but the stories being shared happened, and this is a history that all of us need to know about.

It is a story that needs continued vision and focus to go forward so that reconciliation and healing can happen.

In order for that to happen more broadly, however, we must ask the big question: Is there the will and commitment in society to learn the truth and try to understand it so that change can happen? As a Metis friend put it so succinctly recently: You can know something about a situation, but if you don’t have the “will” to do anything about it, then everything stays the same.

The second story, “We are all created in God’s Image,” challenges us to remember that we are all created in God’s image – every language and cultural group on earth, male and female. The question is asked, “How do we best accept and respect this great honour? How do we do it in an increasingly multicultural, multi-faith society?”

The writer goes on to answer his question with these wise words: “A significant part of the answer, I believe, can be found in getting to know ourselves and in getting to know others, in treasuring what is good from our own traditions and discovering what is good from others’ traditions.” When we do this, we can build a relationship on mutual respect and sharing.

People of different faiths and cultures have literally become geographical neighbours across Canada and North America. Christ’s imperative to “love our neighbour” can no longer be applied mainly to people “just like me.” When we build personal relationships and partnerships across cultural boundaries, we are also learning more about ourselves, stretching our personal boundaries, and bringing healing and hope to a world that desperately needs it. Our lives will never be the same – and that is positive!

There are many Aboriginal leaders who are very active and doing good things in the community. They need everyone’s support and encouragement to serve their community even better. May our journey intersect with theirs in a healthy, life-giving way!

That is all we have for now. Migwetch.

*Neill and Edith*

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



# Learning brings Hope of Justice, Restoration and Reconciliation

I write of the journey of a Mennonite volleyball player become adjudicator, who was fiercely proud to be Canadian in the past, and whose pride in his country has in some measure been renewed. I write about a shameful Canadian legacy arising out of a pact of church and state in the founding days of our country, and perpetuated through most our history. I write to encourage non-Aboriginal Canadians to accept the truth about what happened over the course of 100 years in Indian Residential Schools (IRS). I write in the hope that survivors of IRS abuse find healing and peace, and that reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada can become a reality.

Like you, I suspect, my Canadian pride has largely been muted for some time. Of course we eagerly anticipate the 2010 games as an opportunity to show the world the superiority of our winter athletes over all others. Generally though, we Canadians seldom publicly endorse our red and white flag, unless there is a hockey stick to hold it up with. In contrast to our fervent American neighbours, our nationalism is seldom seen, let alone heard.

From a personal standpoint, it was not always so. I was never more proud to be Canadian than on July 17, 1976 (my 23rd birthday!) when I entered the infamously incomplete big O' in Montreal during the glorious parade of Olympic athletes. We that were blessed with the opportunity to play a sport we loved on behalf of our country will never forget that moment of unabashed Canadian pride, resplendent in our red and white jackets before 70,000 adoring spectators. Time though has served to dull even that most thrilling moment, and the memories of the Olympic medal that I aspired to (but never won) remain mostly hanging on my basement wall.

Back in the day, I theorized that the possibility of being one of Canada's premier volleyball spikers had become reality in large part because Canada was a just society of limitless opportunity. After all, Canada welcomed my grandparents into this country in the 1920's and into the kind of society denied them in Russia. "Yes, Insel Chor-tiza was a paradise for a young girl," Oma Sawatzky told me, "but now I would never give up the freedom of Canada". Within two

generations Canada's freedoms and opportunities had allowed me to follow lofty athletic pursuits. No hiding this 6'6" frame under any bushel. Using the singing voice discovered at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, I proudly sang our national anthem on key before every international match.

Six years later, my admission into law school coincided with the passing of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. How affirming! The basic rights and freedoms I took for granted were now supreme law, entrenched in our Canadian constitution. Human rights were guaranteed protection from government abuse. Individuals no longer needed to fear any discrimination and intolerance by Canadian society at large. What a great country! What a privilege to be part of this idyllic society. What beautiful rose-coloured glasses I viewed our society through, or were they perhaps blinders?

The intervening years have matured my perspective somewhat. More aptly stated, then and now, God has been present with me all along my life journey, shaping my choices and equipping me to help in some small measure to make Canadian society a more just and more peaceful place. At the end of the day, I continue to believe in the promise of Canada.

My nationalism is not limited to the hope of witnessing a podium finish at the 2010 games, or even of some day seeing a Canuck hoist the Stanley Cup. I believe Canada remains a country striving for justice and freedom, a country which my own grandchildren (yet unborn and unconceived) will be proud of.

Ironically, it has taken recognition of what is arguably the most shameful chapter of Canadian history to inspire me to voice that hope. The apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, for Canada's misguided attempt to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into the larger society through the institutionalization of all Aboriginal children, stands as a humble reminder of past wrong but also as a powerful statement of a country seeking reconciliation and healing of its citizens. That is the Canada I am now proud of, the one that acknowledges there is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential School system.

In the advent of the important work of



the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I write this article in hope that my fellow Canadian Mennonites commit themselves to learning the truth about a sad and misguided chapter of our country's history, and in hopes that a discernment can then occur as to how we best apply principles of justice, restoration, and reconciliation in the context of our ongoing relationship with our Aboriginal Canadian neighbours.

## The Truth about Indian Residential Schools

It was only after my appointment to work as an adjudicator of claims by survivors of serious abuse at Indian Residential Schools that I began to understand the gravity and scope of what truly happened, how it has impacted Aboriginal people individually and collectively, and the great shame it has brought to the Christian churches operating the schools and to the Canadian society that allowed it to happen. The Native Law course I took at law school taught me much about treaties and Aboriginal rights, but little or nothing was said about Indian Residential Schools. My instructor did not know then what we know now about the systemic human rights violations and the terrible legacy of Indian Residential Schools in Canada.

From the late 1800s until only twelve years ago, the Federal government provided education to Aboriginal children through a system of residential schools. Our government made an agreement with four of the major Christian churches to administer the schools throughout most of this period, including Methodist (now the United Church of Canada), Presbyterian, Anglican, and several Roman Catholic Orders. The state was responsible for funding and setting



Cross Lake Residential School in Manitoba, circa 1925.

general policy for the school system, while the church organizations oversaw the day-to-day operations. At its height, there were 88 schools in the system and over 100,000 Aboriginal students attended.

The church and the state entered their partnership with distinctly different goals. Residential schools were the primary tool introduced by the new federation of Canada in pursuit of its policy of assimilation of Aboriginal peoples. The purpose was nobly stated to be the re-socialization of people by instilling them with new roles, skills, and values. It was also referred to as “solving the Indian problem”. There was a financial motivation – through the eventual assimilation of the Aboriginal population, the government’s ongoing and expensive treaty obligations could be reduced or even end. The participating churches, on the other hand, viewed their involvement as an extension of their missionary arm. Running Indian Residential Schools offered an opportunity to save heathen souls, and ultimately colonize and transform Indian children into model Christian citizens.

To achieve these goals, the institutions controlled nearly every aspect of their student’s lives. Children were required by law to be taken away from their families once they reached school age (six years old) and placed into a residential school. Many ended up there for ten or eleven years, sometimes far from home with no opportunity to return except during summer vacation. Imagine the anguish of a parent when their six-year-old child was picked up from their home, put onto a bus or airplane, and deposited at a foreign school where the language was different, their hair was cut off, and clothes burned. Abuse aside, the

removal and isolation from their families and communities led to the loss and destruction of tradition, spirituality and culture.

Chronic under-funding played a significant role in the outcome of the schools. With some exceptions, students attained limited and poor education from poorly-paid teachers. Children were often hungry, malnourished, inadequately clothed and forced into manual labour to support the daily cost of running the institution.

Terrible abuse marked the children’s experiences. Sexual abuse by caregivers and administrators, the very people in authority the young native children should have been able to trust, was rampant. Physical, spiritual and psychological abuses were common. Harsh and arbitrary punishments were an everyday reality. Young children were severely strapped if they were ever heard speaking their native language, even though it was the only language they knew when they entered school. Terrible bullying became the norm in many dormitories, as older or stronger students preyed upon and abused younger students, while supervisors turned a blind eye or even encouraged this perverse pecking order.

As a result of the sexual or physical abuse suffered, many survivors of residential school abuse came to suffer significant consequential harms in their lives. Haunting nightmares, difficulty in personal relationships or in trusting others, sexual dysfunction, anger, loss of self-esteem, and depression are examples of such harms. Many turned to alcohol to anaesthetize these harms.

In fact, an inordinate number of Canadian Aboriginal people suffer from alcohol addiction. See *Learning page 8*

# 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.*

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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.







### Obituaries

**Bouchey Pascal** of Pauingassi, Manitoba spent the last couple of years at the George M. Guimond Care Centre in Sagkeeng First Nation, where he passed away on January 11, 2010, one month short of 89 years. He was predeceased by his wife Elizabeth. He is survived by three children, and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owens in charge.

Suddenly on Sunday, January 17, 2010, **Garry John Raven** (known also by his traditional name Morning Star), from the Hollow Water First Nation in Manitoba went home to be with his Creator, the Great Manitou. Morning Star was born in Bissett, Manitoba on September 1, 1945 and resided most of his life on the Hollow Water First Nation.

Left to cherish his memory are his wife Evelyn, sons Wilfred Sinclair, Reynold Raven (Shelly), Robert Raven (Florestine), Elizabeth Raven (Ken) and Winston Smith; grandchildren Raven, Reanna, Felicity, Tessa, Reno, Zach, Nolan, Jeremy, Raynon and Sadie; sisters Beatrice Moneyas (Norman) and Marilyn Sinclair (Dennis); brothers Larry (Doreen), Albert (Matilda), Robert (Jennifer) and Mike (Marie); plus numerous nieces, nephews and special friend Bjork Bjarnadottir.

Garry was pre-deceased by his parents John and Flora (Parisian) Raven, sisters-in-law Brenda and Louise Raven and brother Ray-

mond Raven (2005).

Morning Star will be missed by the community of Hollow Water and all those who knew him. He was an untiring helper, a teacher of traditional values and customs, and an inspiration to many young and older folks, not only in the community of Hollow Water and area but across Turtle Island and beyond. He took great pride in his teachings about Mother Earth and what she had to offer us as her children. Morning Star was a residential school survivor and yet a well-respected elder and role model among his people and all who knew him.

As was printed in the January 2010 issue of the *Grassroots News* paper, Morning Star was a Traditional Pipe Carrier. Garry was open to teaching all nationalities, people from all walks of life, and people with different levels of education. In fact, he regularly taught at the University of Manitoba, the Red River College, and other post secondary institutions. However, his main place of teaching the traditional way of life was on/in his own college that he and others knew as Raven's Creek at Hollow Water. It was here where he could teach culturally relevant things like the sweat lodge, plant and animal life, and aspects of holistic healing.

Garry spent much of his time teaching the children and staff traditional values at the local Wanipigow School in Hollow Water.

Garry was a well-known and outspoken advocate for the boreal forests and eco systems

of Turtle Island but had a particular interest on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. In fact, at the time of his demise, Morning Star was working on establishing the East Side Cultural Interpretive Centre, whereby local elders and others could help tourists and visitors understand the lifestyles and traditional ways of Indigenous peoples who lived in the area for centuries. We of the Hollow Water area would like to wish Morning Star a safe journey from this world to the Spirit world. We also wish to thank Garry for his care for creation and for reminding us that it is up to all of us (not just Aboriginal peoples) to care for God's Creation. Norman Meade, Winnipeg, MB

**Edwin Orvis** of Bloodvein, Manitoba passed away at the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg on January 23, 2009 at the age of 63 years. He is survived by his wife, four daughters and one son. A wake service was held in Winnipeg and services followed in Bloodvein. Interment took place in Bloodvein on January 29 with Allan Owen of Pauingassi in charge.

**Cassandra Nicole Meekis** of Winnipeg, Manitoba passed away by choice on January 29, 2010. Left to mourn her untimely passing are her mother Bernice, father Robert Kennedy, grandmothers Elizabeth Meekis and Lillian Kennedy, other siblings and many relatives and friends. Interment took place at Brookside Cemetery in Winnipeg with Rev. Henry Neufeld officiating.



## Resources

The *Mythperceptions* website is an initiative of the Indigenous Work Program of Mennonite Church Committee Canada ([www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org)). Check it out at <http://www.mythperceptions.ca/>

The goal of Mythperceptions is to dismantle stereotypes, myths and misconceptions that people from the dominant culture tend to believe about Indigenous peoples living within the borders of what is now North America. Mythperceptions attempts to change views in a way that is engaging, yet gives opportunities to dig deeply into some of the issues facing Indigenous peoples. (taken from the website)

***The Wolf at Twilight: An Indian Elder's Journey through a Land of Ghosts and Shadows*** by Kent Nerburn. Novato, CA: New World Library, 2009. 346 pages.

The story of Lakota elder Dan, who we first met in *Neither Wolf nor Dog*, continues in this book by sharing the part of his life that was left untold in the earlier book. Nerburn uses the art of storytelling in the Native tradition to teach and to heal, stories that reveal "truths about what has been taken from Native people and what the rest of us have lost in that taking. But it also reveals what we may all yet become if we heed Sitting Bull's poignant entreaty and put our minds together to see what kind of lives we can create for the children." (p. xix)

Check out the Native Ministry webpage at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/899>. Read back issues of *Intotemak*, find materials available for loan from the Resource Centre and preview Reaching up to God Our Creator.

All of 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/resource-centre> for more resources that are available for loan.

# News from Cross Lake, Manitoba

On occasion it has been discouraging that our Living Word Church congregation does not have a minister; nonetheless, we are moving forward.

A Brethren in Christ couple, George and Beth Wilgrenbusch of Roblin, Manitoba, were part of a ministry that was coming into the North on a regular basis so they contacted us in January 2009. The couple's first trip into Cross Lake was in February 2009 and since then numerous couples and families have come to Cross Lake to worship with us. These guests participate in our regular Sunday School program, and then we have a potluck lunch together as community members and guests. A time of singing and worship follows the excellent lunch and clean-up time. We feel that God has blessed us with these times we look forward to.

Our church has also been blessed by the Rev. Ernest McDonald of the local United Church, who has a communion service with us when we ask him to come.

Our church also thanks Norm Voth (of Mennonite Church Manitoba) for putting us into contact with two great ladies from Grunthal, Manitoba. Maria Funk and Gertie Braun brought their expertise and enthusiasm to our Ladies Group on the weekend of September 25-28. A couple of us were already comfortable putting quilts together, but these two women helped everyone there assemble quilts with confidence.

Not only did the women come to teach, they brought along approximately 50 quilts that had been assembled by the ladies in Grunthal -- boxes and boxes of quilt tops! Since that time our group has put many of the quilts together and we have given them to most of the elders, and to many of the widows, widowers and infirm people in the community. In the near future we hope to make more quilts to distribute to the Whiskey Jack Treatment Center for Youth.

Our congregation asks for your prayers as we continue to do whatever is required of each and every one of us. We are thankful and continue to feel that God has blessed us. We have faith that God will continue to bless our humble efforts.

—*Florence Benson-Umpherville,*  
*Cross Lake, MB*



## Events Calendar

**March 4 - 6:** Spring Leadership Assembly, Mennonite Church Canada.

**April 9:** "Removing Barriers, Building Bridges" evening at Circle of Life Thunderbird House, 715 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba – sponsored by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Manitoba.

**April 9 & 10:** Manitoba Partnership Circle spring meeting.

**May 2:** Did you know that Alvin Lepp has been sharing his gifts of sharing Good News and walking along side our friends on Siksika Nation for the past 30 years? Everyone is invited to Rosemary Mennonite Church for an evening of celebration.

**May 3 - 5:** The Churches' Council on Theological Education in Canada's first biennial conference, hosted by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Winnipeg. John Ralston Saul and Terry Leblanc will speak. See <http://www.ccte.ca/news.shtml> for more information.

**June 10 - 12:** The 7<sup>th</sup> NAIITS Symposium is being held at George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon. Theme – "In the Beginning: First Nation Narratives of Ontology and Mutuality."

**June 30 – July 3:** Mennonite Church Canada Annual Delegate Assembly, Ambrose University College, Calgary, Alberta. Theme: "Reclaiming Jesus™ Gladly Bear the Name."

**July 19 - 22:** Native Assembly 2010 is being held in Ashland, Montana. The Northern Cheyenne Mennonite Churches are hosting the week's gathering at the St. Labre Indian School. Theme: "I am the Potter; You are the Clay." Contact the Native Ministry office for a registration form: e-mail [nativeministry@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:nativeministry@mennonitechurch.ca) or telephone at 204-888-6781 or toll-free at 1-866-888-6785.

If you want a ride from Winnipeg to Native Assembly 2010 in Montana, please notify the Native Ministry office **as soon as possible** to reserve a seat on the bus.

For more events visit [mennonitechurch.ca/events](http://mennonitechurch.ca/events).

## Learning from page 5.

tion, or have experienced domestic violence. How is this explained? A significant impact has been the residential school experience. So, for example, a boy is sodomized at a residential school at age eleven. He feels humiliation, guilt and shame because the abuse was done by a person in authority he trusted. He finds that when he drinks alcohol, he can briefly put his haunting thoughts on the shelf. He drinks regularly and becomes addicted to alcohol. His drinking, his lack of any good role models, his background of physical punishments, and his latent anger, all combine to result in domestic violence. His dysfunctional behaviour is modelled to children, and the children now also have become victims of the alcohol and family violence. Those children then repeat the cycle in their families and relationships, leading to a systemic social, racial issue.

### The Settlement Agreement

On March 8, 2007 nine judges, representing nine different provinces and territories in Canada where Indian Residential Schools were located, approved an historic agreement, the largest class action settlement in Canadian history. This agreement was entered into by representatives from various Aboriginal organizations, church representatives, legal representatives for former students, and the Government of Canada.

### The Settlement Agreement is composed of three main programs:

1. Common Experience Payment: A payment is made to all eligible former students of Indian Residential Schools, of \$10,000 for the first year they attended an IRS and \$3,000 for each subsequent year. There are about 80,000 living students of Indian Residential Schools, each of whom is entitled to a common experience payment. Many of these payments have already been made, and this is intended to compensate every native student for the wrongful experience they had to suffer, as well as for minor injuries or incidents.

2. Independent Assessment Process: A private, out of court, alternative dispute resolution process is established that resolves as many as 20,000 claims of sexual or serious physical abuse suffered at Indian Residential Schools (IRS) over a 4 to 5-year period; and

3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Public steps and measures are to be implemented to support healing, commemorative activities planned, along with public educa-



Prime Minister Stephen Harper delivers an apology on residential schools while native leaders look on. Photo from nationalpost.com

tion to help Canadians learn about this sad chapter of their history, and all are incorporated into a process designed to promote reconciliation.

### The Independent Assessment Process

Prior to the settlement, litigation proved unsatisfactory for all players involved. The victims were required to “prove” the abuse they suffered and faced cross-examinations by lawyers attempting to discredit and undermine their testimony. The process was slow and expensive. Churches involved were placed in the untenable position of apologizing for the residential schools, while at the same time standing on the other side of the court room denying the abuse took place. Money intended for victims was going to process costs and legal fees. One of the components of the Settlement Agreement is the establishment of an Independent Assessment Process, which is an out-of-court, alternative dispute resolution process that resolves claims of sexual or serious physical abuse suffered at Indian Residential Schools.

At the hearing, the victim/survivor relays their experiences, submissions are made about legalities, and then a decision is made. In order to qualify for compensation, the claimant has to prove a number of things, such as:

1. They suffered specific acts of abuse at a residential school, which meet eligibility for compensation.

2. They suffered consequential harms from the acts or abuse, detrimental impact, continuing dysfunction, etc.

3. Aggravating factors, loss of opportunity, projected future care costs.

The settlement agreement has catego-

ries of acts and harms, and the more serious the act or harm, the higher the “points” that the claimant receives, and ultimately the higher the compensation. So, for example, in terms of the acts, a student who was improperly touched or fondled will receive a lower level of points, while a person who suffered repeated, persistent incidents of intercourse will receive a higher level. A person who was modestly impacted by the act, resulting perhaps in nightmares, aggression, depression, or humiliation would receive a lower level of points, while a person who suffers psychotic disorganization, personality disorders, pregnancy or suicidal tendencies receives higher points. Ultimately, there is a schedule -- a certain number of points mean you get compensation of a certain range, the higher the points the higher the compensation.

Various people are present at a hearing. The claimant’s lawyer is present, and often there are supporters for the claimant such as an elder or resource health support worker. Canada is represented, typically but not exclusively, by a Department of Justice lawyer, and upon the invitation by the claimant, there may be a church representative. Each brings their own respective role to the hearing. Only the adjudicator can ask the claimant any questions but caucusing between the lawyers occurs during breaks, in which new lines of questioning can be suggested. The other lawyers can make submissions after the evidence is heard about what categories apply, or other issues related to the decision to be made. A hearing might have a ceremony, a smudge or a prayer to start and conclude.

A significant difficulty arises when



assaults took place on children, in some cases sixty years ago. Let's say the child was sexually abused at an IRS, grows up and eventually gets a job and establishes an income stream. Then the person loses the job as a result of poor job performance stemming from depression and alcohol problems. The question becomes, was the abuse suffered at the school the cause of the alcoholism and depression? Was the abuse the cause of the loss of income? Perhaps there were other factors later in life that contributed to the alcoholism and depression experienced by the person. Does that mean they should get less compensation?

The fact the person is now asked to remember things from sixty years ago, which were experienced in some cases by a six-year-old child, adds further complicating factors in the hearing, such as the reliability of the testimony. Even if the person is honestly giving their story, the memory of the eighty-year-old person recounting something traumatic as a six-year-old is not always accurate or reliable.

So, in an effort to deal with these issues in a typical IRS hearing, some requirements have been changed. The claimant has to establish the acts and harms on a balance of probabilities. In an interesting change to ordinary law, the IAP (Independent Assessment Process) requires that the claimant need only establish that the harms suffered are "plausibly linked" to the acts that occurred (as opposed to the more typical legal test of "causation"). In other words, if they can show some reasonable connection between their anger and alcoholism and the abuse they suffered at residential school, they get compensation for the harms, even though in reality there might have been other intervening causes that may have also contributed to the harms suffered.

Before the hearing closes, Canada's representative or the church representative will often offer a personal apology to the claimant for what has happened to them, on behalf of Canada. If a church representative is present, a moving apology is typically made on behalf of the church.

I am one of about eighty adjudicators across Canada who have been appointed to preside over hearings under the IAP. My task is to assess the severity of the abuse suffered by a survivor and the degree of harm that abuse caused to the survivor's life, and determine the appropriate compensation. The hearing process, however, has the potential to incorporate principles of restorative justice, which I view as a foundational tenet of the Anabaptist tradition. Within this

framework, I view my work as an extension of my theology as much as the application of legal principles. I am in a position to set the tone of the hearings, since only I ask questions of the claimant. I am in a position to encourage a spirit of cooperation and healing between all parties present. Most significantly, I can look for ways for the victim of abuse to experience the hearing itself as a time of healing. The hearing room must become a safe place for the claimant to feel able to share painful memories, sometimes never shared with a person in authority before. Although I cannot undo the harms suffered by the victim, within the confines of a private hearing I can ensure that at a critical moment in the life of the survivor, a white male in authority engaged the survivor with relational concern, respect, dignity, and equality.

### Canada's apology

It is very unusual for a government to admit and apologize for systematic violation of human rights, as occurred in the residential schools. The June 11, 2008 apology given by Prime Minister Harper, as are the supporting speeches by the leaders of the opposition parties, is well worth reading, as it acknowledges that we erred as a nation and that we must share the hard work of restorative justice between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. The words of apology include the following:

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential schools system. To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled,

and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey.

The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. We are sorry.

### How do we respond?

The painful legacy of Indian Residential Schools continues to affect the survivors of those schools. The effect of the abuses are not limited to those individuals but extends to their families, communities, culture, and stretch across generational lines. The effects continue further in the enduring harm to the relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

Our country is not perfect, but it has formally accepted and shouldered responsibility for the wrongs caused due to Indian Residential Schools. I am proud to be part of this response. It is my hope that all of Canada's non-Aboriginal citizens will individually learn and accept the truth of this monumental error in our history, and will look for ways to eliminate attitudes of colonialism, oppression and inequality that allowed Indian Residential School to exist.

The prophet Micah reminds us that God has already told us what is good, and that God asks of us only to act justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly before God, and with these words, Micah has captured the quintessence of God's commandments. I do not presume to instruct how we should respond as a people of God to the Indian Residential School legacy. However, I believe that a necessary first step is to accept the truth of what happened in those schools and dormitories. I believe that Canada's apology was a crucial step toward national reconciliation. I believe that restorative justice requires a response at two levels: to seek out ways to assistance and promote healing of individual survivors of abuse, and to seek out ways to mend the systemic social and racial harms the schools have caused.

—Larry Plenert, Langley, BC

*The TRC logo located at the start of this article (page 4) is a flame that incorporates elements of the three distinct Aboriginal groups in Canada. First Nations are symbolically represented by the feather, Métis people are symbolically represented by the infinity symbol, and Inuit people are symbolically represented by the traditional seal oil lantern (qulliq) that the flame rests upon.*







Two more compositions by grade six First Nations students at David Livingstone School (right). "ovid" paintings by Ovid Charlette (above). Used with permission.

children. In our experience, we are seeing that First Nations children have much strength in imagery and tradition from which to draw inspiration. An art teacher at a private school told us that what we were suggesting to his students was tough for them because they've never had to discover themselves or where they stand on many issues. Life has always been easy. He suggested this challenge was needed.

We've worked in a number of inner city schools. The art created has brought out sources of pride and hopes for a better tomorrow. Many works include First Nations references to bravery, strength, courage, honesty, etc. As with the adult EAL students, art has been working as therapy with younger students.

A young African boy seemed lonely, distant and rootless. I tried to discover exactly from where he came. Eventually, I figured out he had been born somewhere in the Congo -- he did not know where. He had lived in several other countries, including Uganda, bouncing from one refugee camp to another. I had lived in the Congo more than 20 years ago. A few words proving to him that I knew something of where he came from finally produced a shy smile. But he continued to be extremely reluctant or unable to speak about his past. I wondered what he might have seen, likely things no child should ever have to face.

We began to paint. He began to communicate. Not with words but with paint. He split his paper in half horizontally. The top was a peaceful scene -- birds, trees, green grass and cheery sunshine. The bottom half was dark, all purple and black. An airplane flew menacingly overhead. People, some with guns, ran in all directions below.

A small-for-his-age First Nations boy was in the same class. He, too, split his page in two, but vertically. On one side he drew two boys, arms around each other in friendship and trust. On the other side he drew two boys again but this time the smaller of the two figures held a gun to the other's head. The school is in an area with a strong gang presence. I wondered what this boy had seen and experienced, not in Africa like the Congolese boy, but right here in Winnipeg.

As the class neared its end I noticed that the small boy was gone. I asked a classmate what had happened. She said he was often teased for his size. Other boys were ridiculing him again. He had left, hurt and angry.

Both these boys need healing and peace. Neither verbalized the need but their art spoke loudly.

In the midst of pain and the need for healing, we have also experienced much joy. Whether from African, Afghan or First Nations cultures, it has been confirmed

to us over and over again that there is reason for hope. Each of us has good things to teach, decency and honour in our heritage. Individuals of marginalized peoples know too well that the weight of stereotypes is heavy and easily covers them all with the same blanket. If only we would stop and get to know each other. After knowing, stereotypes melt away and acceptance as an individual, as a person equally created in the image of God, comes.

At the same time, it is equally important we accept ourselves, look inside, get to know what is great about our various heritages. Then, each can turn outwards and teach.

Last year the gallery hosted an exhibition of inmate art. Many of the artists were First Nations people. Some of them grappled mightily with inner demons and wider issues in their artworks. In their art, it was obvious to see that the heritage that inspires their art is good and worthy. Art is a link to tradition for these artists and a link in their search for healing. It is, again, therapy.

We are all equal in the eyes of God -- Somali women, First Nations children, children of privilege in a private school. All need to know themselves and each other. Each has something to teach and to learn.

Let's get to know and accept ourselves. Let's get to know and accept each other. Art can be a valuable tool in bringing us to acceptance, even to healing.

—Ray Dirks, Winnipeg, MB

# EASTER WISH

May God's  
blessing rest  
upon you  
On this  
happy  
Easter day,

May His loving arms protect you As you go upon your way;  
May His sunlight shine upon you,  
May He fill your heart with song, May you always  
lean upon Him, One whose heart and arms are strong. May you walk with

surer foot  
steps On  
the path  
that lies  
ahead;

May you  
see with  
clearer vision,  
Journeying  
where you  
are led.

May  
you feel a  
little closer  
To the Lord  
of love and  
peace...

May your  
heart sing  
out with  
gladness  
And your  
glad song  
never cease.

—ROY Z. KEMP




*"Because He Lives We Can Face Tomorrow" is picture #17 in the Kisemanito Pakitina-suwin—Creator's Sacrifice series depicting the Easter story. Ovide Bighetty, an artist originally from Pukatawagan First Nations in northern Manitoba, was commissioned by the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship of Regina, Saskatchewan, to depict several series of Biblical texts and themes, of which this is one. Used with permission.*

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