

my friends Intotemak

Fall 2010 Vol. 39, No. 3



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Participants in the 2010 VBS sessions at the Church of the Way. Read more on page 12.

Vacation Bible School
— *Granisle / Cross Lake*



Eagles Nest

Hope and Promise for the Future

Travelling north of Winnipeg during the last week of August, we saw many geese (both Canadian geese and snow geese) dotting the fields in order to glean the last of the meagre crops from the fields as the geese are preparing for their long journey south for the winter.

Our first thought was: It is too early; it is still summer!! Then we had to admit that the geese know more of what is coming this fall and winter than we do. If they know that it is their time to come south, it must be.

Another fall scene that never failed to impress us when we lived along Lake Winnipeg was the gathering of the eagles in the Pine Dock area each fall. The only appropriate response to such a glorious scene was to stop our truck along the side of the road and quietly observe the hundreds of eagles perched in the trees and flying overhead. AWESOME is hardly an adequate word. The encouraging, strengthening words of Isaiah 40:28-31 always came to mind:

“Don’t you know? Haven’t you heard? The Lord is the everlasting God; he created all the world. He never grows tired or weary. No one understands his thoughts. He strengthens those who are weak and tired. Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted. But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.” Words of hope and promise. Words of encouragement and strength. Words that want to bring healing.

This issue of INTOTEMAK is also full of hope and promise:

- Stories have finally been shared after years of silence and pain.
- Aboriginal theologians are finally receiving recognition for their hard work and diligence after years of being ignored by the larger Christian Church.
- Latin and North American indigenous church people are meeting and sharing their struggles and joys.
- Mennonite Church Canada congregations passed a resolution this summer, saying “... we as Mennonite Church Canada congregations and as individuals will seek renewed opportunities to walk with Aboriginal people of Canada, opening our hearts, minds, and ears to engage the pain resulting from the legacy of the

Residential Schools, and strive to recognize each other as sisters and brothers created in the image and likeness of one God.” (The full resolution is found elsewhere in this issue.)

- Another Native Ministry learning tour was held in summer, this time on the Siksika Nation in southern Alberta.
- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal church people are getting to know each other in a wide variety of situations.
- The need for justice and reconciliation is bringing people together in relationship and working together.

May these stories also be an encouragement to you personally and in your setting. We always welcome your stories so please share them with us!

Just as we were finalizing this issue and writing this column we got word that Native Ministry has lost a compassionate champion upon the death of Isaac Froese. He served as the Executive Secretary of Native Ministries in the 1970s and visited the various Native Ministry programs in that role; however, his interest and involvement continued in the years to follow as well. Ike, as we knew him, was our supervisor in those years as we lived in Manigotagan on the east shore and then moved to the west shore of Lake Winnipeg and began a more itinerant style of ministry in that area. Ike always had a listening ear as well as asking probing questions that expanded our horizons. His wife Margaret and their children also invited us into their home and lives, and we appreciated their hospitality so much. *More will follow in the Winter issue of INTOTEMAK.*

We look forward to another busy fall and winter of opportunities to meet many of you, share our learnings and experiences with each other, and encourage each other to continue the vision of “growing as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.”

That is all we have for now. Migwetch.

Neill and Edith

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



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

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

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Cost of Publication

\$15.00 a year for four issues.
Payments over \$15.00 per publication
will be receipted.
Please send payment by cheque, VISA or
MasterCard. Cheques are payable to
Mennonite Church Canada/Intotemak.

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.



Creation as God's first Discourse with the World

On June 12, 2010, 400 years after the first Mi'kmac was baptized on the east coast of North America, Terry LeBlanc, a Mi'kmac/Acadian theologian, participated in sealing another covenant of faith, this time on the west coast of North America. LeBlanc is part of a group of Aboriginal Christian theologians known as NAIITS, the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies. Larry Shelton, Quaker theologian and facilitator of a new Indigenous Masters program in Missional Leadership, signed the covenant and accepted the covenantal pipe as one of the representatives for George Fox Evangelical Seminary of Newburg, Oregon. The courses in this degree will be taught by Aboriginal theologians who are members of NAIITS, using mainly on-line technology. This will allow students to study and develop leadership within their own contexts.

This event happened in brilliant sunshine in the seminary's circular Rose Garden, which suddenly took on the look of an Aboriginal Sacred Circle. The ceremony reflected both traditions and signaled the hope that North American followers of Christ are finally entering a post colonial era. As Le Blanc stated in his comments, it took 500 years of shared history for Native Americans to be accepted and accredited as theological teachers with Doctor of Theology degrees.

Honoured to witness the sealing of this covenant were this year's NAIITS symposium participants. These symposia began in 1999, and the first one was held on the Mennonite Campus that is now known as Canadian Mennonite University. This one, the seventh symposium organized by this board of Aboriginal theologians, was held June 10 -12, 2010 and focused on Creation.

Symposium presentations invited participants to consider Creation as God's first discourse with the world, one that connected Creation as a harmonious community. We were repeatedly reminded of God's delight in Creation and that when God declared Creation very good, that meant it just couldn't get any better. Participants were also reminded that the modern church had clouded the view of God's good, harmonious intentions for all creation by

- Dividing life into sacred and secular spheres, rather than into the sacred, and the even more sacred.
- Shutting God's first discourse out of our worship space by building walls where there should be windows that keep us connected.
- Succumbing to a dualistic worldview instead of a holistic, balanced one where humans live in harmony with all Creation.

We were encouraged to focus on our common spirituality, rather than the differences of spiritual expression, and to reclaim the intimate communion that the created world continues to enjoy with its creator. Creation, marred and groaning though it is, continues to declare the glory of God. It was this Aboriginal, holistic worldview which they offered us as a gift for beginning to get out of the ecological mess we're in. It was an inspiring call to recognize and reclaim our dependence with a good Creator, and our balanced place in creation.

As this year's symposium closed with the covenant ceremony for a Masters Degree in Missional Leadership, it testified to the birthing of new and balanced relationships between Christians with varied, valid, culture-based expressions of faith in one Creator and Lord in whom all things come together.

—Elsie Rempel, Winnipeg, MB





Photo provided by Neill von Gunten

Steve and Ann Heinrichs (British Columbia), Elsie Rempel and Edith and Neill von Gunten (staff) represented Mennonite Church Canada at the 2010 NAIITS symposium.



Photo by Neill von Gunten

Staff and board members of NAIITS and George Fox University at the signing of the historical agreement.

Rethinking My Relation to the Creation: Cedar Strips and the NAIITS Conference

While hiking through a beautiful, wet forest on British Columbia's northern coast this past fall, chock full of towering cedar, my wife Ann and I came across a tree that was different than any other we had seen. It, too, was a cedar and it was not much bigger, if at all, than others in the area. But about five feet up from the base of the tree, the bark of this cedar was noticeably scarred. A long, thick cut had been made, two or three feet wide and a few inches deep, that extended some twenty feet up the tree before it came to a neat arrow-like finish. I had no clue who had done it, or why. But Ann did. She had read somewhere that cedar stripping was one of the things that the Native peoples did in this area. They would harvest parts of these magnificent trees in order to make household wares, crafts, tools and even clothing. Yet here's the remarkable thing: they did it in such a way that the great cedar's life wouldn't at all be threatened. The "extraction" was so careful that the tree would still live on and flourish. And, apparently, the indigenous peoples in this neck of the woods had been doing this kind of eco-friendly harvesting for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

The site of that large cedar, marked with its "Native tattoo," sparked a lively

time of reflection that afternoon. We marvelled aloud at the wisdom of our host ancestors; how they were able to leave such a respectful, non-violent footprint on the land that Creator had placed them on. It is often said that Native peoples lived in harmony with creation, and I'd be lying if I didn't confess that a lot of us white folk question whether that *really* was the case (i.e., "they didn't dominate the land because they didn't have 'industrialized' tools to do so"). But here was a tangible example of such real harmony at work. *They could have just chopped down that cedar. There were so many thousands of trees for so few people anyway. Who would it have hurt? Who would have noticed? And wouldn't that have been easier and more cost-efficient? Simply take the whole thing down, use what you need and discard the rest.* That's the way – generally speaking – of the Western World. We consume the raw materials of the land for all its capital gain, exploit it for our maximum personal pleasure . . . and we've got the massive clear cuts of cedar, and fir and pine, and so on, to prove it.

But the original inhabitants in that Northern forest didn't chop the cedars down. They had, it seems, a deeper wisdom and an understanding that it would actually hurt

someone, maybe everyone around them – fellow creatures, even Creator – for they believed all things were inter-dependent. And so they treated the trees with reverence, and no doubt, those big old cedars, as some Biblical poets put it, "clapped their hands for joy" (Psalm 96) for "no woodsman had come to lay us low" (Isaiah 14).

As we finished our walk thru the cedars of Tsimshian First Nation territory, Ann and I pondered how we – two adults fully baptized into the rapacious consumerism of the modern world, two adults personally impacted by the acquisitive lusts of our material culture – might transform our lives so that they could be more true and just in relation to the creation. How could we humbly receive gifts from the cedars (and "all things" in creation), and still allow these cedars to live, like our host peoples, for God's glory and the world he so loves?

I'm new at this, and it's not the easiest thing to learn, and then practice, without a supportive community around. So when a few months later, Ann and I were invited to attend this year's NAIITS conference (North American Institute for Indigenous Studies) at George Fox University in Newburg, Oregon from June 10 - 12, we were excited at how this year's topic could apply to us. It was a conference specifically engaging



Photo by Neill von Gunten

Presenter and NAIITS board member, Randy Woodley of Newburg, Oregon.

ways in which the Church can learn a new relation to Creation, with a focus on learning from the ancient and present Native body.

And here's the gist of what I took from the panel of speakers (which was a beautifully diverse group; Native, black and white, male and female together). They were all in vast agreement. The Western, Enlightenment vision of humanity and creation fosters Colonialist politics and genocidal practices towards indigenous peoples and the Creator's land. This modern view (and we are speaking here, of course, in broad, bold paintbrush strokes), puts human beings – most often male, usually white and predominantly rich – at the center of the universe and subordinates everything else in a hierarchy of goods; man over woman, woman over child, white humans over colored, humans over sentient creatures, sentient creatures over everything else, like big, wild cedars.

Though advocates of this worldview appeal to Scriptures to back up their position (like Genesis 1:26 - "let humans have dominion over the earth and everything in it"), the speakers at NAIITS argued passionately that this is simply bad exegesis (fuelled by "privileged" readings). Properly interpreted, Genesis, the prophets and Jesus all advocate a way of Shalom, or as Randy Woodley calls it, "The Harmony Way," in which humanity takes a

posture not over-against wild creation, but alongside it, in solidarity. In fact, as Terry LeBlanc repeatedly said, "We humans are just as much creation as the rest of creation, so we can't be over it, and we can't even steward it, for we are a part of it, and it cares more for us than we care for it."

It might seem obvious which way we ought to go, especially when I've "cartooned" the two positions in the manner above. But it isn't all that obvious, especially to many sincere, genuinely good, thoughtful Christians. Shouldn't man rule over nature? Shouldn't creation concerns take a backseat far behind other important concerns? Consider the following quote (cited by speaker Peter Ilyn) from the pen of Evangelical Chuck Colson, an intellectually astute, faithful follower of Christ:

"Why do radical environmentalists seem so indifferent to the poor? It is a matter of worldview. If you deify nature instead of God . . . you don't have to worry much about the poor. But if you believe God created humans in His image, and gave each one of us a unique and privileged place within His creation; then your concern for the poor far outweighs concerns for nature."

I understand what Colson is saying. I've often thought the same. But it's wrongheaded, for it forces us into a false dichotomy. Why do we have to pick between people-care and earth-care, the poor and the cedars? Why the either-or? Can't we do both?

According to the NAIITS speakers, there are legions of reasons why we North American Christians are enslaved to such dualistic, compartmentalized thinking. But there is hope, if we do three things.

First off, take another look at our Bibles. That's key. Every one of the speakers spent good chunks of time revisiting creation motifs in the Biblical text. They clearly believe that these ancient words

have power to set us free when rightly understood. Yet we can't read the text alone, which brings us to action 2.

Secondly, we've got to read in community, especially in a circle in which indigenous peoples are present, those women and men who carry the subversive, healing wisdom of the past, and who, importantly, don't suffer from harmful Enlightenment dualities (at least to the same degree). As we bend our ear to aboriginal voices, we'll discover a vision of mother earth that's a whole lot closer to the Biblical vision than ours. And, if that's the case, then this step is so necessary; it probably should be made action number one, for our Western tradition of dualistic domination has so obfuscated the biblical text, that it is unable to preach its "obvious" good *green* news to most of our ears. We've got to hear the gospel through the eyes of another.

Finally, we can't just talk about this stuff. We need to actually get our flesh and bones in touch with the glory of creation that is all around us. And so many of the NAIITS speakers encouraged us to apply our conference learning by doing ordinary things like planting an urban garden, taking regular forest walks, camping, slowing down and taking Sabbath rest, and so on. We've got to take up disciplines that enable us to reacquaint our bodies and souls with the world God so loves. And when we do so, going to those wild, wilderness places like our Lord Jesus repeatedly did (Luke 5:16) we will hear and touch God afresh.

That's what happened last fall when I saw that ancient cedar tree with its scar of generous giving. That sight was like a sacrament, somehow changing my life, pointing me back to the joy of a harmonious creation, and ultimately, to her living Lord – the Christ who was also scarred on his body, for our sake.

—Steve Heinrichs, *Maple Ridge, BC*

A First Step toward Healing



As prayers began, a hush fell over the crowd and numerous people pointed to the sky. The great spirit, the eagle, hovered overhead. Surely it was a clear sign of God's presence and blessing as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission launch in Winnipeg drew to a close on Saturday, June 19, 2010. Although the eagle is not part of my tradition, I know the sacred place it holds for Aboriginal peoples. For four days residential school survivors courageously stepped forward to embrace their pain and share their stories. As they spoke, sweet-grass smoke wafted about the circle, gently diffused by a woman with an eagle-feather fan. God was indeed present, honouring tears and embracing those who were raised in the absence of love. The eagle's presence in the final powwow was a true gift.

The stories I heard were many; a mix of pain and hope, of betrayal and determination, and very often, a testimony to the strength of Aboriginal people. I am a survivor of a survivor, said one young man.

A survivor of a survivor. That hit me like a rock. A man of few words, he concealed the truth of his troubled life beneath baggy clothes and a slouch. He was one of several who had walked 1400 km from Ontario to participate in the Youth Sharing Circle, and although he had clearly lived a tough life, he was on a journey of self-discovery about residential schools, and thus about himself.

Another young man had been taken away from his mother when he was eight days old. Child and Family Services (CFS) raised him, bouncing him from home to home. He never bonded with anyone, never knew love. "They say that IRS (Indian Residential Schools) ended back in the 1980's, but they didn't because CFS is part of the same system," he said. "This is now seven generations, and these seven generations

are sitting around this circle today, and the prophecies say that the seven generations will change the world, and that's us."

He spoke proudly of the strength of his people.

A white high school history teacher spent five days at the sacred gathering listening to stories of pain and abuse. She said, "I learned more about Canada in the past five days than I did in my three year history degree. ... We have to begin teaching our children about all of our history.



Sign displayed outside the public Sharing Circle tent.

The residential school situation has maybe been a single page in a textbook, and not even always." She spoke about the strength of survivors, and how honoured she felt to be a listener.

Mennonites were not excluded from these stories. After a man shared his story of abuse in residential schools, of moving on, of how important family is, and that he loved his wife of 43 years, he said that she went to a Mennonite-run school. It was just as bad as all the others. How come, he asked, aren't the Mennonites here? I approached him immediately following the session to tell him that we are here, and that we care.

Another survivor described a vivid and

horrible incident of being beaten under the careful supervision of the principal and four staff members at a Mennonite run school. He wanted to record his story to let people know that abuse happened beyond the schools addressed in the

Indian Residential School Settlement – and he wanted Prime Minister Harper to hear his story. "Two years ago the Prime Minister apologized. Two years ago was a sad day. My son committed suicide on the day of the apology. It was too late for him."



National Grand Chief Shawn Atleo addresses the opening ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation event at The Forks, June 16, 2010.

An impish, tiny girl with little-kid overalls and long flaming red hair reminded me of Pippie Longstocking, but she was 18 years old and about to graduate from high school. "How does she fit here?" I wondered.

Her explanation resonated deeply.

"What one part of my heritage – my mother's white side – has done to the other part of my heritage is tearing me apart. And I won't feel together until the world is made right. I feel shame and anger for what we did. It is wrong. It is inexcusable." Métis and full of fire, she was appalled that she had never learned about this aspect of Canadian history in school.

She could well be speaking for all of us. It is much easier to say “it wasn’t us.” But it was us. Christians professing Jesus and dedicating their lives to service somehow – for reasons we will never understand – were given complicit approval to look upon First Nation, Métis and Inuit children as less than children, less than people created in the image of God. Blind eyes were turned.

Indifference ignored suffering. Sanctioned and even supervised beatings were carried out. Church people took vulnerable boys and girls into their rooms late at night to fondle and sexually abuse.

Repeatedly. Persistently. Consistently.

And successor staff did likewise. As these stories connected with other stories from faraway countries, indignation flared, forcing tears to my eyes. I was angry. I *am* angry. How could people, good people, people like me, do this?

Embroidered black words emblazoned the centre of a quilt formed from Hudson Bay blankets: “Canada has no history of colonization. - Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, September 2008.” Around it are words of disbelief, indignation and sarcasm. “Then we also have a long history of amnesia . . . Is this blanket infested too?” and so on.

It is a poignant reminder that even a short 15 months after Stephen Harper issued the well cited formal apology, we still don’t understand.

Perhaps a sign of hope on that Saturday afternoon of images were the words of Chief Justice Murray Sinclair and Governor General Michaëlle Jean, both of whom attended the Youth Sharing circle. Mr. Sinclair spoke in a gentle yet direct way to the youth who shared the pain. “Your aunts are telling us that the impact of the Residential Schools must stop here.” He spoke simply and profoundly on the question of identity. “To know who you are you need to know where you come from, your clan, because your clan tells you your responsibility in the community. You need to know your spirit name. It is only when we know who we are that we have self respect and mutual



Photo by Neill von Gunten

TRC Commissioners Marie Wilson (far left) and Murray Sinclair (right) join Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, in the Grand Entry on the final day of the TRC event.

Bootstraps

In mid-June I attended some of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) events held at the Forks in Winnipeg. Hearing the stories of the survivors of the residential schools gave me pause to reflect on my response to this dark chapter in our relationship to the Native people of this country.



**Truth and
Reconciliation**
Commission of Canada

Where do I, the son of an immigrant, fit into this picture? As a Canadian I feel a sense of accountability for the actions taken by the government of this country. As a member of a Christian faith community I feel a deep shame at the flagrant disregard for the rights and outright abuses perpetrated in the name of “Christian Mission”. As a member of the Mennonite faith community I am well aware that my forbearers maintained their identity by having a very strong focus on worship and education as they moved from their originating countries in Europe to the Ukraine, North America, Paraguay, Mexico and the list goes on and on. As each new community was formed, the school played a pivotal role in educating with the specific goal of propagating the faith and the culture of my particular faith group.

The Mennonite faith community has been very involved in “mission work” and has seen the value of the school as an institution for fostering not only the academic develop-

Bootstraps cont. on page 10

respect, both of which are essential in the process of reconciliation.” And then he said, “It was through the educational system that we got into this, and it is through education that we will get out of this.”

Michaëlle Jean took both hands of each participant in the circle and kissed each one on both cheeks. The boy who had been raised in CFS without bonding or knowing love, reached out to her. They wrapped their arms tightly around each other in a long embrace.

Jean said, “We need to break the walls of indifference. We are laying a new foundation for this country by confronting together our past.”

My emotions are still somewhat raw from that incredibly moving afternoon and the tears come easily.

Lord have Mercy . . . Lord, can you forgive us? . . . Thank you for your forgiveness.

—Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary
Mennonite Church Canada Witness,
Winnipeg, MB



Photo provided by MC Canada file

Vincent Yellow Old Woman of the Siksika Nation welcomes attendees to Blackfoot traditional territory and to the Ambrose University College campus in Calgary at the opening session on Tuesday evening.

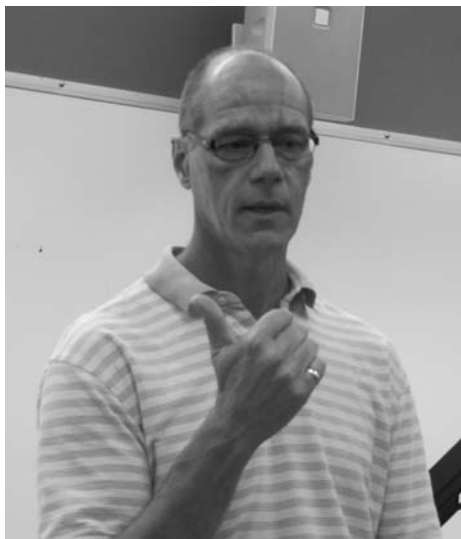


Photo provided by Neill von Gunten

Larry Plenert, a workshop speaker



Photo provided by Rachel Bergen

Darrell Royal shares his personal and community journey with MC Canada delegates during his workshop.

MC Canada Assembly

The Mennonite Church Canada Annual Delegate Assembly 2010 was held at Ambrose University College Calgary, Alberta from June 29 – July 2, 2010. The theme for the gathering, Reclaiming Jesus™ - Gladly Wear the Name, was taken from Colossians 3: 16-17. The following are some highlights from the Native Ministries involvement during the Assembly.

“Do Residential Schools and Good News Go Together?”

“Do Residential Schools and Good News Go Together?” was a well-attended workshop option on Thursday afternoon, July 1st. It was divided into two parts, with a coffee break time between. Larry Plenert of Langley, BC led the first workshop and talked about the Settlement Agreement that was entered into on March 8, 2007 by the Government of Canada, representatives from various Aboriginal organizations, churches involved in the Residential School era, and legal representatives for former students of Indian Residential Schools. The three main programs of the Settlement Agreement were explained: Common Experience Payment, Independent Assessment Process (IAP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (See the Spring 2010 issue of INTOTEMAK for a more detailed explanation of the Agreement.)

Larry's role as one of approximately

eighty Adjudicators who have been appointed across Canada to preside over hearings under the IAP became clearer as he shared his role and how it has impacted him personally, the person being heard and any others invited to be present.

Darrell Royal of the nearby Siksika Nation shared his personal story of being a residential school survivor during the second workshop session and showed a short video of what his community is doing to work at healing. See the article below for more details.

With God, ALL THINGS are Possible The Story of an Indian Residential School Survivor

When you pass by Aboriginal peoples lying in the gutters on skid row, do you think that they are just “drunk Indians who need to get a job?”

Participants of the “Do Residential Schools and Good News Go Together?” workshops at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly now know what those “drunk Indians” went through to get to that place.

What they went through was “a blight on [Canada's] history,” said Larry Plenert, a workshop speaker and an adjudicator for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, an alternative to the courtroom for Indian Residential School (IRS) abuse

claimants.

The participants heard from Darrell Royal, a Blackfoot man from the Siksika Nation who attended an IRS until grade seven and was a “drunk Indian” until God intervened and transformed him, sparing his life, his family, and his soul.

The days Royal spent at the IRS were abominable. He was malnourished and fed mostly rotten meat as well as physically abused.

“The meat was green, you could smell it ... we were always hungry,” Royal said.

The abuse that took place physically scarred him; he was hit on the head regularly with a heavy wooden stick. This resulted in seizures and problems with his eardrums, not to mention emotional destruction.

“I shut down for many years afterwards, I had a wall and didn't trust people ... I didn't know that I didn't have feelings for anyone,” Royal said.

Royal was also held in ice cold and extremely hot showers for a half hour as punishment for speaking his native tongue.

“To this day I can't go in a sauna, jacuzzi or take a hot shower ... Every day when I take a shower I remember [my experience with the IRS], I can only take warm showers,” Royal said. Being so emotionally crippled from his childhood

experiences at the IRS, Royal grew up being full of hate. An alcoholic by age 16, he became involved in a string of crimes including assault in bar brawls, domestic violence and attempted murder.

Royal has been incarcerated for 20 years of his life.

Constantly drunk and violent, with his wife on the verge of leaving him, his life was in ruins.

That is until a preacher came to his reserve on September 20, 1981.

Gradually, the bad feelings Royal experienced for so long vanished. He could feel something other than hate and pain when he accepted Jesus.

In the 30 years since, Royal's marriage has come back together, he is sober and has recovered from alcohol-induced cirrhosis of the liver and brain deterioration.

He became a police officer in Calgary, attended Bible school, he is helping those around him who are suffering from the after-effects of IRS, and he has healthy relationships with his kids. It wasn't an overnight transformation.

Royal is still apologizing to his wife for hurting her and still deals with the trauma of his abuse, even decades later.

As his relationship with God grew and deepened, he was able to forgive those who beat him, belittled him, and tried to erase his heritage and culture.

He has not received apologies from any of his childhood abusers, even after meeting with them years later.

"Forgiveness is the key to healing. Some of the things that have happened to me, if it wasn't for the Lord, I wouldn't have been able to forgive," he said.

Royal leads programs in anger management for men and women, a culture camp for kids, and a program for domestic violence.

—Rachel Bergen, Winnipeg, MB

Resolution regarding Residential Schools

The delegates of Mennonite Church Canada unanimously supported a resolution confessing the complicity of Mennonites "in the failing of the Christian Church" and its role in the residential school, and acknowledging that "that destructive individual attitudes, such as paternalism, racism, and superiority are still present among us." Here is the text of the resolution:



Resolution: Residential Schools

Moved by Rudy Dirks on behalf of the Christian Witness Council

Seconded by Lynell Bergen on behalf of the Christian Witness Council

Passed

Background: The Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 led to the formation of Residential schools for Metis, Inuit, and First Nations children. The Canadian government and churches ran these schools in partnership with one another.¹ The schools operated for about 130 years, and had over 150,000 children pass through them. The impact of this schooling on now seven generations of aboriginal peoples in Canada is enormous. While there were committed, loving teachers, the overall residential school experience was marked by abuses of power, physical punishment for speaking one's own language, sexual and emotional abuse by persons in charge and other students. Its dubious legacy includes the breakdown of the family system, with successive generations raised in a context of increasing family and community detachment, violence and substance abuse.

In 1970 the Conference of Mennonites in Canada offered a litany of confession at its annual Assembly that confessed the significant failing of our own faith community in relating to "Indians," seeing them 'as converts' but not as children of God, in recognizing them by the 'colour of their skin but not as fellow human beings, friends, and brothers' (and sisters) in Christ. In the early 1990's some of the key national churches involved in running Residential schools made formal apologies to Aboriginal peoples. And finally in June 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued a formal apology on behalf of the government and people of Canada. Since that time common experience payments have been made to approximately 80,000 living survivors and private hearings for determining appropriate compensation for those most grievously abused or violated have been offered.

In addition a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed and is currently hosting a series of seven events in different regions of Canada. The events will allow survivors to tell their stories, to validate their experiences, and to educate the rest of Canada about this tragic part of our history which continues to shape families, relationships and our society as a whole. The first TRC event was held in Winnipeg, June 16-19, 2010 and had significant Mennonite Church Canada presence.

Resolution: Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada congregations and individual members recognize and confess our complicity in the failing of the Christian Church and its role in the tragic physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse, denial of culture, language, and peoplehood of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In recognition of this past failing, and in acknowledgement that destructive individual attitudes, such as paternalism, racism, and superiority are still present among us, we as Mennonite Church Canada congregations and as individuals will seek renewed opportunities to walk with Aboriginal people of Canada, opening our hearts, minds, and ears to engage the pain resulting from the legacy of the Residential Schools, and strive to recognize each other as sisters and brothers created in the image and likeness of one God.

There is one school included in the settlement that was Mennonite (but not Mennonite Church Canada) run. There are three additional Mennonite affiliated schools we know of whose students are requesting inclusion in the settlement. While none of these were formally Mennonite Church Canada run, the informal connections are less clear.



The learning tour is honoured to have Margaret Waterchief of Siksika share with them.



The learning tour gathers at the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.

Photos by Dan Dyck

Learning Tour to Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park – Interpretive Centre

Native Ministry staff led a learning tour to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park - Interpretive Centre on the Siksika Nation east of Calgary on Saturday, July 3, 2010, following the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly sessions. Here is a reflection by one participant.

I was a visitor, along with 17 other people from the Mennonite Church Canada

Assembly in Calgary, who were graciously hosted by Native Canadians at the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park - Interpretive Centre on July 3rd, 2010.

Our Aboriginal brothers and sisters are rising out of the ashes of decades of oppression and exclusion and this couldn't be more evident than in the stunningly beautiful architecture of the Interpretive Centre on the banks of the Bow River at Blackfoot

Crossing on the Siksika Nation reserve.

The entire building design is a reinterpretation of a vast range of Blackfoot culture, its sacred icons, and the everyday life of the Siksika people. With every design decision, whether on a site planning level, the building, or with an interior design detail, the building is intended to be a literal metaphor of the traditional Blackfoot iconography.¹ The building's seamless connec-

Bootstraps cont.

a haunting question: In spite of our good intentions, were we inadvertently partners in the effort to erase the cultural identity of the students in this setting?

In a small group setting where these issues were being discussed, a suggestion surfaced to the effect that, as recent immigrants fleeing war-torn Europe and having struggled for survival in various other countries, we had "pulled ourselves up by the bootstraps". Could we not expect the Native people of Canada to do the same?

As I reflected on the imagery of "bootstraps" it struck me that our "bootstraps" had been woven over the centuries in the context of our schools and communities. In many cases, these had been transported intact as we migrated from one country to another. True, for many of the immigrants, especially those fleeing the Soviet regime after having been stripped of their spiritual leaders and, in many cases, of the male members of the family, fathers and brothers, the straps had become frayed and extremely weakened.

ment of the students but also that of faith and culture. It raises

However, most of these people found their way into a pre-existent community of support in their new environment. There is no comparison between the above experience and that of the cultural groups who, for several generations, were subjected to a very deliberate and conscious "cutting of the cultural bootstraps" with an equally deliberate effort to substitute our own.

Can we as outsiders "fix the damage?" "No!"

We need to recognize that the mending can happen but only as the ones who suffered the loss live in community with each other and reconnect their "cultural bootstraps".

We need to honour and to celebrate all cultures, not only our own. In such an atmosphere reconciliation is possible.

The stories need to be told. We need to listen.

We need to acknowledge our involvement, deliberate or inadvertent, in the injustice that was done.

We need to honour the culture that is bringing them back into their rightful place in this country and we need to count it a privilege when we are asked to join in the celebration of their "bootstraps".

—Martin Penner, Sargent Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB



Photo by Dan Dyck

Sharing a prayer circle on the former residential school site at Siksika.

Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park is a world renowned cultural, educational and entertainment centre built for the promotion and preservation of the Siksika Nation Peoples', Language, Culture and Traditions.

To learn more visit www.blackfootcrossing.ca

tion with the earth and its surroundings reminds anyone who enters of the sacredness and interconnectedness of everything and everyone in the Creator's world.

I experienced the Interpretive Centre as a welcome and hospitable place that graciously shares the story of the Siksika people, neither adorning nor hiding the beauty and/or pain of their experiences as Aboriginal people in Canada. I experienced this same welcome and hospitality from the people we encountered that shared their own story of pain and beauty, grace, redemption and hope with us.

For many years now the strongest symbol of the mistreatment and oppression of Aboriginal people in Canada is the legacy of the residential schools.

Our government, with the cooperation of many Canadian churches, sought to integrate the Aboriginal peoples into the rest of Canadian society by building, running and enforcing participation of all Aboriginal children in Residential schools. In these schools, the children were separated from their parents, forcefully not allowed to speak their own language and taught about a Christian God who had no room in His heart for the traditional spirituality of these native children, their parents and ancestors.

As a group we held a prayer vigil in front of the Anglican residential school at Siksika on our way back to Calgary. The sound of the Prairie breeze in the cottonwoods, the gophers cavorting with each other on the lawn in front of the school, the swallows that had built their nests in the school's eaves and above the front porch spoke to me more loudly of possible redemption than any of the words in our prayers. The Creator of everyone and everything that is will heal both the earth and the people of the earth if we learn to listen to each other and our Creator. Our Aboriginal brothers and sisters can teach us this. I am grateful for the opportunity on this day to hear them.

—Marilyn Zebr, Lead Pastor

Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, ON

This description is taken from, "Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park – Interpretive Centre: Design Metaphors and Concepts." p. 1.

This is my child
This is my child.
Running, laughing, voice echoing
in playful halls.
Learning, playing, making new friends.
Boys, girls, teachers,
together. School.

This is my child.
Running, crying, scream echoing
in silent halls.
Scolded, beaten, stolen away.
Boys, girls, teachers,
confined. School.

This is my child.
Home from school.
Warm cookies. Milk.
Giggling. Non-stop chatter.
Questions. Hugs. Cuddles.
Tickles. Time for supper.

This is my child.
School is home.
Forbidden to speak.
Fearful. Weary.
Staring. Empty.
Hungry. Waiting for supper.

This is my child.
Bedtime. Story time.
Prayer time. Not sleepy.
More reading. Hugs.
Goodnight kisses. Love.
Proud. Parents.

This is my child.
Where? Not here.
Empty bed. Missing.
Muffled cries. Tears in the dark.
Another empty night. Love.
Pained. Parents.

A reflection written after visiting
Old Sun Campus, a former residential
school near Gleichen, Alberta,
on July 3, 2010. © Dan Dyck, 2010



VBS in the Cross Lake Community Hall.



Photos provided by Norm Voth

Cross Lake kids at VBS sessions.

Cross Lake VBS: Strangers and Friends

We parked our vehicles at Sand Bay and walked along the footpath toward the camp site. Darlene Beck, Administrator for Cross Lake (Manitoba) Community Council, was the first camper we met. “Family camp started eight years ago with a few families looking to get away for some camping,” she said. “Now it’s become a major event.”

This information did not prepare us for what we found. At the main site a large yellow and white striped tent suggested a festive mood that was continued by the cooking, supply and eating tents that followed. Beyond that the hillsides were dotted with brightly coloured tents and tarps and the smell of wood smoke filled the air. We found a village of more than 300 tents set up in the bush around Sand Bay with approximately 1000 people participating in the week long family camp.

Fifteen youth and adults from Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg arrived in Cross Lake on July 11, 2010 to explore a partnership with Living Word Church and provide four days of Vacation Bible School (VBS) programming and service in the community.

After a day of driving, sharing a meal and worshipping together, the group started preparing for the program. Monday morning they continued to hang murals,

posters and streamers. By noon the church and community hall were ready. All that remained was to see how many children would show up.

Twenty children had pre-registered, thanks to the support of Florence Benson Umpherville, a member of the Living Word Church, but more and more came until the day’s program began with more than fifty children. By the end of the week seventy children had registered and the highest attendance for one day hit sixty children.

Each day the program included singing, drama, crafts, snack, games and story time. The children were divided according to school grades and each group began at a different station and then moved to the next one, until each child had participated in every station. The afternoons ended with everyone gathering for more singing and sign out. The enthusiasm was contagious and tiring.

In addition to the children’s programming, the mornings included serving the community and building relationships. From getting a flat tire fixed at no charge to devouring piles of fresh pickerel fillets at fish fry’s, we were welcomed warmly and generously by so many people.

On the final evening the community invited all the VBS volunteers to attend a concert at Family Camp and surprised

them with a presentation of t-shirts, expressions of gratitude, and an invitation to return next year.

Providing VBS to the children of Cross Lake was a collaborative effort. First, two family members, Carol Scott Ross and her daughter Lesley, came from Cross Lake to help out with Sterling’s VBS program in Winnipeg. The local congregation, Living Word Church, provided food, volunteers and the church facility for snacks and a teacherage where the fifteen Sterling volunteers stayed for the week. The Community Council donated the use of the hall for four days and offered encouragement and affirmation.

When Sterling Mennonite Fellowship first considered this project, some parents voiced concerns about safety. Stereotypes of reserves as violent and dangerous underlie such fears but the volunteers from Sterling experienced tremendous hospitality by the people of Cross Lake. They came as strangers and left as friends with the children from VBS and both children and adults from the time spent at the Family Camp, and are looking forward to returning next year.

—Norm Voth, Winnipeg, MB



Granisle/Tachet VBS

A group of seven youth and young adults left Chilliwack in the beginning of July and headed north to central British Columbia to the town of Granisle for ten days. The purpose of our trip was deliberately different than typical youth service projects or missions trips. Though we would have the same opportunities to serve and to talk about Christ that traditionally characterize youth mission trips, the purpose of our journey was to seek out intentional opportunity to learn and to grow. Our hope was that we could begin to learn from this trip what life, faith, history and community are like for the First Nations people we would be interacting with in Central BC.

Our church, the Sardis Community Church, is located on the south side of Chilliwack, right next door to the Tzeachten reserve. Although we have been neighbours here for more than thirty years, there has been little meaningful interaction between our two communities in that time. Unfortunately, this lack of relationship between our two communities isn't unique to us and our small area of Chilliwack but, in the four years that I have lived here, it seems indicative of our city as a whole. Two communities, the First Nations and the rest of Chilliwack, mostly comprised of former European immigrants and their descendants, live side by side as neighbours but have little meaningful interaction with one another.

And so it was, with this on our hearts and with the Bible's clear call for us to love

our neighbours, that our youth ministry began to explore how we could begin to get to know our First Nations neighbors; how we could start to build relationships with each other, become friends, and truly live out the gospel's call for us to be "neighbours." Part of the problem we recognized is that we were uninformed of the history and the many issues facing First Nations people in Canada today. Also, we were not familiar with First Nations etiquette or culture, and we wanted to be sensitive and relevant to the people with whom we were hoping to build friendships.

This is where Granisle fits into the picture. My brother Steve has been serving as a pastor there for the last three years, building relationships, trust and friendship with the Carrier people who live in that area (Lake Babine Nation, Tachet Reserve). It was with Steve's help and many of the First Nations peoples' willingness that we were privileged to come to Granisle to learn.

During the time we spent there, we divided our time into two parts. During the day we would pick up kids and teenagers from the reserve and spend time together at what was called "Jesus Camp." There we played games and sports, sang songs, ate food and made crafts. We also watched skits, learned Bible verses, and talked about Creator and His son Jesus. We had an awesome time together, getting to know each other and making new friends.

In the evening, our group from Chilliwack would spend time watching films

that talked about the residential school experiences. We also heard from elders about what life was like growing up on the reserve, and we even helped host a community dinner on the reserve where we ate spaghetti, had dessert together and watched the movie "Smoke Signals".

It was an emotional journey for us, as we would listen to the pain of past hurts and injustices along with present day struggles and hurdles. We came face to face with some of our own preconceived ideas, stereotypes and biases. And we also observed and experienced a great deal of love, care and respect among these people, many of whom have become our friends.

As we had hoped from the outset, this was an extraordinary opportunity for our group and it provided us with many chances to begin to learn how life, faith, history and community are different for the First Nations people than our own experiences. But, more importantly, it has begun to transform our hearts and attitudes. Through building friendships with the people with whom we spent time in Granisle, we see how uniquely and lovingly God has created each one of them. Even greater is our desire that, from this experience, our hearts and attitudes will continue to change and grow with love, compassion, understanding and a desire to reach out to our First Nations neighbors here in Chilliwack.

—Dave Heinrichs, Chilliwack, BC

VBS group at the Church of the Way, Granisle, BC.



Dave Heinrichs and Anthony enjoying each other's company.



Photos provided by Dave Heinrichs



Visiting Hollow Water First Nation: (back) Ed Toews and Brigido Loewen of Paraguay, Norman Meade, Edith and Neill von Gunten, Dennis Sinclair; (front) Marilyn Sinclair, Alina Itucama of Panama, Thelma Meade.



Photos provided by Neill von Gunten

Brigido Loewen of Paraguay shares a song with those gathered at the Manigotagan Community Chapel.

South, Meet North 2010

Indigenous Christians from North America travelled south in July 2009 to attend the Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered in Asuncion, Paraguay and, together with other Latin American Christians, visited indigenous communities in the Chaco of Paraguay and Argentina. In July 2010, two Latin American visitors came to North America: Alina Itucama, a Wouunan church leader from Panama, and Brigido Loewen of the Enlhet tribe of the Paraguayan Chaco with his translator, Ed Toews. The guests spent a week visiting indigenous communities in Manitoba before travelling to Native Assembly in Montana.

Brigido Loewen visits Native Communities in Manitoba and Montana

After the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay in July 2009, a delegation of North American Native people visited Native communities in the Chaco and expressed their interest in having a Paraguayan Native representative participate at Native Assembly 2010 in Ashland, Montana. Brigido Loewen, a singer, teacher and secretary of social service in his Native community of Pesempoo, Colony Menno, qualified as a candidate. Ed was asked to accompany Brigido on his trip and also assist him as translator.

We arrived in Winnipeg on July 10, 2010 and were greeted at the airport by Neill and Edith von Gunten of Native Ministry, who had organized our itinerary and were to accompany us during our visits. Brigido spoke and sang on Sunday morning at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and shared lunch with others in the congregation who were originally from various countries in South America.

We left Winnipeg on Monday morning the 12th to visit Manigotagan and Hollow Water First Nation. Besides sharing testimonies and singing in the church there, we were also fortunate to be part of some traditional ceremonies happening then, learn of traditional ways of seeing God in nature through many symbolisms.

We spent Tuesday evening sharing in the church in Riverton. On Wednesday we travelled about 800 kilometers north to Cross Lake, where we spent two days sharing, learning and visiting. Brigido's singing was also greatly appreciated.

On Sunday the 18th we joined the Manitoba group that headed to Ashland, Montana USA by bus for Native Assembly. While in Montana, Brigido spoke and sang on two occasions. We also participated in different workshops and afternoon tours to significant historical places.

Our visit to these North American Native communities and to Native Assembly was a unique and richly blessed experience for us. We are very happy for the many brothers and sisters in Christ we were able to get to know. Special thanks go to Neill and Edith von Gunten, Norman Meade, Dennis Sinclair and Willis Busenitz (Montana) for the warm companionship, hospitality and loving care during all our visits and for making our stay such a lasting memory. Our youth in Paraguay is a big concern to us and we also pray for your youth in North America because God has a special plan for our future generations.

We got home to Paraguay on July 30 and since that time we have had many different opportunities to share our experiences from the trip. We hope to meet all of you again some time. May God continue to richly bless all of you.

—Brigido Loewen and Ed Toews,
Chaco, Paraguay

Cross Lake Hosts Guests

The month of July 2010 has been an exciting time for the small congregation of Living Word Church in Cross Lake, Manitoba!

A group of adults and teenagers from the Sterling Mennonite Church in Winnipeg



Photo provided by Neill von Gunten

Thelma Meade and Marilyn Sinclair with the Star Blanket presented to Alina Itucama of Panama by the Hollow Water Band Council.

held a Vacation Bible School in the Cross Lake Community Hall from July 12 - 15. The group was led by Mr. Ralph Bartel.

Neill von Gunten of the Native Ministry office arrived in Cross Lake on July 14 with Alina Itucama from Panama and her interpreter Liz Drewnisz from Winnipeg, and Brigido Loewen and his interpreter Ed Toews from the Chaco region of Paraguay. This group was hosted by a family from the church and the visitors were given a tour of the communities of Cross Lake and the Cross Lake First Nation, including learning more about the extensive flooding that occurred in their region when Manitoba Hydro built a dam nearby and the effects that flooding has had on the people and their livelihoods.

The visitors were in the community at the time that the Cross Lake Community Council holds its Annual Family Campout and the group was invited to join in the activities at the campout area as they could.

A fish fry was held at the church on the evening of July 15th as a Thank You to the group from the Sterling Mennonite Church and it also gave a chance for the congregation to meet the Latin American visitors. Local church leaders and others were invited to this supper. Mr. Cameron McLeod from the Cross Lake Community Council presented the visitors with slippers and the Council also generously gave all the participants t-shirts.

After supper the Latin America visitors

shared and sang and the church group presented a brief history of Cross Lake. The evening ended with one more trip to the Family Campout. The Gospel Jamboree was winding down when they arrived; however, not before the visitors had a chance to listen to local singer Ernest Monias and sons end the evening with *How Great Thou Art*.

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

Visiting the East Side of Lake Winnipeg

It is a beautiful Monday morning in Manigotagan and Hollow Water, Manitoba. I got up quickly thinking I had slept in but, no, it was only about 6 a.m. There was a certain excitement in the air because today we were going to see some friends from Latin America that we had not seen for a year. Brigido Loewen and Alina Itucama, along with their interpreters Ed and Liz, were on their way from Winnipeg.

Many other community people of Hollow Water had also gathered to greet these new friends from a far away country. The visitors were already there when I arrived at the CHCH building. Handshakes, hugs and friendships were already in the making.

I observed closely what was happening. I could see that the spirits of the indigenous hearts were again naturally intertwined, just as it happened last year when we went to the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay. It was wonder-

ful to see. God was at work in His own mysterious way. Then it dawned on me, the Spirit of God's unconditional love is not measured by physical distance and, in fact, as the Word says, it is so deep, broad, and high that it is immeasurable. I need to add that the people of Hollow Water, and in particular at the CHCH building, were awesome hosts. They had prepared a huge traditional welcoming feast for our Latin American friends and everyone else. It was wonderful to witness God's love at work.

In the afternoon, Dennis had arranged with Edgar Bird, a local elder and commercial fisherman, to take our guests and us across to Black Island to visit the traditional grounds of the Anishinabe (Ojibway) people of the Hollow Water area. I will never forget the look on Brigido's face as we travelled out to the island. He was in awe as he glared over the water and witnessed the point of where the water meets the sky. Apparently, this was his first time to see and be on so much water.

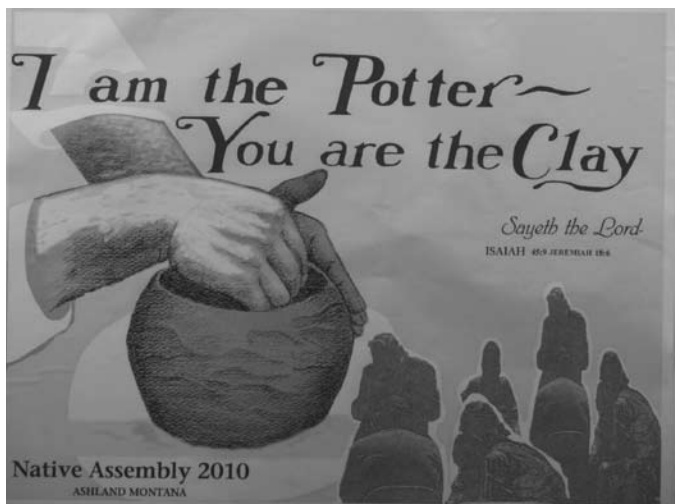
In the late afternoon we went to the Manigotagan Community Chapel. Here we were met by many local people, some of whom are congregational members of the Chapel. It was supper time and time to eat again. So between our local caterers, Bunny and Diane Bostrom, and congregational members of the Chapel, we had another big feast. After supper was served, members of the Northern Gospel Light singers, led by Billy and Doreen Meade, who are also the local leaders in the Roman Catholic Church, provided good old country gospel music for our guests and for us all.

To end the evening, there was an exchange of gifts between those brothers and sisters in Christ from the south and those from the north.

On behalf of us all from the north, we will be forever connected to our brothers and sisters from the south. Physical distance cannot separate us any longer because we are forever spiritually connected through God's love that is instilled in our hearts.

We like to especially thank Neill and Edith von Gunten of Native Ministries for facilitating this relationship. God Bless.

—*Norman Meade, Winnipeg, MB*



Banner of the Native Assembly 2010 theme.



Part of the Choctaw group from Mississippi singing in their language at a worship service at Native Assembly.

Photos provided by Neill von Gunten

Native Assembly 2010

The theme for Native Assembly 2010 was "I Am the Potter. You Are the Clay" from Isaiah 45:9 and Jeremiah 18:6. The three Northern Cheyenne Mennonite Churches hosted the gathering at the St. Labre Indian School in Ashland, Montana from July 19 – 22, 2010. The bi-annual event is sponsored by Native Mennonite Ministries (US) and Native Ministry (Canada). Canadians in attendance were from Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.

Twenty-eight of us left the Canadian Mennonite University campus in a private chartered bus just after 6 a.m. on Sunday morning, July 18, and arrived in Medora, North Dakota in time for supper and a chance to do some exploring of the town and the Theodore Roosevelt National Park that evening. We were treated to see buffalo, wild horses, antelope, many groundhogs and wonderful scenery on our bus trip through the park. Another breathtaking view was watching the thunder clouds and lightening from close up high in the hills. It was a beautiful ending to a great day before resting at the Cowboy Inn motel in nearby Belfield for the night.

The Northern Cheyenne Mennonite Churches of Busby, Lame Deer and Ashland had supper ready for us on Monday and hosted us very well during the assembly. This year's theme was "I am the potter, you are the clay: working together to build his kingdom." The assembly is sponsored by

Native Mennonite Ministries – USA and Native Ministries – Canada and is held every two years somewhere in North America. The next one is planned for Mississippi in 2012.

The Assembly again increased our growing realization of how First Nations people have so much to offer. There is always something new to learn. The many different tribes, cultures and customs participating gave it a colourful representation of how great God's creation really is. The worship services were led by different churches representing their tribe or tribes, and often dressed in their colourful regalia, reading Scripture, singing and praying in their own native language. These included Cheyenne, Choctaw, Cree, Creek, Lakota, and Ojibway.

Special speakers included Mary Fontaine (Cree) from British Columbia, Brigido Loewen (Enhlet) from Paraguay, Alina Itucama (Wounan) from Panama, and Terry LeBlanc (Mi'kmaq /Acadian) from Alberta.

Some of the highlights for us were how we interpret Scripture. For example, we often highlight Genesis 3, the fall, instead of Genesis 1 and 2 where God gives his intention, and says that it is good. Or, Acts 17 where Paul commends the Athenians for being a religious people and then talks of the unknown God they are also worshiping, rather than emphasizing all the false gods they have on display. The God who created all things gives life and breath to all people

and is not far from each one of us.

Terry shared the setting in which this realization came to him in a forceful way, and it made us think in a new way. To illustrate, he used a picture of how the first explorers came to this land and when they landed they let God get out of the boat first, since they believed God didn't exist here. Yet Paul says God created all people, and is near to each one of us. God was already with the indigenous people long before the white man arrived.

Over the years we have also come to realize that the indigenous peoples have learned some truths we could benefit from. As Mary Fontaine said, a church she was a part of accepted her as a Christian, but not as a Cree woman. Now she has learned to accept herself as a Christian Cree woman, and has a deep inner peace. She, already a strong Christian leader, was deeply moved while participating at the Assembly.

Willis Busenitz from Busby, Montana shared how, after recognizing the way different denominations had come into the Cheyenne community and had torn apart families and built walls of alienation, began to meet with the different church leaders. They are now meeting together regularly, where they complement and support each other. A number were there and personally gave greetings.

A sincere thank you to God, all the organizers and to our bus drivers. Migwetch.

—Egon and Erna Enns, Winnipeg, MB

Spruce River FolkFest and Jamboree: Songs for Justice and Reconciliation

It was a fairly typical late summer gathering in rural Saskatchewan: friends, family and neighbours sitting in lawn chairs, lying on blankets and standing huddled in groups listening to an eclectic mix of gospel, folk, jazz and First Nation's music drifting towards them from a stage in front of the barn. People munched on hot dogs, hamburgers, cotton candy and homemade squares as their toes tapped along to the music. As the sun slid down behind the barn, gloves and toques were donned and cups of coffee sought out to keep the chilly night air at bay.

To anyone happening across this scene, it may have almost seemed like a spontaneous gathering to celebrate the fading days of summer. But this light-hearted sing-along was carefully brought together as part of a journey two different peoples began over a century earlier. The Mennonites and people from the Young Chippewyan First Nation who warmly greeted one another at the Spruce River FolkFest and Jamboree were writing a new chapter in their relationship. Both peoples came together on this cold evening committed to raising funds that would help right a historic wrong that saw Young Chippewyan land taken for Mennonite settlement.

In some ways, this history began when Canada was in its infancy. Shortly after Confederation, the Canadian government negotiated Treaty Six with the Nehiyawak or Plains Cree people. The Young Chippewyan were granted 30 square miles of prime farmland near the present-day town of Laird as part of the 1876 negotiations. But increasing white settlement, the decline of the fur trade, devastating epidemics and the disappearance of the buffalo were quickly changing these prairie peoples' way of life.

As a young child, Chief George Kingfisher used to listen to these stories of hardship at his grandfather's knee.

"They were getting hungry there," says the hereditary chief of the Young Chippewyan First Nation. "There wasn't any game on their land."



Photo by Eric Offert

Ray Funk, centre, and his wife Shirley hosted the Spruce River Folkfest at their home north of Prince Albert.

Chief Kingfisher says the government only gave his great-grandfather, Chief Ispimihk Kâ-kitot or "sounding in the sky," bad meat to distribute to his people. Starvation and the beginning of Métis leader Louis Riel's resistance to these dire circumstances prompted the Young Chippewyan to head south to the Cypress Hills in search of buffalo. It was many years before they began to drift toward home.

"But when they got to their reserve, white man was settled on it," Chief Kingfisher says. "So, they separated from there and went to different areas."

In 1897, without the knowledge of the Young Chippewyan people, the government had taken their land for white settlement. The following year, this land was added to the Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve. German Lutheran settlers from the United States joined this community of Mennonite farmers at the turn of the century.

Leonard Doell, Aboriginal Neighbours Coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, picks up the modern-day tale. He says the story of the Young Chippewyan's loss was largely unknown in the settler community until an incident in 1976.

"There were Aboriginal people that showed up in the yards of a number of Mennonite farmers at Laird and said, 'take good care of this land because eventually it will be ours again,'" Doell says. "This was the first time for a lot of Mennonite farmers that they became aware that something fraudulent had happened."

MCC Saskatchewan board member Ray Funk remembers his surprise when he read the newspaper article about the incident and realized his grandfather had homesteaded on that land.

"That was as bad a start as was possible for the relationship at the community level," Funk says with a chuckle.

Faced with the Mennonite farmers' fears, feelings of betrayal on the part of the Young Chippewyan and the possibility of conflict, Funk and many others in the Mennonite community committed themselves to keeping an open dialogue and creating understanding between the two groups.

Doell was initially hired to research the history of the Young Chippewyan claim and MCC Saskatchewan began to reach out to both communities. In the early 1990s, Funk inherited the quarter section his parents had kept on the former reserve and



This need to hire genealogical researchers to identify the descendants of the Young Chippewyan families present at the signing of Treaty Six was the genesis for the FolkFest at Funk's farm.

FolkFest and Jamboree cont.

filed an affidavit with his title in recognition of the unfinished business. He also began building personal relationships among the Young Chippewyan people, particularly with the hereditary chief.

In 1992, Funk and Chief Alfred Snake went up to Stoney Knoll, the highest and most sacred place on the reserve. It was the first time the elderly chief had been on his people's land. The experience moved Chief Snake to the realization that if they were to try to take the land from the Mennonite and Lutheran settlers, they would be no better than the government. He passed this conviction on to his family.

"That is their home now," says Chief Kingfisher. "How many generations have lived there now? It wouldn't look right to try to take it away from them."

But he still longs for a place his people can call their own, even if it is not on their traditional land.

"We don't have a home anywhere," says Chief Kingfisher. "The people I spoke to feel like they're bumming when they live on other people's land. That doesn't make a person feel very good."

Both communities are now committed to making a Young Chippewyan homeland a reality. At Stoney Knoll in 2006, elected Chief Ben Weenie reaffirmed this commitment to respect the current ownership of the land. That day, the journey to reconciliation reached a significant milestone. The Young Chippewyan, Mennonites and

Lutherans gathered at Stoney Knoll signed a memorandum of understanding, calling for peace, justice and self-sufficiency for all three communities.

These words became actions with the FolkFest. While something tangible was accomplished at Stoney Knoll, Funk says it was only a beginning.

"If we are going to put our money where our mouth is, then we have to be prepared to deal with the real issues that need addressing," he says.

A few of those real issues became clear this past April. A meeting with the Young Chippewyan revealed the First Nation could move ahead with their specific land claim if they had financial support for a genealogy project.

Getting to this point has taken a long time. Chief Kingfisher says the government has often engaged in what he calls stalling tactics, to avoid recognition of the claim.

"They'd say, 'no land, no band.' Then they'd turn it around, 'no band, no land,' he explains. "That didn't make any sense at all."

In the most recent version of this reasoning, the Indian Claims Commission concluded in 1995 that while the government had illegally taken the land from the Young Chippewyan, treaty provisions could not be honoured until band members were identified.

This need to hire genealogical researchers to identify the descendants of the Young Chippewyan families present at the signing of Treaty Six was the genesis for the FolkFest at Funk's farm. Grace Mennonite

Church in Prince Albert and MCC Saskatchewan, with the support of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, joined forces to raise \$4,000.00. MCC Saskatchewan has agreed to contribute funds to get this time sensitive project off the ground while the Mennonite and Lutheran communities continue to raise funds.

But Doell says the FolkFest was about more than fundraising. It was about building understanding and community between peoples whose histories and futures are bound together. It was about recognizing their responsibility as God's people to uphold the covenant made between First Nations and non-Aboriginal peoples with the signing of Treaty Six.

"We are called to be God's ambassadors of peace and reconciliation here on earth," Doell says. "Here is one opportunity where we can make a difference. We may not be able to solve all the land claims right across the country, but we have one in our backyard that we can work very hard to find resolution to."

Chief Kingfisher says their communities are making history by choosing to live and settle their differences peacefully. Echoing elected Chief Ben Weenie's words at the 2006 gathering, he says the rest of the country can learn from their example. Chief Kingfisher says it gives him hope for a future where people work together and truly listen to one another.

"Man oh man, it would be a beautiful world to live in."

—Brandy Harrison, Ottawa, ON



Pumpkin Fry Bread

4 cups fresh pumpkin, peeled and cubed
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 cup warm milk
3/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
3 cups lard or vegetable oil for frying

1. Cover the pumpkin with water in a saucepan, bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until the pumpkin is tender, about 15 minutes. Drain the pumpkin, and mash to a smooth texture.
2. Stir the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg together in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together the mashed pumpkin, milk, brown sugar, and vanilla extract. Pour the wet ingredients in the flour mixture, and stir together to make a dough. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface, and knead a few times until thoroughly combined. Don't over knead the dough. Cover the dough and let it rest for 30 minutes to relax the gluten.
3. Heat the lard over medium heat in a large heavy skillet until it shimmers. Break off egg-sized pieces of the dough, pat them out flat into rough circles about 4 inches across and 1/4 inch thick, and fry, turning once, until the dough puffs up and begins to brown at the edges, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Push the fry bread into the oil to help it puff. Drain on paper towels, and serve hot.

From *allrecipes.com*



Resources

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 preveiw Reaching up to God Our Creator.

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.



Community news

Wedding Anniversaries

Two former Native Ministry staff celebrated significant wedding anniversaries this summer: Congratulations to both couples!!

Clarence and Barbara Nepinak celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary with a supper gathering for family and friends on Sunday evening, August 15, 2010 at Steve's Bistro in Winnipeg, Manitoba. [Clarence was on staff at the YOU (Youth Opportunities Unlimited) drop-in centre in Winnipeg.]

Neil and Genny Funk – Unrau celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in the Great Hall of Canadian Mennonite University on Saturday evening, August 21, 2010 with their family and friends. [Neil was on staff in the Native Ministry office in Winnipeg and in Manigotagan, Manitoba.]

Obituaries

Mary (Owen) Crow passed away at Pauingassi, Manitoba at the age of 80 years after ailing for some time. She is survived by her husband Elijah and family. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owens officiating.

Dick Owen of Pauingassi, Manitoba passed away at the Health Sciences Center in Winnipeg on July 1, 2010. He reached the age of 68 years but had been ailing for some time. He is missed very much by his family. The body was returned to Pauingassi for burial, with Allan Owens officiating.

Isaac (Ike) Froese, aged 83 years, of Winnipeg, Manitoba died on September 8, 2010 at the Victoria General Hospital in Winnipeg. He is survived by wife Margaret and their five children, Phil (Vera), David (Virginia), Ken (Lynette), Judith (Robert), and Rob (LeAnne). He is fondly remembered by 13 grandchildren;

three siblings and many friends and acquaintances.

Ike served as the Executive Secretary of Native Ministry, Conference of Mennonites in Canada, in the 1970s. Ike and his wife Margaret were on staff at the Hopi Mission School in Kykotsmobi, Arizona before coming to Winnipeg to accept the Native Ministry director position.

A Memorial Service was held at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on September 11. Interment was at the Mennonite Memorial Gardens in Winnipeg.



*Our death is not an end
if we can live on in our
children and the younger
generation. For they are
us, our bodies are only
wilted leaves on the tree
of life.*

~Albert Einstein

Events Calendar

October 7 – 9, 2010

Native Mennonite Ministries (US)
Council meeting,
Winnipeg and Manigotagan, MB.

July 4 – July 8, 2011

Mennonite Church Canada Annual
Delegate Assembly and Youth Assembly
Waterloo, ON,

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.



Exhortations to Thankfulness

2. *Psalm 100:4* - Enter the Temple gates with thanksgiving; go into its courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise him.

3. *Colossians 1:11, 12* - May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious power, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. And with joy give thanks to the Father who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for this people in the kingdom of light.

4. *1 Thessalonians 5:18* - Be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.

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my friends **Intotemak**

Publication Mail Agreement # 40012495
Return undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
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600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Intotemak Fall 2010

A Mennonite Church Canada Publication



Witness