

my friends Intototemak

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Photo provided by Don Klassen

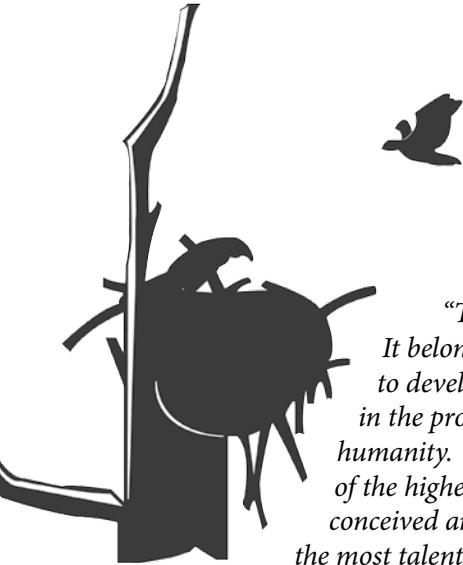
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Don and Isidore carving together. Read article starting on page 3.



“The earth belongs to humanity. It belongs to those who know best how to develop it, increase its wealth, and in the process...beautify it and elevate humanity. Colonization is the propagation of the highest form of civilization yet conceived and realized, the perpetuation of the most talented race.”

—Georges Deherme, 1908

Cree peoples on the Plains (Paul Kane).



Six months. That’s how long I’ve been living in the Prairies, how long since I’ve moved from the lush West Coast. And I must confess, I’m still missing those skyscraping mountains, salty waters, giant cedars and firs. Sometimes I dream about them. Sometimes I look for them on the horizon. And sometimes I think – and please don’t tell this to any of my new prairie neighbours – that these flatlands need to be changed and rearranged ‘cause they’re missing all that good stuff.

Of course, I’m not the only one who has scratched his head at this place and pondered how to fix it. As Francis Kaye tells us in her book *Goodlands*, almost every settler people has either dismissed the Plains as barren or drastically sought to reshape them in order to mine their potential. The Prairies lack gold and fine furs and peoples of ‘civilized’ technology. It needs cows and farms and hydro-dams. As a result, the buffalo are gone and well over 90% of the original prairie humus has been severely damaged, if not destroyed. Our eyes – white, European, Lockean-infused Christian eyes – have struggled to see the sufficiency of these lands, lands that the Creator purposely crafted over thousands and thousands of years.

Yet the Cree, Blackfoot, Dakota and other plains peoples saw exactly that (and many still do!). They believed this land was good, very good, as it was and is. The Goodlands were the centre of the universe, the place where creation began, a land of ceremony, beauty and riches. It wasn’t treeless, but grassful. It was as lush, in a different sense, as my West Coast.

Yes, the earth, plants, medicines and animals were ‘used’ by the indigenous. Yes, they carefully manipulated the land in various ways. But here’s the key: they didn’t make dramatic, radical changes to this space, because they were imbued with a sacred sense of sufficiency. It’s not that they didn’t have the technology to do what we have done. It’s that they saw what I, and many of my settler kinsfolk,

don’t see. . . or struggle to see. Abundance and the Creator’s abiding faithfulness in that ‘primitive’ ecosystem.

In terms of the Christian tradition, it might be fair to say that we settlers have been held captive to the ideology of Pharaoh. Remember him? That old ruler of Egypt got word one day that some difficult economic times were coming to his Prairies. So he quickly figured out ways to secure his future; creating plenty of mega-farms with mono-crops, building huge granaries, stockpiling resources and RRSPs. Pharaoh’s vision of the land (*and the Creator* – for the two go hand-in-hand) was one of stark deficiency and scarcity. He didn’t trust the land to provide enough for all; he didn’t believe it would offer up ‘daily bread.’ So he fundamentally reorganized the lands and the peoples, he gathered and stored, and in the end, he got just what he wanted – the Empire had more than enough to go on for another day. Yet the land and the people who were close to it were made barren.

This is one of the reasons why it’s so crucial for us non-natives to be in relationship with the indigenous. The hosts can help us guests break free from this death-dealing vision of deficiency and perceive this world – Turtle Island – more truly, experience the sacred more faithfully, and so live lives in contended sufficiency. In a day of global burning where most are consumed with consumptive ways that wholly disconnect us from the land, this is all the more critical. To paraphrase the prophet Jeremiah, it’s time we “stand at the crossroads and ask for directions to the old road. . .and take it.”

In this spring edition of *Intotemak*, we’ve got a collection of articles that hold up a few signs towards that old road; articles that celebrate the relationships that make the journey possible. Blessings upon you and all your relations as you read and reflect.

Miigwech,

Steve Heinrichs, Director, Native Ministry

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

**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.

Two Worlds and a Healing Pole

“I would like to carve a residential school healing pole!” Isadore exclaimed one Sunday morning. We were sitting in a class of about twenty-five adults at our church, identifying some of the barriers that keep settler and indigenous peoples from experiencing closer relationships. The unfortunate legacy of church-run residential schools was one of those barriers and Isadore, a former student himself, was helping us to understand the need for reconciliation. He explained that if we carved a pole together he would be able to tell his story in a culturally appropriate way and the process of carving would help us, experientially, towards the path of peace. The finished pole would have indigenous images of protection, family, security and healing, many of the things lost in residential school.

I must admit, this sounded strange to me. But as my friendship with Isadore grew, I saw the need to see things from his point of view, as he sought to understand mine. Here's a story that might help illustrate this journey of new understandings.

“Hey Don, I don't think I can come. My car won't start.” Isadore's voice was strained with frustration. “I can't afford to fix it,” he moaned. “I might

I hung back and waited at the end of the line before serving myself. I wasn't sure if there was some protocol, some way of doing things that I wasn't aware of. I didn't want to mess up.

as well just give it back.” I encouraged him to go to the dealership to see what they could do. So I picked him up and we drove from the potholed, gravel road of the reserve onto the fresh blacktop by the gleaming new auto dealership. It was like leaving one world and entering another. Isadore looked so small in the high ceilinged reception area adjacent to the spotless service centre. It was this dealership that sold him the car and where he bought an extended warranty. Quietly, Isadore approached the service manager. “I thought that since we have a relationship, maybe you could do something for me?” I was startled. Relationship? I knew that approach wouldn't get him anywhere in this place!

The manager didn't sound promising. The car would have to be towed at his expense and warranty coverage was not assured. Isadore was given an 800 number to call and register his complaint. Turning his feet, Isadore started for the door, conceding defeat. “Wait a minute!” I blurted out indignantly. “My friend has an extended warranty that is still good for another 40,000 km and one more year. Who will pay for the towing and the repair?” “Well...,” came the meek response, “I think we will.”

Isadore smiled. “Wow! This is a really good day!” With gleaming faces, we started back to the reserve. Isadore called the tow truck driver and insisted that his car be taken to the dealership.

A little while later, I was following Isadore as he drove his newly repaired car to the longhouse on the neighbouring reserve. “Just follow me,” he said. Isadore entered with sure steps, me in tow... and somewhat hesitant. We walked through a kitchen into the long hall, down a ramp onto a dirt floor. A simple meal was served. I hung back and waited at the end of the line before serving myself. I wasn't sure if there was some protocol, some way of doing things that I wasn't aware of. I didn't

Continued on page 4

want to mess up. After eating, Isadore joined his fellow elders at a table and the real meeting began.

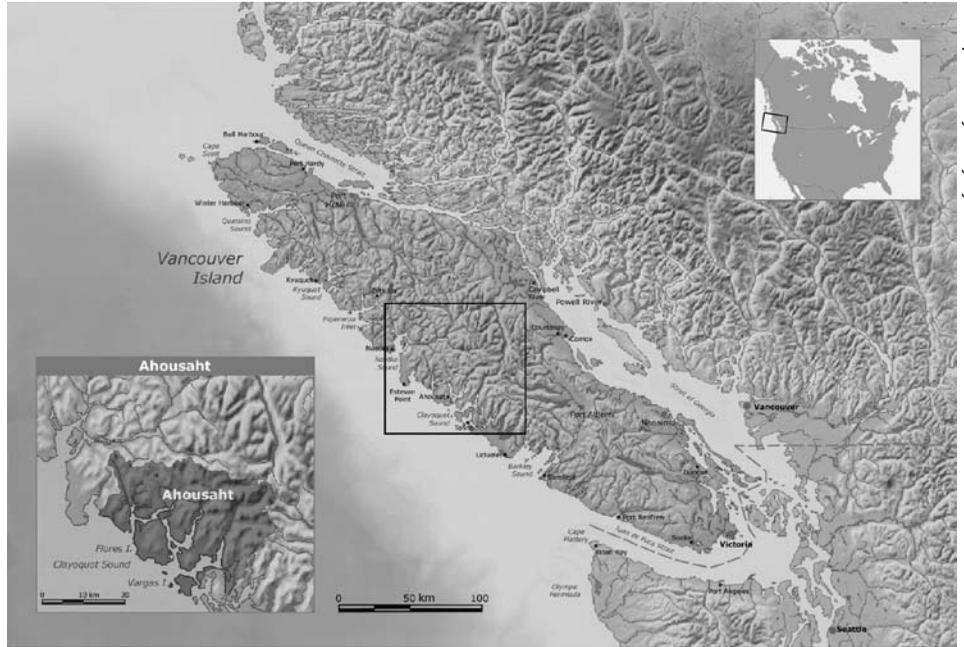
And what a meeting it was! Age was respected, first names were used, participants deferred to one another, relationships were valued and decisions were made based on consensus. Congregationalists could really learn a thing or two from this.

I watched Isadore as he participated. He looked so at home and comfortable. And near the end of the meeting, he shared his plans for the residential school healing pole. I was now starting to see how important this project was to him. . . and to me. The pole was a way to connect worlds that are still largely disconnected and unknown, a way to hear another's story, and a way to bring understanding and experience the beginnings of a relationship. And relationship is critical.

Last month the pole carving was featured at Missions Fest in Vancouver in the main display hall. Hundreds of people saw indigenous carvers and non-indigenous 'apprentices' working together on a yellow cedar pole that will tell the story of how pain and separation are finding a path toward truth, healing and trust. Just the process of shaping this tree together – a tree that grew tall and strong in the midst of that residential school era – is incredibly powerful. Many stopped to help and to listen to stories of redemption.

The pole will now travel to churches and communities throughout B.C. and perhaps beyond. Isadore and I will tell the stories of our journey, our common faith in Christ and how our lives are being enriched by one another. We hope many more will join us on this path. While the pole is only a small gesture, our prayer is that it can become a rallying point, a beacon of hope, and the start of some amazing friendships, like the one I'm blessed to have.

*Don Klaassen,
Yarrow, BC*



Ahousaht on the Map

Discovering God in Ahousaht

“God – you’re my God! I can’t get enough of you! I’ve worked up such hunger and thirst. . . So here I am in the place of worship, eyes open, drinking in your strength and glory.” -Psalm 63

Sometimes we look for God and find the Creator’s powerful presence in those expected places – the Bible, at Church, in worship. That’s where the old psalmist found God – in the temple, and through the holy law that had been passed on from Moses. But sometimes, we discover God in those unexpected places – God outside the church, God in the world, God among the people. I’d like to share how “I found Jesus” some miles away from my home in an indigenous community called Ahousaht.

The Ahousaht First Nation is located on Flores Island, a 40-minute boat ride north of Tofino, B.C. The community is only accessible by float plane or boat, and there is currently a population of about nine hundred living on the reserve. Some years ago, I was working as a youth pastor at First United Mennonite Church (FUMC)

and was trying to plan a Summer Ministries trip for my students. I often say that we randomly ended up in Ahousaht that summer, but I know now that it was all part of God’s plan for us. Who could have guessed that that trip was going to spur long-standing relationships with the people there? Who could have known how God was going to transform my husband and I, our youth group, and even our church congregation, through this initial connection?

Since the summer of 2006, Anthony and I have had the opportunity to return to Ahousaht each year with groups of youth and intergenerational folks from FUMC, which we’re very excited about. We’ve also had opportunities to welcome and reconnect with people from Ahousaht here in Vancouver when they’ve travelled through or had relatives in the



Shelley Dyck and FUMC friends on the way to Ahousaht

hospital.

Each time we've gone to visit our friends, we've had a very different experience. Alongside elders we've helped put on camps for youth and family. We've run a couple of Daily Vacation Bible Schools. And we've gone there for Easter weekends to celebrate with them and share some of our gifts.

This last summer we had a very unique and meaningful experience compared to past years. Usually, our teams stayed in an empty house on the reserve, but this time the house wasn't available, so we were billeted out into local families. What an honor and blessing that turned out to be! We experienced a more intimate side of the community. We were pushed out of our comfort zone – which was really good.

When I read Psalm 63 and think about thirsting for God, there's something about being in Ahousaht that quenches that desire. It's when I'm there that I feel truly alive and experience a deeper joy in my walk

with God. I feel closest to Jesus when with the people and I really think that that's because my friends embody Jesus in a way that's different than anything I've experienced before.

In Ahousaht, I see Christ:

- through the generosity and hospitality of the community. We are welcomed and accepted as part of the family, which I find remarkable, since we are part of a larger white society and people that have caused so much harm

- through their genuine openness in sharing life stories, personal experiences, and struggles

- through their indigenous celebrations, which includes plenty of food, drumming, dancing, and generous gift-giving

- through their strong values of family and community. They are always ready to help and support each other through thick n' thin; taking care of one another's kids if they're not able to, providing freshly caught salmon to all the elders, and so on

Ahousaht is a beautiful place with

beautiful people. The community has been through a lot and it's hard not to notice the underlying sorrow that so many have faced in their lifetimes. Experiences at residential schools, drugs and alcohol addictions, tragic deaths and suicides, and many other things have impacted their lives for generations and continue to be a daily reality. But there is hope! There are ongoing efforts for the next generation to break these cycles and rise above. And our Creator is doing exciting things in Ahousaht! More and more people are trusting Christ and want to follow his Way. Many families are involved in evening Bible studies that happen each night in a different home. Their devotion is strong.

It's a blessing to be in relationship with the people of Ahousaht, to learn from their culture and expression of Christian faith. Like the psalmist, I can say that "I have seen God and beheld his glory and power." I see him, quite clearly, in Ahousaht.

Shelley Dyck,



Tito y Quito

The Toba People and Sabbath Economics

For fourteen years, my wife and I had the great privilege of accompanying evangelical churches and leaders among the Toba people of Northern Argentina. That gave us the opportunity to observe how some of their traditional ways of perceiving and living embody what some have called “Sabbath Economics” – a Biblical mandate for living justly and in solidarity with the whole creation. An incident that occurred near the end of our last term made us painfully aware of just how difficult it is to live out this mandate.

In late November of 2010, a group of Tobas in a large native reservation in the province of Formosa staged a protest, seeking to recover a piece of ancestral land. In a stand-off with

police, two people were killed – a young policeman and an older Toba man. Repercussions from this incident continue in the life of this community today, with no clear resolution; emotionally, relationally, or judicially.

In large measure, this tragic event reflects a clash of cultures. The Toba are feeling squeezed, confined by the boundaries of reservations as the size of their population increases. Furthermore, their traditional view of the land conflicts with that of the dominant society. Many Tobas consider land, along with water, sky, and vegetation, to be the Creator’s abundant gifts for the wellbeing of *all* creatures. Land cannot be owned, in their view, because it is an essential source of life, to be protected and

respected. In contrast, the dominant culture sees land predominantly as a possession to be exploited for what it can produce for its owners. It is an investment, a measure of security, wealth and power.

The Toba are criticized for failing to “use” the land they *do* have (i.e. failing to farm it or at least raise livestock on it). “Why do they need more land when they don’t use what they have?” is a frequently asked question. But the question betrays a failure to grasp the indigenous value on *life-space*. Juan Carlos Martínez says, “When we speak of *life-space*, we speak of a place where we have much more direct contact with the creation, much more contact with life; where life expresses itself and we can feel it among us. Without land,



Mala' Lapel

we feel suffocated.”

This indigenous attitude toward land and creation, especially in hunting-gathering traditions, is an attitude that resonates with the Bible's Sabbath teachings. Most simply expressed, it is the Genesis picture of God creating the world as a garden with an abundance of resources, and then taking a break, stopping for Sabbath, a day of rest. In sacred imitation, God's creatures take what they need from the bounty around them, and then they rest, content because they have enough.

Or consider Exodus 16, which presents this Sabbath Economics with a shocking and joyful clarity. There are God's people out in the desert. And in that supposedly barren place, they are provided the bread they need; all they do is “gather” the manna each day, without storing for tomorrow – and on the Sabbath, they take a complete rest. The point is clear: the Creator provides

generously for his/her creatures, but there's a limit to consumption and to labor.

In a modern, capitalistic society, this Sabbath Economics sounds idyllic or utopian, but it describes the subsistence culture of cooperation and sharing that has characterized hunter-gatherer societies for thousands of years. It is this vision that still resonates in the Toba heart, and accounts for the increasing clashes with white society, especially around matters of land and labor.

I often reflect on the lifestyle of my Toba friend, Tito Bordón. Like many of the other Toba Christians, Tito is rooted in his culture, its language and its customs. He has been grasped by an encounter with Jesus that has changed his life, but that hasn't – thank God – changed his relationship with the land. As he praises God, celebrates *alabanza*, participates in the sacramental sharing of food in church



Nazarene Nainack Fiesta

festivals, he also delights in the land he cultivates and stands with the people who are seeking to maintain their holy, earth-based ways.

Though he's never heard the term, Sabbath Economics describes how Tito lives. He rejoices in the abundance of God's provision, but his own needs are small, so he accumulates little. He provides for his family, and shares liberally with his neighbors. He works hard, but is not obsessed by work. He practices the Sabbath rest by turning from productive labor in order to spend time in worship, trusting God to provide whatever he lacks.

This humble and rooted way of life that the Toba and many other indigenous peoples embody, reflects something fundamental of God's intention for God's people. It's a way that stands in conflict with the dominant values and practices of industrialized societies, like those of Canada and the United States. The challenge for those of us who long to incarnate the reign of God “here on earth, as it is in heaven,” is evident and immense. But so is the promise of God. There is manna, there is rest, there is a better way, if we will just trust.

*Keith Kingsley,
Elkhart, IN*

Rambling Bear on Relationships

“The West is a culture of the individual... and the imposition of this culture of individualism is quickly being extended throughout the colonized world via economic and political development policies. [Thankfully!] indigenous peoples may have something corrective to offer the world....communal stories and ‘functional’ theologies that will undergird the life of the community.” George ‘Tink’ Tinker

my lakota brother is right... native people have ways of viewing the world that can help western society, even the church, get out of the muck of individualism...

for native peoples, it’s all about relationships... especially with Creator... we have always believed that human beings are helpless apart from God... he gives us breath and we spend the rest of our days trying to give it back and give it away... that is the essence of life, and the reason for it... to show Creator he is all sustaining and the one who is...

this is the big problem with the ‘garden’ incident of long ago... the problem wasn’t so much the breaking of a command... it was that adam and eve acted as if we humans aren’t utterly reliant upon Creator, that we can do our own thing.... this radical independence is something i have never heard in all my time in indian country... though plenty of non-native people may debate the reality of God, and many say they don’t need God, that’s not the case with native peoples...‘every’ native knows we are dependent on the Sacred Mystery... life lived without Kitche Manitou, Wakonda, or Jesus, is an absurd assumption...

‘togetherness’ with God and one another is woven right into the DNA of humanity; we were made for community... to think outside this foundational relationship with Creator is like thinking of not existing at all... it’s hell... and hell is utterly terrifying for native people... terrifying not because of hot fires n’ eternal pain n’ torment... it’s terrifying because of the loss of a relationship, *the* relationship... to lose that loving bond with the divine Grandfather/Grandmother is ‘paradise lost’...

in order to maintain that sacred relationship we are taught as native people to live our lives as a prayer... do we all do it? no... there is much that distracts, and much that prevents us from living the way our elders did... but many are walking that good path, attentive in the moment, seeking the Creator, receiving guidance and direction

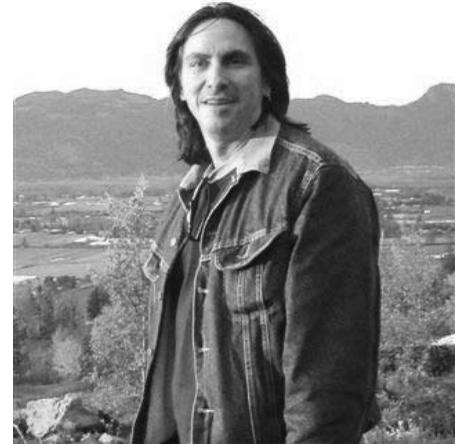
a prayerful life can’t happen when our relationships are out of balance. . . and european christianity is out of balance... it focuses on my rights and your wrongs, my sin, and your sin... counting and naming all those ‘omissions’ and ‘commissions’... but for the most part, native folks don’t... we don’t see life in binaries, polar opposites, and dualisms... we look at things as being both/and, and somewhere in-between... it’s about asking how things

in relationship are impacted, recognizing our inter-dependency, the circle, and the web of life that we are all part of...

this is why adam’s sin was so profound and disruptive... it affected all of creation because all of it - every sister and brother, uncle and auntie, tree and river, salmon and oil tanker, butterfly and computer - is tied together in one big relationship... we are all relations... we really are

this is one reason why the disconnect between settler and native peoples in Turtle Island is such a disconcerting matter... for the most part, the church and mainstream society doesn’t believe “we are all relations,” and so isn’t too concerned about ‘those native peoples’ (apart from fixing them and helping them ‘get over it’) or the land they live on... the church and world are consumed with their individual pleasure and/or survival in this day of shrinking retirement funds and rapid congregational decline... yet we native peoples believe that everybody’s hope n’ healing is linked together... you and I, the church and this earth can’t be well, can’t be balanced and full of life, unless we’re living in relationship together... “if one part of the body suffers, all suffer; if one rejoices, all rejoice”...

don’t get me wrong... european christianity isn’t all bad... it has plenty of gifts, gifts than can bless the whole lot... but it’s addiction to the welfare of the individual - often at the expense of the common good - is not one of them... thankfully, Creator has given us native peoples some gifts too, and we’re willing to share them; we think we may have something of value that can help us all



*Brander ‘Standing Bear’ McDonald
Indigenous Relations Coordinator,
Mennonite Church
British Columbia*



CPT Aboriginal Justice Delegation (Stephanie in center with glasses)

Exile and Homecoming in Anishinabe Territory

What would it be like to be in exile? And what does it mean to come home again? One thing is for certain, to be in exile is traumatic; forced relocation, loss of language, culture and beliefs. It's like having the ground swept out from under your feet. How does one regain footing in those circumstances? And if going home becomes possible, and home is not how you left it, how does it become home again?

Our Scriptures talk plenty about exile. The people of Israel spent years away from the land they loved, forced to the margins and other oppressive places by imperial powers. But in that space of longing, the tribes were given messages of assurance and possible return.

This past year I spent time with a people who are experiencing an exile that is as real as what the Israelites underwent. Yet their exile is taking place right on their own land. The people are the Anishinabe from Grassy Narrows in north-western Ontario, whom I had the privilege of meeting while on a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation.

Varying factors have contributed to the exile that Grassy Narrows (and many other host peoples) are experiencing. Ultimately, it all comes down to colonialism. European

settlers brought disease, violence, and the destruction of traditional ways of living and being. The result was cultural genocide. Some of this was accomplished through the establishment of residential schools. Original language, spirituality, and culture was forbidden at the schools. Grassy also experienced forced relocation – the people having to move from their original reserve land due to flooding from a hydro-electric dam – and mercury poisoning – the Wabigoon River system was contaminated because of negligent pulp and paper mills. To top it off, large corporations have been clear-cutting the Whiskey Jack Forest. This has meant loss of habitat for gathering berries and medicine, and has also severely affected traditional economies of trapping and hunting.

It is a long, long litany of loss. How does one recover from it? How does one return home when one never entirely left it, but parts of oneself – and parts of the land – were taken? It seems hopeless. It looks dire.

Yet as in Israel, light does shine in the darkness. In Grassy, there's a powerful prophetic resistance – much of it led by women – challenging imperial ways and inviting a return

to traditional, life-giving, paths of peace. Young people are being taught some of the wisdom of their elders; learning how to harvest wild rice, build canoes and tikinaugans (cradle boards). Some are rediscovering their language, and the philosophy of life that that language holds. Many are standing up to the government and corporations that are logging on their traditional territory in violation of their treaty rights. They have dialogued with the powers, gone to court, set up physical blockades, and recently started up a petition to boycott logging giant Weyerhaeuser (see <http://borealforestnetwork.com/boycott-weyerhaeuser-petition> and sign up!).

The strength and vision it takes to do this work is the kind of strength and vision that “sets captives free” and leads a community out of exile. I find it truly inspiring. We cannot change the past, but we can acknowledge its brokenness, learn from it, and work to create what the past should have been in our present and for the future. This is what Jesus came to do. To stand in solidarity with those in exile, encouraging them with “the good news” – “God will bring deliverance. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt.” (Is. 58).

Stephanie Epp, Saskatoon, SK

Events Calendar

May 31- June 2, 2012:

Toronto Truth and Reconciliation Regional Hearing (Sheraton Hotel – Toronto, ON)

June 7-9, 2012:

NAIITS 9th Symposium on Indigenous Mission & Theology (Wheaton, Illinois)

June 21-24, 2012:

National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Saskatoon, SK)

July 12-15, 2012:

Mennonite Church Canada Assembly (Vancouver, BC)

July 23-26, 2012:

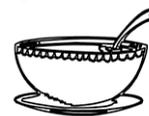
Native Assembly (Philadelphia, Mississippi) Come join us for an incredible time of worship, learning, and fellowship. Our hosts, the Choctaw Mennonite Churches, have programs for all ages – children, youth, and adults. They'll be taking us on tours of traditional historical sites and offering us opportunities to participate in traditional cultural events (including indigenous stickball, North America's oldest game). For more information, please contact Steve Heinrichs at the Native Ministry office, Mennonite Church Canada (sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca)

August 10-20, 2012:

Christian Peacemaker Team Aboriginal Justice Delegation to Treaty #3 Territory Explore what it means to live in right relationship with the earth and each other. Find out what it means to be an ally to indigenous communities engaged in healing, resisting colonialism and struggling for sovereignty. For more info see www.cpt.org/work/aboriginal_justice.

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 3, or email to imiller@mennonitechurch.ca.

IROQUOIS SOUP (u'nega'gei)



4 large mushrooms, sliced
2 (10 ½ oz) cans beef consommé
2 tbsp yellow corn meal
2 tbsp minced parsley
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ tsp basil

1 onion, thinly sliced
Fresh ground pepper, dash
¼ tsp salt
1 lb haddock fillets
10 oz baby lima beans
1/3 cup dry sherry (optional)

Place the mushrooms, consommé, corn meal, parsley, garlic, basil, onion, pepper and salt in a large saucepan, and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Add haddock, lima beans, and sherry and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, breaking haddock into bite-sized pieces. Serve hot.

The Iroquois were blessed with clear, cool lakes and sparkling streams, and both served up an abundance of fish. Fish soup, or *u'nega'gei*, as the Iroquois called it, was a favorite. When wild onions and greens were available, they were usually tossed into the soup pot, adding both color and flavor. Serves 4 | Taken from <http://thegutsygourmet.net/>



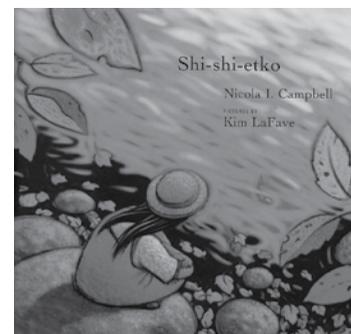
Resources

New Resources at Mennonite Church Canada

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre>

Helpful items for the journey of understanding and reconciliation:

- Nicola Campbell. *Shi-shi-Etko* (2005). A book for children and adults that tells the story of a young girl who is preparing to go back to residential school. Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa, take Shi-Shi-Etko around the land to experience and remember the place of her people.



- Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right* (2008). Can conservative, non-native Church's and Indigenous activists partner to seek justice and peace? Smith believes they can, and shares how in this challenging book.

- Tobin Miller-Shearer, *Daily Demonstrators* (2010). Miller-Shearer explores the history of white and Black Mennonite relationships, and how they have struggled to seek a just, inter-ethnic church.

- *Stolen Sisters* (DVD, Farenheit Films, 2007). In the past twenty years, more than 500 Indigenous women have been murdered or have gone missing in Canada. Hear some of the stories, and the reasons why in this powerful one hour documentary.

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



Photos provided by Byron Thiessen

Calgary's Menno Simons Christian School, along with two MCC Alberta staff, traveled to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park on Blackfoot Nation lands.

Menno Simons Christian School Visits the Blackfoot Nation

Last June, twenty-one grade eight students, parents and teachers from Calgary's Menno Simons Christian School, along with two MCC Alberta staff, traveled to the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park on Blackfoot Nation lands. It was an emotional, informative and challenging day that none of us will forget. We had the opportunity to learn some of the history of the Blackfoot people, and also hear about the devastating impact that the residential school system has had on their community.

Alvin Lepp, from Rosemary, Alberta, has been learning from the Blackfoot people since 1979, and helped to organize this educational day. We began by watching an introductory film in the Vision Quest Theatre, which featured cultural stories of the Blackfoot, or Siksika people. We then participated in the Dreaming Place tour which walked us through the Blackfoot exhibit featuring four main tipi areas representing different themes and points in history: Creation, Survival, Celebration and Storytelling.

Following the tour, we went on a guided hike, hearing stories of the Siksika and their ties to their land. Significant landmarks along the way included Chief Crowfoot's burial site and the place where Treaty No. 7 was signed. Being on the land and hearing this history - much of it unknown to us - made a huge impact.

After lunch, Alvin accompanied the group to the town of Gleichen, where we visited the Old Sun Residential School. The school was formed back in 1901, and was named after a revered medicine man named Old Sun, a warrior and leader of one of the largest Blackfoot Confederacy bands. For many years, indigenous children were forcibly taken to this school, as the government sought to assimilate native peoples out of their cultures. On this day, we had opportunity to hear from some of those former children what that was like. It was incredibly moving. The elders spoke of pain and trauma, the devastating impact on the community, as well as the road to healing through their

belief in the Creator. As we listened to their courageous witness, we were taught some profound lessons about perseverance, resistance and hope.

Later that day, we had the privilege of visiting elders at the Siksika Elders Lodge, where the students had a chance to offer up a small gift of thanks by performing a drama.

It was an extremely important day of learning, which birthed in us a greater interest in our host peoples, and lots of questions. Most of all, the experience opened up our hearts.

We are so appreciative to the Blackfoot Nation and to Alvin for organizing this day for us. We anticipate further opportunities to learn and grow in relationship with our host peoples.

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