

my friends

Intotemak

Summer 2012 Vol. 41, No. 2



Inside

Eagles Nest...2

Day School...4

Cow in Circle...12

Keep the Water...3

Rudy Wiebe...10





Not Perfect, but Life-Giving

Names have power. They can shape, direct, gift, transform. And that's why, in both indigenous and judaeo-christian traditions, there's a sacred practice of re-naming women and men. Something new because one has made a transition to a

fresh season of life, something new because of a profound spiritual experience. A new title that conveys an alternative identity, a new name to symbolize a divine calling. So the Shawnee leader Lalawethika ("He Makes A Loud Noise") becomes Tenskwatawa ("The Open Door") when he receives a prophetic vocation to resist American imperialism in the early 1800s. And the biblical patriarch Jacob, long, long ago, is renamed Israel – and struck with blessed responsibility – after wrestling with the Holy One. There's power in a name.

In 1948, Mennonite Church Manitoba began a work with indigenous peoples and named it *Mennonite Pioneer Missions* (MPM). Then in the 1970s, MPM received a call to change its name. Native partners had shared how they weren't keen on the terms "Pioneer" and "Missions." The words failed to communicate the kind of mutual relationships that existed on the ground. The words had unfortunate 'colonial baggage.' Menno Wiebe and other Mennonite leaders agreed, and thus a new name was birthed to acknowledge, celebrate and foster the new relationships and working realities that that the Spirit was bringing about. That name was *Native Ministry*.

It's been forty years since that significant change, and it's time to make a similar move. In our current context, a growing number of "native" communities, both here and around the world, prefer the word indigenous over native or aboriginal. And the term ministry, though it has great biblical connotations, is problematic. Not only does it have governmental overtones – like "Ministry of Child and Family Services" – but it seems to suggest that this work is primarily about non-native Mennonites serv-

ing native peoples. In other words, *Native Ministry* doesn't communicate the vital ministry that indigenous persons and communities and traditions offer people like me.

With such concerns in hand, a few of us tested a number of new names with indigenous colleagues and friends, past and present Native Ministry staff, Mennonite Central Committee Aboriginal Neighbours workers, the Manitoba Partnership Circle, and more. All were agreed that the name should change. And wonderfully, and excitingly, there was overwhelming support (more than 90%) for one particular new name. That name is *Indigenous Relations*.

People like *Indigenous Relations* because it emphasizes the need for respectful friendships, because it honors a common indigenous prayer – "All my relations" (which asserts that everything is inter-connected) – and also because it sounds good. They like Indigenous because it's the universal name to acknowledge the original inhabitants of the land; it's what the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* proclaims; it's the most progressive term that peace and justice circles use; and it connects us to the complimentary efforts of MCC's Indigenous Work program.

"No name is perfect," a Dakota friend told me. "But some are definitely better [and more life-giving] than others."

Indigenous Relations is not perfect. Yet if it allows us to do "Intotemak" – to walk in greater friendship and solidarity together – then it is a gift. We pray that this news of a name change is "good news" to you.

Steve Heinrichs

Director,
Indigenous Relations



EDITORS

Steve Heinrichs
sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Ingrid Miller
imiller@mennonitechurch.ca

ART DIRECTOR/DESIGNER

Carpe Diem Communications
Tammy Sawatzky

Printed by Christian Press

Please send all communications to:

INTOTEMAK

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

COST OF PUBLICATION

\$15.00 a year for four issues.

Donations above the cost of publication will receive a tax-deductible receipt. Please send payment by cheque, VISA or MasterCard. Cheques are payable to Mennonite Church Canada/Intotemak.

Intotemak translates as my friends or my clan and are people who walk in solidarity together. *Intotemak* is a quarterly newsletter featuring news items of interest to friends of Indigenous Relations, 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.



Mennonite Church Canada stands in solidarity with Yinka-Dene against Enbridge Pipeline. L-R: Willard Metzger (Executive Director, Mennonite Church Canada), Vic Thiessen (Executive Minister, Church Engagement & CAO) and Steve Heinrichs (Director, Indigenous Relations).

Keep the Water

On Friday, May 5, Mennonite Church Canada executive attended a locally organized, public action at the Manitoba Legislature in Winnipeg in support of the Yinka-Dene Alliance's resistance to the development of Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline.

The planned pipeline will link Alberta's oil sands with the west coast, extending through traditional First Nations territories in the Fraser River Watershed. The Yinka-Dene Alliance includes Nadleh Whut'en, Nak'azdli, Takla Lake, Saik'uz, and Wet'suwet'en First Nations of northern BC. The following day, a water ceremony took place in Winnipeg at the Forks' Oodena Celebration Circle as part of a cross-country demonstration by the Alliance.

"The water ceremony is a symbolic way that our host peoples acknowledge the incredible responsibility to 'keep' the shared water that this pipeline will impact, a commitment to honour its life-giving power and prevent its pollution," says Steve Heinrichs, Director of Mennonite Church Canada Indigenous Relations. It reminds us that we are all connected by the waters that run across our country.

Following the water ceremony, Will Braun of Hope Mennonite Church informally presented a letter of support to a representative of Coastal First Nations who was traveling with the Yinka-Dene Alliance. The alliance Coastal First Nations, consisting of Wuikinuxv Nation, Heiltsuk, Kitsoo/Xaixais, Nuxalk Nation, Gitga'at, Haisla, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate, and Council of the Haida Nation, is also effected by the pipeline. The letter was signed on behalf of Hope Mennonite by Pastor Lynell Bergen. It expressed solidarity with Coastal First Nations and sorrow over the danger posed to traditional lands and waters.

The water ceremony is a symbolic way that our host peoples acknowledge the incredible responsibility to 'keep' the shared water that this pipeline will impact, a commitment to honour its life-giving power and prevent its pollution

*Deb Froese, Director, News Services
Mennonite Church Canada*



Henry Neufeld presents a talking stick to Joan Jack.



Elder Elmer Courchene of Sagkeeng First Nation.

Pursuing Just Recognition and Healing for Former Day School Students

Pre-1970s Indian Day School students – whether on or near a reserve – went unacknowledged in Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s June 2008 apology to residential school survivors. Neither are day school students included in the national *Truth and Reconciliation* process to which the Government and mainline Churches are party to.

Like residential schools, day schools were funded by the federal or provincial governments and run by churches. Day school students were able to go home at night, but most suffered the same indignities as their residential school peers – loss of language, the imposition of Christianity, the denigration or erasure of indigenous history and tradition, and foreign forms of corporal punishment. Students went home hurt and ashamed of being indigenous.

Today, day school survivors want to make sure they are no longer over-

looked, and are banding together to bring their case forward. Leading the way is Spiritwind Inc., a non-profit organization of survivors based in Winnipeg. The group began in 1986 as an advocate and support group for the Indian residential school survivors movement. It was part of the original movement seeking justice for residential schools survivors, and it supported the Baxter National Class Action, one of several class actions that finally forced the government to listen to indigenous cries for justice.

Ray Mason, president of Spiritwind, contacted Joan Jack, an Anishinaabe lawyer in the spring of 2009 and asked her to bring the case of the day school students to court. Jack, originally from Berens River, Manitoba, filed the class action suit that July. Work is now going forward to have the case certified and to gather the necessary data that will make the links between past actions at day school,

and present harm. So far, more than 10,000 former students have signed on to this lawsuit.

On May 2 and 3, 2012, the first *National Day School Class Action Conference* was held at the Victoria Inn in Winnipeg, led and hosted by Spiritwind Inc., Joan Jack Law Office, and the Sandy Bay First Nation of Treaty 1. The conference goals were to bring people together, to hear the support of indigenous leaders (e.g., Shawn Atleo, Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, and Judge Murray Sinclair, Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) for this movement, listen to the witness of day school survivors, and discuss next steps in the class action.

Elders and indigenous leaders offered up words of encouragement, stressing the need to speak from a place of love and strength as they journey this path of truth-telling, aware that many in mainstream society will

TREATY 1 HOST NATION : SANDY BAY FIRST NATION -
CHIEF MCIVOR & COUNCIL PRESENTS

National Day School Survivors CONFERENCE

MAY 2nd-3rd, 2012 VICTORIA INN WINNIPEG, MB

DAY SCHOOL STUDENT BENEFIT CONCERT featuring
C-Weed and other Aboriginal Artists!!!

McLean and others v. A.G. of Canada
File No. C109-01-62181

CONTACT INFORMATION
Lori Jack - Event Coordinator
204-981-5887

JOAN JACK LAW OFFICE
PH: 204-783-5556
FX: 204-942-0025
508-283 PORTAGE AVENUE
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA
R3B 2B5

SPIRITWIND
RAY MASON-PRESIDENT
204-794-8355
rmfars@mymts.net
PEGUIS FIRST NATION
BOX 309
ROC 3J0

FOR MORE INFO VISIT WWW.JOANJACK.CA

Day school students were able to go home at night, but most suffered the same indignities as their residential school peers – loss of language, the imposition of Christianity, the denigration or erasure of indigenous history and tradition, and foreign forms of corporal punishment. Students went home hurt and ashamed of being indigenous.

dismiss their story with the common response of “When will they ever get over it?” Other important sentiments included:

- monetary compensation is a necessary gesture of atonement, but ultimately, it doesn’t heal anyone
- healing has to come from within
- indigenous peoples are survivors; we must live as survivors and not victims

Nine of us Mennonites attended the conference, listening and learning; Tim Froese (Mennonite Church Canada Witness), Norm Voth (Mennonite Church Manitoba), Leonard Doell (Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan), Norman Meade (Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba), Henry Neufeld (former teacher in Pauingassi, MB), Egon Enns (former teacher in Bloodvein, MB), Steve Heinrichs (Mennonite Church Canada Indigenous Relations), and ourselves, Neill and Edith von Gunten, retired Native Ministry directors. We all recognize that this struggle is not just for the native community. It involves

mainstream Canadian society and the church, for as Judge Murray Sinclair said, “Non-Aboriginal people were the ones who society and the school system declared as superior.” It was attitudes of superiority – religious and cultural – that fueled the assimilation program to “kill the Indian, save the child.” Attitudes that are still present today.

In the 1940s, Mennonite conscientious objectors were sent to United Church day schools in northern Manitoba and worked as teachers. Then, in the 1950s, Mennonite Pioneer Mission, the predecessor to Mennonite Church Canada’s Native Ministry, was invited by indigenous leaders in Pauingassi and Bloodvein to open two day schools. Some of the students of these schools tell a story, not of dramatic cultural loss, but one in which teachers and community leaders worked closely together. In Pauingassi, for example, some teachers changed the school calendar to respect the rhythms of trapping and fishing, and Anishinaabe language was encouraged, despite the

protest of the Department of Indian Affairs. That is not to say our schools were wholly respectful of indigenous life-ways and that we didn’t think our Christian faith and culture superior. “As Mennonite Pioneer Mission, we had a lot of learning to do,” says Egon Enns. “Yet over the years, with the help of indigenous friends and partners, we have learned much and changed our programs to reflect such. We are still learning.”

As we seek to be a faithful church in relationship with host peoples today, what role should the Mennonite community play in supporting day school students, especially those whose experiences were not positive and need healing? Moreover, what kinds of concrete steps do we need to take to help the church and mainstream society foster relationships of real respect and mutuality?

*Edith and Neill von Gunten,
Winnipeg, MB*

“We Speak from the Heart”

On May 2 and 3, I was privileged to attend the 1st National Day School Survivor’s Conference in Winnipeg with several Mennonite colleagues from Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Although I have significant cross-cultural experience internationally, this was the first time I was privileged to listen to a deep conversation from my indigenous sisters and brothers from across this land as they spoke about their personal and shared day school experiences, as well as hopes and plans for recognition, for healing, for taking important steps for future generations. Allow me to share several thoughts and reflections from this experience:

A language of the heart. I was moved by the free flow of the Anishinaabe language throughout the interactions. It is not a language I am familiar with, but it was good to hear and to know that this language still unites people and communities, it still carries culture, and it expresses so many things – greetings, jokes, prayers, songs, teaching, etc. I was grateful that English was also used, as it allowed me to accompany the discussion. Whether Anishinaabe or English, the comment from elder Courchene’s opening words was repeatedly affirmed: “We speak from the heart.”

A welcome Creator. From the beginning of the gathering, the Creator was welcomed and acknowledged. Prayers, songs, and personal sharing all reminded us that the Creator was present. All were thus encouraged to “speak truth, kindness and love.” Harmonizing, connecting and loving one another were all affirmed. We were also invited to be “mini-creators (in God’s image) and be part of creating things ourselves. Lawyer and organizer Joan Jack also commented that the work we were doing was “spiritual work.”

An unbroken Circle. The call of the gathering was to stand as a circle, one that would not be broken either by those outside of the community

or those inside the community. While “the world does not want to hear our voice” said elder Courchene, the “worst abuse is to be made silent” added Chief Shawn Atleo. The school experience, whether residential or day, was a shared experience within and among families, communities and across this land. Individuals, communities and leaders from across the country were encouraged to speak, and to speak together in this SpiritWind led initiative. The importance of speaking is not only for the current generation, but also for children and future generations.

Healing and the capacity to love. Perhaps the most difficult thing that I heard about the impact of day and residential schools on former students was the destruction of survivors’ ability to love. Whether showing love to one’s children, sharing physical affection, not knowing how to show love, not being able to receive (and therefore unable to teach) family values – all were mentioned as lingering affects among families and communities affected by the schools. Judge Murray Sinclair briefly shared his experience in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and thousands upon thousands of survivor testimonies he has heard. He summarized it by simply saying “nothing compares to the violence suffered in the Indian Residential Schools.” Even without details, this is a chilling and mind-numbing statement. Many speakers highlighted the need for healing in addition to compensation. “Money does not do the healing,” and “no amount of money will bring healing.” Indeed, the recovery of the ability to love will be a good indicator of healing.

On the journey to reconciliation. I was grateful for the presence of many wise and committed indigenous leaders at this gathering. They shared

The school experience, whether residential or day, was a shared experience within and among families, communities and across this land.

their support, wisdom, teaching and encouragement for the people and communities gathered. They spoke of reconciliation, saying reconciliation requires atonement (compensation for damages suffered) but involves much more. “Reconciliation begins with you and your family” said Judge Murray Sinclair, “and continues to reconciliation between peoples... Reconciliation means to work for self-respect and to demand mutual respect.” The work of reconciliation continues the theme of “speaking from the heart, not the mind, in order to bring healing for our communities and peoples,” added Chief McIvor.

People of courage and hope. I was touched by repeated words of hope amidst the words of pain. Elder Courchene affirmed, “we have the love needed for our little ones and our families... We are learning to fill the Indian Residential School void of mother’s love, joy, care and understanding.” “We are a loving, good, and strong people and we will have the courage to make the journey.”

I was grateful for the welcome we received and for the opportunity to listen to this dialogue. It is my prayer that the church and the larger settler society will take the time to listen and relate from the heart, and to relate in ways that can promote reconciliation, healing, love, courage and hope.

Tim Froese,
Executive Minister, Witness
Mennonite Church Canada

Disturbed by what I have heard

It was difficult to listen to the impact statements I heard at a recent Truth and Reconciliation event in Toronto (“The Meeting Place,” May 31-June 2). To learn of such painful abuse endured by children at residential schools is disturbing – especially when those behaving abusively were representing the church.

One set of impact statements I heard in Toronto have deeply penetrated me. A sister and brother took the stand together to tell their story. The older sister detailed how life was good before they were taken to the residential schools. As most children they had no idea what was going on and that their childhood was being stolen from them. She described how she was routinely punished for waving to her younger brother. She was not allowed to even acknowledge her little brother. Despite the beatings she felt responsible for him.

After multiple punishments she was awakened one night at 11:00 p.m. and told to quickly accompany the teacher because her little brother was ill and needed help. She responded immediately but was led into a room and blindfolded. Instead of being taken to her brother, she was sexually assaulted by the teacher. She was raped once every month by him. As the older sister told her story her haunting eyes gazed across the room. Her brother sat beside her wearing dark sunglasses and a baseball cap.

“Eventually I started feeling something grow in my stomach,” she explained. “So once again one night at 11:00 p.m., they came and took me to the hospital and removed the baby.” She gazed the room, eyes filled with pain, “they told me the baby was dead, but I think she is alive. Sometimes I hear her cry.”

The younger brother told his story, with equally disturbing detail. He explained how another little boy had become sick with a high fever. Yet at



Aboriginal children in class at the Roman Catholic Indian Residential School, Ford George, Quebec, 1939.

<http://www.wherearethechildren.ca/en/backstory/> Photograph: Archives Deschêteliers

I choked on my emotions. What a contrast of brutal cruelty and gentle tenderness. I begged God for forgiveness. I felt ashamed of those who misrepresent God’s love.

lunch time, the sickly boy was still forced by a teacher to eat. The little boy vomited into his soup bowl and onto the floor. The teacher came over and repeatedly slapped him, making him wipe up the mess on the floor. Then as she left the room she grabbed the boy and said, “And you better finish eating everything in your bowl.”

The brother paused and said; “You know you grow close to the other children in the school. You knew they were not to blame. We were all suffering the same abuse.” Then from underneath his baseball cap and behind dark glasses, he explained how the boys silently passed the bowl among themselves and each took a spoonful until the bowl was emptied.

I choked on my emotions. What a contrast of brutal cruelty and gentle tenderness. I begged God for forgive-

ness. I felt ashamed of those who misrepresent God’s love.

In her closing summary, Commissioner Marie Wilson said; “We have heard some harsh truth. We have shared what we have shared. We have heard what we have heard. This day should mark us all. We can never back away from this honesty.”

*Willard Metzger,
Executive Director
Mennonite Church Canada*





Sr. Eva Solomon



Photos by Deb Frasse

Brander "Standing Bear" McDonald

Between Culture and Faith

The relationship between culture and faith is intimate and difficult to describe. But understanding that relationship is the first step toward building bridges between culture and faith traditions.

At the annual Building Bridges event on Friday, March 16, 150 people gathered to hear Sr. Eva Solomon, Fr. Francois Paradis, and Brander "Standing Bear" McDonald reflect with word and song upon their experiences with that relationship. The event, hosted by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Manitoba, took place at Thunderbird House in Winnipeg. It launched the annual Spring Partnership Circle, bringing together indigenous and settler church communities for a time of worship and community building.

Singer/songwriter McDonald, of Cree and Scottish descent, grew up in British Columbia feeling conflicted about his mixed background. For a number of years, he worked with Stó:lō

Jesus grew up within a Jewish culture. He saw economic, political and religious wrongs and challenged them. The first conflict that came [to the early church] had to do with conflict of culture.

First Nations people who had survived residential school. He heard a great deal about Christianity from survivors and discovered something important about their faith. "They [already] had a spiritual system that was forced underground...that was a lot like the early church."

As an institution working with First Nations communities, McDonald said the church "went sideways." He has since developed his approach to culture and faith. "I ask, not 'How can I fit Native culture into my Christian faith,' but 'How does Christ complement my Native worldview?'"

Eva Solomon, an Ojibway, and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, also pointed to

the early church for examples of the struggle between culture and faith—including Jesus' ministry.

"Jesus grew up within a Jewish culture. He saw economic, political and religious wrongs and challenged them," Solomon said. "The first conflict that came [to the early church] had to do with a conflict of culture." She noted Peter's struggle with foods that were considered unclean in the Jewish tradition—but not from a Gentile perspective—and the argument about whether or not Gentiles in the church should be circumcised as Jews were.

Solomon's father struggled for years with the differences between Western European church culture and his Anishinaabe understanding of the Creator



Fr. Francois Paradis



Cross and feather

and worship. She said that her father left the church, and eventually he began to share the story of Jesus through the lens of his own culture.

As a child going to school in her village, Solomon was called a “dirty Indian” by a classmate. She asked her mother why someone would say that. Her mother’s response was simple; they did that because they had not yet had the opportunity to learn otherwise.

For people of different cultures and faiths to truly recognize and appreciate one another, they must be willing to learn from each other. “That makes us brothers and sisters,” Solomon says.

As a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate and an ordained pastor, Fr. Francois Paradis faced his own inner conflict. He left seminary studies full of knowledge and religious rules—only to arrive in the community he was to pastor and discover a sweat lodge. He said he knew it was his calling to find a bridge between culture and faith, but it wasn’t an easy calling. “There was a deep fear,” he recalled. “Am I being un-

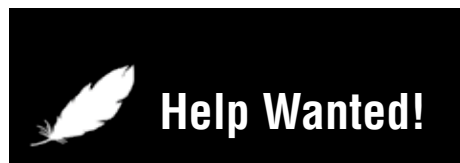
faithful to what the church is teaching, and even more important, as a pastor am I leading people astray?”

Paradis, like McDonald and Solomon, determined that there was a necessary process to an encounter between cultures. “I have to bring me. I have to bring my faith... As you encounter [another culture or faith], you must allow yourself to be open and learn from the other party.”

Paradis encourages that kind of learning between First Nations and the non-Aboriginal Church through his full-time ministry in Winnipeg, *Returning to Spirit*, which focuses on reconciling the Indian Residential School legacy in Canada.

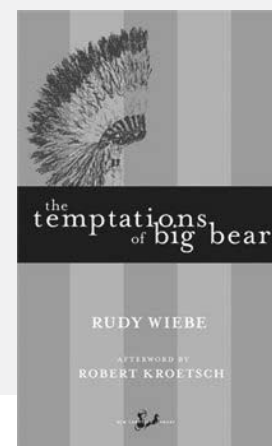
Though Christ is central for Christian faith, no one people or culture has the absolute truth, Paradis said. “We each have one vision of it, but it isn’t the whole truth...I believe that God has spoken to all nations from the beginning.”

Deb Froese, Director, News Services



Mennonite Church Canada’s Indigenous Relations is putting together a thought-provoking book called *Just Creation: An Indigenous-Settler Dialogue on Creator and Land*.

Bringing a variety of voices into conversation – both Christian and traditionalist, native and non-native – this text hopes to stir helpful questions and offer up tangible ways in which we can live more peaceably with “all our relations” in this age of ecological crisis. But we need your prayers and financial help to pull it off. If interested in giving, please send a designated cheque (“Just Creation”) to Mennonite Church Canada.



Chief Ben Weenie of the Young Chippewayan band and Ray Funk, right.

Rudy Wiebe Speaks to Historical Society

The Worship Hall at Bethany Manor was filled on March 2nd and 3rd as the Mennonite Historical Society in Saskatchewan hosted author and storyteller Rudy Wiebe. Engaging his writings related to indigenous peoples – *The Temptations of Big Bear* and *Stolen Life: the Story of a Cree Woman* – Wiebe held everyone spellbound with his passion and consummate storytelling skills.

Wiebe's journey of research came alive as he spoke about the places where Big Bear (Mistahimaskwa) – the great Cree Peace Chief (1825-1888) – had lived during his lifetime. We heard about the vision quest he went through as a young boy, how he was given his name, and about the Spirit that thereafter directed his life. We learned about Big Bear's struggles with the Canadian government and the Treaty system that was being imposed on his people; how he refused to sign these flawed agreements, and at the same time, resisted his young braves' desire to fight, insisting that dialogue was the only way to resolve the dispute between the First Nations and the representatives of the Crown. We sensed Big Bear's pain when his young warriors took matters into their own hands and confronted Canadian soldiers, only to be soundly defeated. We keenly felt the injustice when Big

Bear was held responsible and labeled a traitor...and felt his dread as he gave himself up and spent several years at Stoney Mountain penitentiary, coming out a broken man near death.

One particularly fascinating story involved Wiebe's personal experience in a New York City museum. Far away from the Saskatchewan plains, in a back room of a museum which is off limits to the public, sits Big Bear's medicine bundle. Wiebe was able to hold this sacred object, which most of his descendants have not touched or seen...and was able to feel the connection with Big Bear's spirit.

On Saturday, we viewed a film version of Wiebe's latest book on Big Bear (in the "Extraordinary Canadian" series), written especially for teens and young adults. Then Wiebe spoke about the life and story of Yvonne Johnson, great-granddaughter of Big Bear. Johnson had read Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* at the Kingston penitentiary and decided to contact Wiebe. Eventually, they collaborated to narrate her experience, which dramatically reflects the impact of the treaties on subsequent generations of First Nations peoples. Wiebe's retelling of this account was deeply moving.

On Saturday afternoon, we had opportunity to engage a story that is

currently unfolding in the Saskatchewan valley. Chief Ben Weenie of the Young Chippewayan band, Pastor Jason Johnson from the Laird Lutheran Church, and Ray Funk, former resident of Laird, told the story of the Young Chippewayan community whose treaty land in the Laird area was appropriated by the government without consultation, and subsequently given to Lutheran and Mennonite immigrants. Settlers and members of the band are currently working together to seek government recognition of the land claim and adequate compensation. This story might not be as finely crafted as Wiebe's writings, but it is history in the making and needs to be heard. It is one of few instances in Canada in which First Nations and settlers are working together to right a historical wrong. God-willing, someone will make this story into a book one day.

All in all, these sessions were very interesting and helpful. They were also timely; in a few short weeks, Saskatoon will be hosting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools (June 21-24). We anticipate learning more of the history of indigenous and settler peoples, being changed by those stories, and responding with hope.

Renata Klassen, Saskatoon, SK

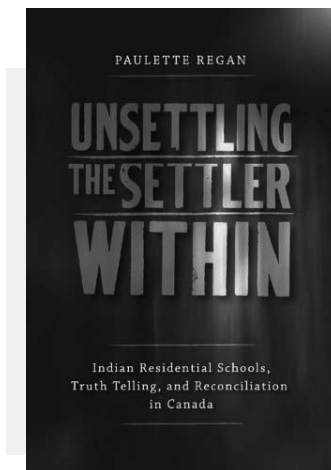
An Act of Wildly Radical Hope

In her book, *Unsettling the Settler Within* (UBC Press, 2010), Paulette Regan challenges mainstream Canadians to courageously explore their “settler reality,” questioning the myths by which we live in this indigenous land. It’s a difficult journey, one that demands emotional and intellectual strength, a love of truth, and epistemological humility (i.e., we white folk don’t know everything or more than everyone else). It’s a journey from which many will want to shrink back. At least I do. But I know I must walk this path if I am to grow in integral relationship to host peoples and land.

To help us decolonize our settler hearts and minds, Regan shares her own story, recounting ‘unsettling’ experiences as an academic researcher in indigenous fields, her role in the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program – which engaged survivors of ‘Indian Residential Schools’ and compensation processes – and her life-changing participation in an indigenous-settler Apology Feast that took place in Hazelton, northern BC. Regan deeply touched me with her vulnerability, passion for justice, and her belief that all people deserve respect.

The most important and difficult step in the unsettling process that Regan proposes is to embrace the idea that what we call the “Indian problem” is really the “settler problem.” Such requires that we challenge a number of myths that are paradigmatic of our Western world view, including;

- Canada’s history is one of benevolent peacemaking
 - the Western legal system provides neutral justice for all parties and is the only way, or the best way, to achieve justice
 - Indigenous people did not have complex and sophisticated governments and legal systems
- Countering these myths requires



Unsettling the Settler Within
Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and
Reconciliation in Canada
Paulette Regan
UBC Press
ISBN: 9780774817783

The most important and difficult step in the unsettling process that Regan proposes is to embrace the idea that what we call the “Indian problem” is really the “settler problem.”

a re-storying of Canada’s history that includes indigenous perspectives, and perhaps privileges such marginalized voices. Regan attempts to do some of this by setting forth an alternative ‘Canadian’ narrative, specifically focusing on the Indian Residential Schools and the government-church efforts to destroy indigenous religion, cultures and communities. It opened my eyes... and it broke my heart. How should I respond? I’m struggling as a citizen of Canada, and a Christian neighbor, to own my responsibility in all of this.

The goal of this “unsettling” pedagogy is not to demonize settler culture, but to speak more truthfully about our past and present, and ultimately, to nurture a more life-giving, respectful relationship. Crucial to the formation of these relationships will be the willingness of settler peoples to refrain from trying to dictate the conditions and the solutions to “the settler problem”... a very real tendency. It’s time for us to heed the wisdom of the apostle James; “be slow to speak, quick to listen.” Indigenous voices must

guide the discussion.

Paulette Regan ends her book on an optimistic note. As she highlights important steps that have been taken by mainstream Canadian society – such as church confessions of wrongdoing, the 2008 apology from the Federal Government, and the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission which Canadian society is a ‘party’ to – Regan emphasizes that this critical journey of self and societal ‘unsettling’ is one that will breathe forth ‘wildly radical living hope.’ Her testimony, along with those who have tread a similar path, persuades me that such is the case. This work is difficult and exhausting, but strangely, also hopeful and full of life. And so despite my fears and reluctance to unsettle, I anticipate doing this work. . . the holy work of allowing “truth to set us free.”

John Heinrichs,
Burnaby, BC.



Getting Cow in the Circle: Relationships through Relocation

“What do you call a Cow that doesn’t give milk?” “An under failure!” Shhh, Coyote. This is no time for jokes. This is serious.

The sage medicine is burning, smoke rising high from a green-blue abalone shell. Eagle fans the sacred smoke over all around the fire – Moose, Bison, Coyote...and Cow. Yup, Cow is here too. In fact, Cow is the reason for the gathering. The locals invited her to come ‘cause there are problems. Cow and her clan don’t know the native fauna. Don’t know, maybe don’t like... and quite sure – for sure – don’t understand.

You see, not too long ago, Cow and company moved into this neck of the woods, cleared their quarter-section, and made a life by sticking to themselves (since they were much different than the rest). They were “hard-working, religious, and educated.” They “looked different, ate different, believed different.” And when, over the years, they became a little rich and a

little chubby, they decided to up and move a mile or so outside that downtown pasture to something greener. Yet ironically, at the beginning of each n’ every week, on bright n’ early Sundays, they still mosey on over to graze their old land. How come? Well, that place has special meaning for them. It’s where many of them grew up. And that place is kind of cool – a ‘retro’ feeding place. But above all, it’s a symbolically important place. It affirms the cows, for it gives them a presence “amongst the least of these.” These are good cows. Though they all live somewhere else, going to this beautiful, yet marginal, on ‘the-other-side-of-the-tracks-place,’ does something for them... spiritually or psyche-Cow-logically, if you will.

It doesn’t, however, do much for Moose, Bison and the gang. They are sad about the situation. Possibly upset. And so the fire, the circle and smoke, and a time of heart-to-heart.

Holding a talking stick, Moose

begins. “Friends, it’s good for us to be here. We’ve gathered before Kitchie Manitou (the Creator) because we recognize that we’ve got some pretty big divisions between us. We want to find healing.”

Quiet caaaws and growls of agreement. Cow sits silently, big-eyed.

“We want to talk,” Moose continues, “about how we can create a better relationship, a real relationship with you, dear Cow. We’re so glad that you’ve come to be with us today. We want to know and be known by you.”

Cow nods and immediately starts mooing, or something like that. “Yes, it’s good to be here. I too want to build my relationship with you, and so do my fellow Cows. And that’s why our Cowgregation has been working hard at a number of relationship-building-programs to help bring that about; programs like our Sunday morning milk distribution, our afternoon “Cow-based” literacy program; and of course, the annual, inner-city, *Vacation Rumi-*



nation School, where we play games with your young street animals and help them learn about the love of the Great Cow Creator (who is not really a Cow...we just refer to him as Cow, even though creator is beyond cowness)."

"Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Coyote rolls his eyes and throws paws to the sky. He's not known for his polite manners. "How can you talk of relationship? and building relationship? We have no relationship. Do you hear what you're saying? Helping, helping, helping. That's all you good cows do and know. Help us, help us, help poor, problem us. Why don't you help yourselves...you're part of the problem."

Cow crosses her hoofs and flares her nostrils. "How are we the problem? We don't have to do any of this. We're just being kind and sharing some of the good things we have with you. We're fine on our own. But it's clear that you really do need some help. Look at how many of your kind have broken families, drinking problems, live in poor housing or on the street? Creator wants us to help, and you need help. We're not imposing. We're just offering. Why can't you be grateful?"

Bison raises her hand. "Don't

take it personally Cow," she assuages. "What I think Coyote is saying, is that we can't have a genuine relationship if the posture you have isn't mutual. Whenever we see you, hear you, talk to you. . . you're always serving – that's for sure – but you're never

just with us, being with us. And when you're done your good things, you're gone. It feels more like work, than relationship. Like duty, than friendship."

"Yes, yes. That's what I'm talking about," says Coyote, tail wagging fast. "You cows aren't with us. You're above us, over us, and from over there. Yes, we've got our problems – who doesn't – but you ain't gonna fix them or us like that. You'll never be of help unless you know us. Sure you know I'm Coyote, and he's Moose, and she's Bison. . . but you don't really know us. You're helping us here and there, but you don't know our story, our dreams, our understanding of this place and the One who put us here, and why – historically, systemically – we are in some of the difficult situations we are in. As one of your own (a wild cow if there ever was one) once confessed, *"The cow's number one freedom is the freedom to be ignorant about those who are other than cow...and our number two freedom is the freedom to deny that we're ignorant."* Trust me, if you spent less time helping us, more time listening to us, drinking coffee with us, wasting time with us, you'd not only

help us more, but you'd help yourself, and reconcile this relationship (that really, never was a relationship to begin with)."

Elder Eagle ruffles his feathers. "If I may." He looks at the floor, then his friends. "I want to affirm Cow's heart. Cow's good intentions. Cow's desire in many ways to do what is right. I think we all know that if we were in her hoofs, we would be struggling with the same things. So we're in this together. What then can we actually do to come together? There's no magic recipe for relationships of respect, no 'best practices' or 'quick fixes.' But there are two things that can definitely move us towards authentic, committed relationships. Thunderbird prophesied some years ago and said, "Cows who are sincere and want to help beaver and raven... need to gather amongst themselves and figure out strategies to break down the paternalistic prejudice that exists in cow communities. That's their first calling."

"Amen! Hey ho, hey ya!" the animals affirm, not so quietly.

"Cows must ruthlessly examine cow prejudice and privilege, that's for sure. It's a sacred truth. But that's not enough," Eagle continued. "If we want to bridge the divides between Cow and Moose, between Cow and Bison, cows have got to relocate their lives among us so that they can truly be with us... and we must welcome them in."

"What?" Coyote mutters. "I'm not sure I want any part in that."

"But it's what we all need," Eagle says with passion. "Conversations from a safe distance will not help the

Cows continued on page 14

Cows from page 13

cows. They need to experience life with us – as much as they can – in order to understand the system that oppresses us, the things that keep us apart. That can change their ways. Removed from our everyday realities, surrounded wholly by cows, their misguided beliefs about us and their lust to fix us will persist as long as the rivers flow. But if they courageously come, and we courageously invite them in, we can help open their big eyes. And in doing so, perhaps our eyes will be open too...perhaps we won't hate cows so much, or love them so inordinately (where we dream to become just like them)."

Cow didn't like what she was hearing. "Go and live with you? You're asking a lot. Too much! We need to be more practical and realistic. This is utopian hog-wash."

Cow got up, nodded to the circle, and walked away with a beating bell.

"Good riddance!" Coyote piped. Shocked, Moose and Bison looked at one another. Elder Eagle was sad. But she had seen it before. And she knew there was hope. Cow might chew these things over in her heart. Cow might come back.

Soren Mennohawks

*I plan to start my own nation.
Because I am half Ojibway half
Caucasian, we will be called
the occasions. And of course,
since I'm founding the new
nation, I will be a
special occasion.
— Drew Hayden Taylor*



Community News

Dear Friends – the sharing of community news is an important way that we strengthen the connections between us and care for one another. If you have something important that you would like to offer up to the Intotemak community – a birth, adoption, death, wedding, baptism or event of reconciliation – please do so. Contact Steve Heinrichs at sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca. We will celebrate and mourn, laugh and grieve together.

Long-Service Fisher Awards

Commercial fishing has been a source of family income and community economy for many living along the major lakes of Manitoba for over a century. It has also been a lifestyle choice made by generations who have persevered through all the ups and downs of inclement weather, rough winter conditions, and the variance of prices for their harvest.

On May 9, 2012, at the Canad-Inn Hotel in Winnipeg, the Government of Manitoba presented awards to a number of men who have been dedicated commercial fishers for at least 50 years.



Congratulations to **Hilda Franz** of Gretna, MB and **Ben Dyck** of Swift Current, SK., who were married on May 20, 2012 at the Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Altona, MB. Rick Neufeld and Herman Wiebe, pastors of their respective congregations, presided over the Sunday afternoon ceremony before many family members and friends of the couple.





Meditation

Micah 6:8

“He’s already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women. It’s quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don’t take yourself too seriously – take God seriously.”

LΔb 6:8

b·Δ! bΠVΓqΔ Δb PP ·ΔCLda· ∇dσσσ ∇σσσσσb, <σ b4 ∇J <C·∇σΓa* ΓΔJΓq·<*.
·∇·∇σ ΓCΓq·<* ΓadC·<* b4 ∇4PΔ·∇b*, ΓC<4σJ·<* ·ΔΓ ΛJ4L* PΠLσJΓa·.

Ojashkwawegad

(Algonquin Green Salad)

SALAD:

- 1 cup wild onions or leeks, well chopped
- 4 cups watercress
- ¼ cup sheep or wood sorrel
- 1 ½ cup dandelion leaves

DRESSING:

- 1/3 cup sunflower seed oil
- 1/3 cup cider vinegar
- 3 tbsp maple syrup
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper

Toss together the salad ingredients. Combine the dressing ingredients and mix well. Toss the salad in the dressing and serve. From www.thegutsygourmet.net



Resources

Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2011)

Born into a magical Cree world in snowy northern Manitoba, Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis are all too soon torn from their family and thrust into the hostile world of a Catholic residential school. Their language is forbidden, their names are changed to Jeremiah and Gabriel, and both boys are abused by priests. As young men, estranged from their own people and alienated from the culture imposed upon them, the Okimasis brothers fight to survive. Wherever they go, the Fur Queen--a wily, shape-shifting trickster--watches over them with a protective eye. For Jeremiah and Gabriel are destined to be artists. Through music and dance they soar.

Andrea Smith’s *Conquest* (2005)

In *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, Smith places Native American women at the center of her analysis of sexual violence, challenging both conventional definitions of the term and conventional responses to the problem. Beginning with the impact of the abuses inflicted on Native American children at state-sanctioned boarding schools from the 1880s to the 1980s, Smith adroitly expands our conception of violence to include the widespread appropriation of Indian cultural practices by whites and other non-Natives; environmental racism; and population control. Smith deftly connects these and other examples of historical and contemporary colonialism to the high rates of violence against Native American women--as a group, the poorest women in the US, and the most likely to suffer from poverty-related illnesses and to survive rape and partner abuse.

Available at Mennonite Church Canada Resources Centre.

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

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



Events

June 9: Journeying Together, The Creator's First Nations Gathering. The Skawahlook First Nation, MCC BC Aboriginal Neighbours program, MCBC and Mennonite Church Canada are partnering together for an evening of food, friendship and celebration. The event includes a potluck supper, a welcome from local First Nations elders and entertainment from several indigenous artists. Admission is free. For more information, please contact Darryl Klassen at 1-888-622-6337 or email abneighbours@mc-cbc.com.

June 21: National Aboriginal Day

June 21-24: National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Saskatoon, SK.

July 23-26: Native Assembly 2012 in Philadelphia, Mississippi
All are welcome to this inter-ethnic gathering of great fellowship, food, teaching and worship. Deadline to register is June 22. If interested, contact Steve Heinrichs at the Indigenous Relations office.

August 10-20: 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.

August 20-25: MCC Aboriginal Neighbours Camping Trip
Come camping with MCC! A wonderful opportunity to connect people and place as we tour beautiful northern Vancouver Island. Experience an old growth forest with a Mennonite forester, see the Umista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, and visit with members of the Kwagwiltz First Nation in Alert Bay. We'll discover the history and ecology of this part of the island as we listen and learn from "all our relations." Learn more at <http://bc.mcc.org/whatwedo/campingtrip>.

Intotemak

Publication Mail Agreement # 40012495
Return undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
Intotemak
Mennonite Church Canada c/o Indigenous Relations
600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Intotemak Summer 2012
A Mennonite Church Canada Publication

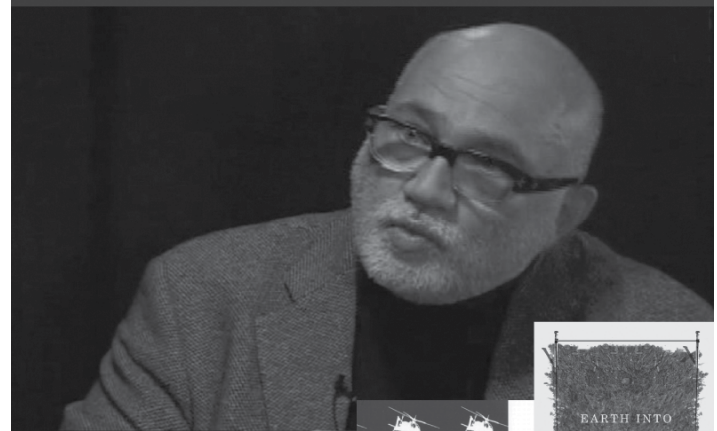
July 13, 2012

July 13: Sacred Scripture in Invaded Space: Reading Text in a Land without Treaty. Anthony J. Hall will be leading a workshop at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly and exploring what it might mean for a "peace church" committed to a gospel of nonviolence to live in "unceded indigenous territory." Register by June 15 at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/vancouver2012/index.htm>

DUSTING OFF THE BIBLE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Mennonite Church Canada • Assembly 2012 • Vancouver, BC • July 12-July 15

SPECIAL APPEARANCE

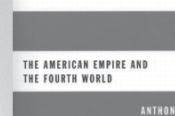
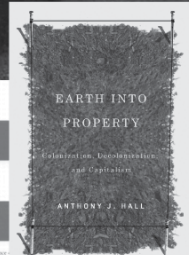


Anthony J. Hall

Prof. of Globalization Studies, U of Lethbridge

Author, activist and leading scholar will explore what it might mean for a Peace Church to walk justly in unceded Indigenous lands.

Workshop, Friday July 13th 2:35
"Sacred Scripture in Invaded Space: Reading Text in a Land without Treaty"



DETAILS & REGISTRATION

www.mennonitechurch.ca/vancouver2012

