

my friends

Intotemak

Fall 2012 Vol. 41, No. 3



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At some point, we'll talk about land...



On May 18th, 2004, the city council of Eureka, California did something strange - they voted to return 40 acres of land to a local Native tribe. For over thirty years, the Wiyot had been trying to regain control of this land, but no one would listen. But then everything changed. A group of people not generally known for supporting Native land struggles started to walk alongside

the Wiyot... a people whom the Wiyot credit for bringing about the dramatic transformation in their circumstances. Who were they? *The evangelicals.*

The predominantly white, Christian churches of Eureka had invited Richard Twiss and his Native Christian organization (Wiconi) to facilitate some bridge-building between the native and newcomer communities. They thought it would be good to get everyone together... share food... learn a few things. But after three days of meetings, the churches decided to do more than that. They took a collection and gave money to help the tribe purchase land that they had had taken from them long time ago. It wasn't much money, yet it did buy back one and a half acres. And according to the Wiyot, it was hugely significant, getting the rapt attention of 'the powers that be.'

It's a remarkable story, isn't it? Evangelical churches raising money to fund Native land claims. It's not a story that you often hear. It's kind of political, kind of risky. What would lead them to that kind of action? No doubt, these churches were already doing a lot of good things for folks in the community (maybe running a food hamper, maybe doing summer VBS for the kids). So why get involved in that sticky arena of land issues?

Perhaps after all these years, the church had finally come to learn the story of the place in which they lived? Perhaps they didn't know the Wiyot had been expelled from their land by settler society, and that there had never been any efforts to repair that injustice? Discovering this history, they were just compelled to do something.

Perhaps the church heard indigenous voices tell them

straight up that if reconciliation is ever going to happen, they're going to have to deal with the land issue at some point? As Desmond Tutu once said, "You can apologize for having stole my pen, but unless you return the pen, you haven't apologized."

Perhaps the church rediscovered all those subversive prophetic voices in our sacred scriptures that urge a reckoning with land injustice?

I don't know what it was that made these evangelicals act. But whatever it was, they acted. They raised money to get a chunk of land and that caused a "river of righteousness" to flow.

It's not a common story. Yet here's the cool thing. It's not utterly unique. A few others have done it, and are doing it... even Mennonites.

Randy Woodley, a Keetowah Christian has said, "At some point, Native and non-native relationships must go 'beyond 'Getting Along,' and include actual restitution for past injustices that still impact present relationship... restitution in the form of monetary payment, services or the return of lands."

In this edition of Intotemak, we have a number of articles that explore our relationship with indigenous lands and the possibility of restitution. Restitution is difficult, there's no doubt about it. But it's filled with resurrection promise, for not only does it help with truth-telling, not only does it redistribute God's gifts, not only does it acknowledge that Native peoples have deep, spiritual connections to the land, but it also demonstrates that this relationship *is* incredibly important... so important that we are willing to put costly action to words, costly discipleship to our faith. That'll move mountains (or prairie acres), cause the authorities to take note, and even bring life to death.

Blessings to you as you read, discuss, argue with and pray alongside the reflections in our 'zine.'

Peace, and meegwetch,

Steve Heinrichs,
Indigenous Relations,
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**VISION HEALING
& HOPE**

God calls us to be followers of
Jesus Christ and, by the power of
the Holy Spirit, to grow
as communities
of grace, joy and peace,
so that God's healing and hope flow through us
to the world.



Rejoicing in God's Love

DVBS in Manigotagan

During the week of August 13 to 19, Randy Hildebrand and eighteen youth from Steinbach Mennonite Church came up to the Manigotagan Community Chapel. It was the 15th time they had made the journey to do Daily Vacation Bible Study with our children, deepening their relationships with Christ and with each other.

As one of the co-pastors of the Chapel, I sat by the window of my mom's old house next door thinking, "if only we could be like the little children, singing and playing, developing the kinds of relationships they develop, our world would be so much better."

Then it came to me, Matthew 18:2-4: "And Jesus called over a child, and said to the people, "I'm telling you, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom."

So near is the kingdom of heaven, yet it seems so far away from us anxious adults.

It was interesting to see how the children and youth from Steinbach and the community made instant friendships with the help of God's Creation. The Manigotagan River became a big bath tub where the youth would go for a morning and evening cleansing. The beautiful green grass in the church yard became a natural carpet for outdoor games of fun. The big tent provided a shelter for teaching, craft making and just being together. It was simple, elemental stuff – but it all worked together to bring the kids together and experience God's love.

Weeks like this make a difference. As nine year-old Dezaræ put it – having memorized some Scripture through the week – it helps us "Love the Lord our God and listen to what the Bible says, for God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7).

The Manigotagan Community Chapel and the many grandparents and parents of our community would like to thank the Steinbach youth, Pastor Randy and his wife Leona for their dedication toward this partnership. We are also grateful to all those who brought snacks each day, and to the Manigotagan Metis Local and Community Council for letting us use their buildings for various activities. Blessings to all of you as we seek to grow in our relationships.

Norman Meade
MCC Manitoba Aboriginal Neighbours



Brander, middle, on the bus with Arlene Tubby, right, and Henry Krause, left.

Rambling Bear on Native Assembly 2012

Choctaw Mississippi was home to Native Mennonite Assembly July 23 - 26, 2012. With the help of “Redekop air miles” (MCBC) and MC Canada’s Indigenous Relations, Pastor Henry Krause (Langley Mennonite Fellowship, BC) and I flew east to be with our Choctaw Mennonite neighbors and many of the native peoples who are part of the larger Mennonite community. Assembly is a bi-annual event that’s been going on since the early 90s.

Our first night found us dealing with the extreme heat typical of the south eastern states. “Miss Sippy,” as they call it, is hot. People were very hospitable and welcoming. We had local people pick us up all the way from Philadelphia, Mississippi – about 90 minutes away – and drive out to Jacksonville to shuttle us over to the conference. We were very honored.

When we got to the event, we were immediately fed and hustled off to the conference which was held in a huge high school campus on the reservation

that would dwarf many Bible Colleges (like Columbia Bible College). We found out later that this reservation is populated by upwards of 10,000 Choctaw. They are a community roughly the size of Mission or Hope, BC, and they have their own city works, schools, churches, fire departments, police detachment, jail, courthouse, football fields, baseball diamonds, electrical substations, hotels, motels, malls, elders healing lodges, museum, a couple of casinos and swimming pools. All of this has come about through a combination of government sponsorship and a healthy dose of local, economic development. This was a very, very different experience for me who is used to the small and economically impoverished First Nations communities in the Fraser Valley. And I still remember the many struggling native communities in the north of Manitoba and northwest Ontario. This Choctaw community was much different. Its growth was incomparable.

One highlight of the conference

...it was apparent to our Canadian contingent that sharing native cultural elements in a contextual setting was stretching for many of our sisters and brothers from the south.

was being able to join Cheryl Bear and Randy Barnetson on the big pow wow drum and being allowed to have a few young ones come and join us while Steve Heinrichs led us in worship. That was very meaningful to me. The youth were very eager to include the drum in worship and to be able to sit alongside some “young warriors” was healing.

I did not know at the time that some of the Native American Mennonite communities were still somewhat uncomfortable with the big drum in worship. Through Cheryl and Randy’s lead they were able to shed the negative stereotype and allow for the use of our “sacred” instrument in the singing of praise to our Redeemer, creating a great time of fellowship. We were continually thanked for sharing the drum songs on hand drum and in the big drum. On our closing night, we invited elder Norman Meade from Manitoba, Pastor Henry Krause, and a local Mennonite leader, Harvey Yoder, to join us all on the big drum during worship. Everyone found that powerful and healing.

I am sharing this because it was apparent to our Canadian contingent that sharing native cultural elements in a contextual setting was stretching for many of our sisters and brothers from the south. I found myself wondering why. It showed me that I need to be very careful and respectful to each faith community’s journey in processing contextual elements of our native culture. It means that we still need to work on relationships and gain permission of the host people to be allowed to share these elements.

As the week went on we had opportunity to experience and learn some things about Choctaw culture – their history and practice is very different. It was great to see their dance, to taste their foods, to go on historical tours and participate in cultural presentations. So much beauty in this culture...so much that can gift the gospel and the church.

As for my own involvement, I was given the privilege of sharing in both youth and adult workshops, exploring topics of cultural identity and Christian faith. I also offered up some song with the guitar and drum in worship, and even got to tell a few bad jokes from time to time.

As an aside, I want to thank Henry Krause – Wow! What an amazing wealth of knowledge and diplomacy in one man. He was able to listen to my debates and personal rants about various topics for five whole days! Got to give the man some credit for putting up with this crazy Cree. Many thanks!

Also, I lift my hands to the Canadian contingent that came via bus from Manitoba. Many travelled from remote northern communities and they braved a long distance to make this gathering. They are such troopers and are passionate about this great conversation and celebration of the Jesus Walk amongst our Aboriginal peoples. There is so much wisdom in all your work and words. I miss you already.

Meegwetch,

*Brander 'Standing Bear' McDonald
Indigenous Relations Coordinator
Mennonite Church BC*



Action Camp. Pacific Trail Pipelines (inset).

The Unis'tot'en Action Camp

A Site of Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence

Dave Diewert, an organizer with Streams of Justice, a faith-based social justice group in Vancouver, recently participated in an indigenous-led action camp in north-central BC. A friend of the Mennonite community, Dave shares his experience here with us.

The third annual Unis'tot'en Action Camp (August 6-10, 2012) was held on the ancestral land of the Unis'tot'en clan in Wet'suwet'en traditional territory. The camp has been intentionally situated in the path of the proposed energy corridor that would provide a right-of-way for pipelines carrying Tar Sands bitumen and natural gas to Kitmat for tanker export. Although Enbridge's Northern Gateway Pipeline project is well known, the Pacific Trail Pipeline (PTP), carrying natural gas from Summit Lake in north-eastern BC to Kitmat, is the most imminent, and would set a precedent route for all other proposed pipelines to follow. The Unis'tot'en and Likht'samisyu clans of the Wet'suwet'en have given a resounding "NO" to these pipeline projects passing through their territories, and have taken action to ground that refusal in material structures, direct action education and training, and implementation of traditional protocols.

The camp is located 66 kms along a forest service road off of Highway 16, beside the Morice River. A solid wooden structure has been constructed to provide sleeping and cooking space. Water from the Morice River provided the camp with a fresh, clean, continuous water supply – a sign of the pristine environmental conditions that are threatened by pipeline construction and operations. Latrines were constructed, a meeting space for communal gatherings was established, a pine grove provided space for dozens of tents, a smoke house was built, and a solar energy system erected – all of which now constitutes the basic infrastructure for a sustainable site of continual resistance.

The Action Camp was hosted by Unis'tot'en elders and community leaders. The invitation went out to indigenous communities and non-indigenous supporters and allies. Although last year saw a group of two dozen participants, this year the campsite bustled with 150 people from nearby communities, Coast

Camp continued on page 6.



Morice River, part of the ecosystem many indigenous and settler peoples are working to protect from the pipeline.

Salish territories, and across Turtle Island. In addition to engaging in various camp infrastructure projects, we participated in a number of daily workshops that focused on decolonization, indigenous / non-indigenous race relations, direct action strategy discussions and training, and various skills and knowledge sharing circles. Guests from the Native Warriors society passed on some of the traditional teachings of the warrior culture and provided helpful information on security strategies. In addition, there was lots of time for conversations with a wonderful array of people who shared their experiences and insights from various contexts of struggle for justice. All of this made the camp an extremely rich learning experience.

Yet the most powerful and pervasive feature of the Action Camp was the multiple ways in which indigenous resistance and resurgence were enacted. This was clear from the moment of arrival. Before crossing the bridge onto Unis'tot'en territory, every non-Unis'tot'en person was asked to stop and wait. Unis'tot'en elders and community members would come out from the camp and meet the guests on the bridge, and engage in a Free, Prior and Informed Consent protocol. Guests were asked who they were and where they came from, what their intention on the land was, what skills they bring to share, and if they worked with any of the resources extraction industries threatening Unis'tot'en land.

Although the name given to this protocol derives from the language of modern political negotiations, the protocol itself is hundreds of years old. It expresses indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in fulfilling their responsibility as caretakers of the land. By enacting this protocol, the Unis'tot'en were not asserting legal rights granted to them by the colonial state; they were living out traditional responsibilities within a politics of self-determination.

The Free, Prior and Informed Consent protocol was also applied to Canfor logging truck drivers and executives who were also held up at the bridge, asked who they were, and what their intentions were on the land. When it was determined that they intended to log the PTP and Enbridge pipeline right-of-way, they were refused access. Resistance to resource extraction and the imposition of pipelines was expressed through this ancient protocol, and it signified the unflinching commitment of the Unis'tot'en people to protect and care for the life and health of their unceded territory.

This protocol, enacted dozens of times on the bridge, set the stage for our week together. It reminded us of who we were and where we were, personally and collectively, geographically and historically. As settler-invaders we heard stories of personal, communal and cultural devastation inflicted on indigenous people by colonial state power.

We were made aware of the destruction, past and present, of their lands, resources and life-ways by capitalism's unrelenting bid for profit, embodied now in the threatening pipeline proposals through Wet'suwet'en territory.

But we also witnessed indigenous resurgence of culture and tradition, a profound embodiment of self-determination, and a deep refusal to capitulate to the interests of industry or the control of the state. We shared evenings of traditional songs and dances, ate fresh fish and moose, heard stories passed on for generations, and witnessed their passion to protect the land for generations to come.

It was an honour to be present for this week, to be welcomed as a participant and witness in this movement of indigenous resistance and resurgence. Of course being a witness carries with it a responsibility to testify to the truth of the experience. For me this means firm opposition to pipelines and resource extraction on indigenous territories, actions of solidarity and support for indigenous resistance and resurgence, and a deepening commitment to the practical work of decolonization. It means staying true to the vision of a non-exploitative, non-oppressive world where life for all in the creation can flourish and deepen in the soil of mutual respect, freedom and love.

*Dave Diewert,
Streams of Justice,
Vancouver, BC*



Photo provided by Lea Snelgrove.

Jesus Camp, Carrier Country – July: Youth from Sardis Community Church and Granisle’s Church of the Way hang out with their friends from the indigenous community of Tachet

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. —Matthew 18:20

Wasting Time Together, Pauingassi – August: Folks from Grace Mennonite in Steinbach spend a week camping with their friends and hosts in Pauingassi



Photo provided by Steve Heinrichs.

Saskatoon TRC – June: many Mennonites volunteer and participate in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; MCC and MCSask offer up an Expression of Reconciliation.

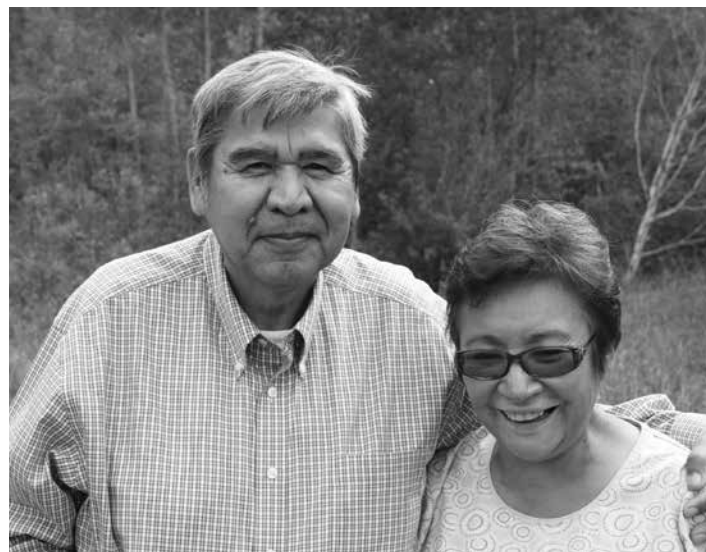


Photo provided by Ann Heinrichs.

Hearing My Story – August: MCCOntario’s Aboriginal Neighbours hosted a 3 day gathering in Treaty 9 territory to learn more about the residential school story and discover ways that we can journey together



Photo provided by Steve Heinrichs.

“So You Want Better Relations?”

Soren Mennohawk reads Mark 10

At Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Vancouver, Soren Mennohawk connected with a number of Mennos from the Fraser Valley, and took time to explore their relationship with the local First Peoples. At one point, an older gentleman took Soren aside and said with conviction, “Unless we start addressing the issue of land, honestly stating what has happened – that most of BC is not ‘treated’ territory – we will never approach reconciliation.” Moved by that comment, Soren did a little historical reflection and wrote the following translation of an infamous Jesus-story.

Some time ago, there was a Sto:lo Medicine Man named Charlie who was sent by Creator on a journey through S’olh Temexh (which some call Vancouver and the Fraser Valley). As he traveled, many people came to him to receive words of wisdom, a healing touch, and the hope of a new beginning. One time, a well-off Mennonite man, a faithful churchgoer who lived right next door to Charlie’s Rez, came up to him and said, “Charlie, you have a reputation as a wise and good teacher. Your people look up to you. What can I do to improve our friendship, and make things better between my people and yours? We live so close to each other, but are so very far apart.”

The Sto:lo healer replied, “Why do you call me wise and good? Creator is the wise and good one, and we all come from Creator – two-leggeds, four-leggeds, the salmon, birds and berries. We are all equal parts of his creation.”

The Mennonite nodded. He had heard it before.

“So you want to know how your people and mine can have better relationships?” said Charlie. “That’s a very important question. I’m glad you asked. Surely you know what your elders have said, don’t you? ‘Honour your neighbours and all your relations – don’t murder, don’t commit adultery, don’t steal, don’t lie; respect the aged ones and never defraud the tribes around you.’”

Immediately, the Mennonite smiled and said, “Yes, I know this, and I have kept it all since I was a little boy.”

Charlie looked at him with compassion. From the heart, he shared these words: “Brother, I appreciate your obvious sincerity. But have you ever wondered how you and your people got so wealthy? Ever wondered how come so many natives – who once lived from and cared for this rich land – are now poor and suffering from addictions and despair? Ever wondered whose land you came and settled, and how you came to call it your own? Ever wondered how the past shapes the present? If you want better relations with Creator and my ancient people, grapple with your history, with my history and the history of this land right here in this place, the land that once gave



Sto:lo woman weaving basket

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sto:lo_woman_weaving_cedar_basket.jpg

us life and cared for us. Then go and do as your Great Si:yam (Jesus!) says, ‘Give your money and property away to the poor.’”

“My people aren’t looking for charity, or for church people to come and save us with good news. We aren’t even looking for apologies and the promise of reconciliation. We are looking for true justice and respect, for equal friendships that allows us to stand up for each other. Through that, a great healing will come to us, and to you. But none of that will come, until the church does as Jesus asks – redistribute wealth to the blessed poor, to those who have been defrauded. If you do that, then you’ll be in right relation to Creator and my people. That’s the key to our friendship. I know, it sounds crazy. But remember: I’m not quoting a tough-talking Mohawk warrior and these ain’t the fighting words of the American Indian Movement. It’s simply the pre-condition for right living that your sacred medicine man taught! And that’s why we love Jesus – he was such a good Indian.”

When the Mennonite heard this, he was shocked, full of sadness and some anger too. Angry because he had much privilege, power and property, and he believed that his wealth was the result of all his hard work in a God-given promised land, not connected to some long-gone, historic injustice. And so he stalked off. Would he be seen again? Would he ever approach a Native person once more? The legend passed

Return What was Taken

A few years ago, a dear friend unexpectedly offered my wife Lydia and I fifty-five acres of land in Nova Scotia. We purchased it, and ever since we've been wondering what life giving activity could be pursued here. What would bring the Creator joy as care for this land passes from one hand to another? As we seek to follow the Spirit, "which blows where it desires" (John 3:8), we can't help but contemplate who was here and what happened on this land before our purchase. And a thought keeps on growing in us, challenging us, changing us. An idea that is both simple and achievable – return the land.

Return the land? We know, the idea sounds pretty crazy. But we've been doing our homework, and we

believe it would be a more than reasonable thing to do – a just thing, a right and good thing to do.

I love to read, and a series of books have helped answer some of the questions raised by our Nova Scotia land purchase. Daniel Paul's Mi'kmaq history, *We were not the Savages*, Paulette Regan's *Unsettling the Settler Within*, and Anne Bishop's *Becoming an Ally* have awakened our settler minds and quickened our conscience. Moreover, the Intotemak accounts of the Mennonite-Young Chippewyan land discussions taking place in Saskatchewan – discussions in which Mennonites have both acknowledged that their farmland is actual-

ly Young Chip reserve land that was appropriated by the government, and are seeking ways to amend that injustice – have inspired us. Through such learning and many prayerful conversations, Lydia and I have been led to a place in which we long for nothing less than a relationship with the lands original caretakers. We want to nurture a respectful friendship with the local Mi'kmaq nation, learn about the past cultural/spiritual history of this land, and come to an agreement about "returning" an agreed upon section of this land (or, if so desired, discover some other form of compensation for it).

Several assumptions about the

on to us does not say. But it does say this:

When the Mennonite left, Charlie looked around and said to his tribe of followers, "How hard it is for the settler, even the well-intentioned, to enter Creator's kin-dom!"

The disciples were perplexed by his words. For here was a Mennonite the movement could have used. Sure, the guy was old school, a colonizer unaware of the history of this place. But he had impressive resources and a big reputation; with someone like him on their leadership board they could make roads in their liberation quest (especially with other whites). So what if he didn't know how he gained his place in the world, and at whose expense? He could be brought up to speed later.

Yet Charlie was firm. "Friends, how hard it is for settlers to enter the Creator's Way. To paraphrase the Waymaker, 'It's easier to stuff a Nelson Rockefeller (or a Nelson Redekop!) through the deposit slot at VanCity Bank, than to get your average settler to embrace God's Red Road of justice and wealth redistribution.'"

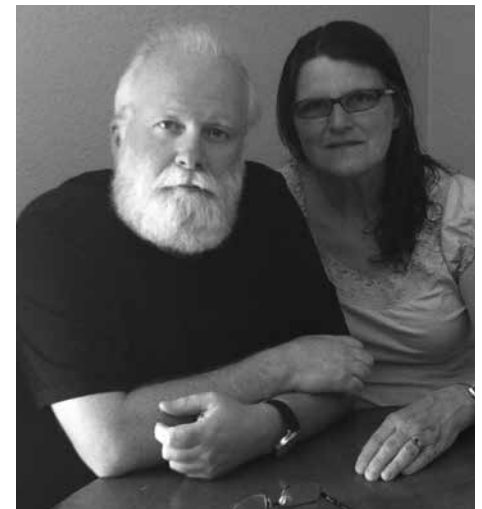
They were all – to a woman, to a man – greatly astounded and said to one another, "But if that's the case, is there any hope? Who can be saved?" Charlie looked at them and said, "For two-leggeds, it's pretty much impossible. Can't be done. But look to Creator, and all things will be possible."

One fellow from Charlie's Rez piped up, "Look, we didn't have much to begin with, but we have left everything to walk this path!"

With hands lifted up, Charlie said, "Know that the Creator sees your sacrifice, and will honour it. If we stick together, no one who has left all things will lack anything. For when we potlatch with one another, we share everything, and our community will be full of what we need: food, health, and happy families. But make no mistake – persecutions will come, for settler society believes the way of consuming capitalism is the only way, and they'll resist. That's what they've done here in S'olh Temexh, a territory without treaty for the last 150 years."

Charlie's words gave the people much to ponder. And his not-so-ancient story lives on to trouble all...even the church.

Soren Mennohawk



Paul and Lydia Jenkinson

history of Settler-First Nations relationships are guiding our hopes of tangible reparation and restoration. We are assuming that land in North America was given by God as a trust to each First Nation. No, they didn't own the land (as none of us does). They were part of it, were cared for by it, and called to care for and protect it in kind. That land – sacred, promised land, if you will – was (generally speaking) taken by settler governments through dishonest and violent

Return continued on page 10.

means, and occupied by immigrant settler peoples who thought it was racially and/or legally legitimate to do so. If treaties were made (and they often weren't), they were frequently concluded under coercive conditions and many (if not all) of these treaties/covenants were broken (and are still being broken). The guests did not respect the host's homes and territories, and thus there is a "settler problem" that we have all inherited that needs to be addressed. Some people may not accept these assumptions, and may still be convinced of the Canadian settler myth of peaceful, cooperative settlement. But Lydia and I can no longer believe that story.

So we are setting out on a journey. It's a voluntary settler journey, one we hope leads to a proper relationship with the local Mi'kmaq First Nation. We feel the need to act, to take a risk, to admit that the land we have is not "entirely our own." If "the earth is the Lords and all who dwell in it," (Psalm 24:1) we can let go of the need to possess it and build reconciled relationships rooted in a new Settler-First Nations understanding of land and place.

If you are interested in further dialogue and action around these matters, please contact Lydia and I at pandjenkinson@gmail.com, or share your thoughts with the *Intotemak* community by writing sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca. Together, let's see where the Spirit can take us.

Paul and Lydia Jenkinson

Paul and Lydia are members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, BC. Paul traces his Nova Scotia roots to the first Scottish settler ship the Hector, a ship full of indigenous Celts who had been dispossessed of their lands in the Scottish Land Clearances of the mid 1700's. Lydia is the daughter of Russian Mennonites who were also dispossessed of their land in the early 1900's.



Little Imperialist on the Prairie

From the very first page, Laura Ingalls Wilder gets it wrong. *Little House in the Big Woods*, the first of Wilder's classic Little House series of children's books, begins in the 1860s in the empty woods of Wisconsin. "As far as a man could go to the north," she writes, "there was nothing but woods" – no houses, no roads and "no people."

Oops. She begins by omitting indigenous people from the landscape. This error – known as terra nullius in international law – is the basis of the standard story of this continent: it was empty; just sitting there for the taking.

Of course, my 5-year-old son isn't great with Latin, and I don't want to turn a story into a lecture, so I just grimace to myself and keep going, eager to revisit my childhood memories of the books.

Wilder's father later moves the family from Wisconsin, which was becoming too crowded, to Kansas, where they set up a homestead in "Indian Territory." Here things get ugly. And weird.

Early in *Little House on the Prairie* – the book set in Indian Territory – Pa promises Laura she will get to see a

"papoose," or Indian baby. (Though the term Indian is considered offensive in Canada, it is still widely accepted in the U.S.)

Laura's interest is piqued, but Ma doesn't like Indians, which perplexes the girl. "This is Indian country, isn't it?" she asks. "What did we come to their country for, if you don't like them?" Pa had heard that Indian Territory would be opened to settlement soon. Plus, he loved wild adventure.

Running parallel to the story of a family's remarkable effort to set up a homestead 40 miles from the nearest town is the relationship with Indians. Pa and Laura are intrigued – the elusive papoose keeps coming up – while Ma is scared.

The ominous Indians do not make an actual appearance until a third of the way into the book. "Two naked, wild men" approach the house and enter, their black eyes "glittering, like snake's eyes." (By this point, my son is getting a redacted version of the book.)

Pa is gone. The men motion to Ma, who makes cornbread for them, trembling with terror. Most preposterously,

the men are said to be wearing loin-cloths made of stinking “fresh skunk skins.”

The “fierce-looking” Indians eat and leave. Pa returns. “Don’t bother them and they won’t bother us,” he says.

Later, when Laura finally sees a papoose, she is so enchanted that she asks Pa to get the baby for her to keep. But the increased presence of Indians heightens tension.

One day “the tall Indian” pays a visit. He and Pa eat and then smoke their pipes together. This diplomatic encounter ultimately saves the family from being massacred.

Pa, who defends the Indians as “perfectly friendly,” is fine with them using the trail that he inadvertently built the family’s house next to. He concedes their entitlement: “[It was] an Indian trail long before we came.” But that entitlement is limited. Later, Ma and Pa explain to Laura that Indians go west. “Why?” she asks.

“The government makes them . . . now go to sleep.”

“Will the government make these Indians go west?”

“Yes.” Pa explains that when settlers come Indians have to “move on.”

“Won’t it make the Indians mad to have to—”

“Go to sleep.”

Tensions reach a crescendo as the family is bombarded nightly by frenzied, blood-curdling war cries from nearby camps. Later, they find out that the “tall Indian” convinced the warriors not to kill the settlers.

In the end though, Pa hears that Washington will let the Indians stay, so he moves the family to Minnesota to live among Swedes.

In these books, Indians are wild, exotic and threatening, yet also dignified and peaceable. When the white neighbour says “The only good Indian is a dead Indian,” Pa objects. They have reason to dislike white folk, given how often they have been forced to move.

“But,” he says, honing in on the crux of his colonial justification, “an Indian ought to have sense enough to know when he was licked.”

In Wilder’s world, Indians are not entitled to the land. Indeed, if she believed otherwise, her life’s story, and the entire story of the continent, would fall apart. To maintain her belief she must portray Indians as inferior – interesting, even friendly, but ultimately uncivilized.

This classic colonial narrative is easy to critique. Yet it persists because it is nearly impossible for non-indigenous North Americans to truly untangle ourselves from it without getting back on the boat. We might not share Ma’s disdain for Indians, but our existence here constitutes a tainted sense of entitlement. We must acknowledge that we are not fully entitled to what

we have. And we must work for honourable and equitable sharing of land and resources.

Like Wilder, I come from a prairie farm that sits on land once inhabited by Indians. My parents still live there. Next time I go there, I’ll take my son for a walk along the creek and talk about Wilder’s books. I’ll ask if he thinks Indians ever lived there.

The hard part, though, will be deciding what to do when I inherit a piece of that land.

*Will Braun, Winnipeg, Man.
This article first appeared in
Geez magazine.*





A Life Transformed in Christ

Linda Chodak, Winnie Fehr, Albert Martens, Walter Fehr, Allan Owens, Delores Pascal (centre).

Forty year old Delores Pascal of Pauingassi is outgoing and ready to tackle many new opportunities in spite of her blindness. For many years, however, she struggled with alcoholism and repeatedly tried to get out of that snare. Time and again she went to the local church and asked to be prayed for but was soon drawn back into her old ways. One time she phoned me and requested prayer, sharing her sincere desire that God would take control of her life. The next time she phoned she said, 'Today it is one month since you prayed for me.' *30 days sober!* What a joy it was to hear of this miracle. Yet it wasn't long before my friend was down again.

In August of 2011, Delores had a life-changing dream about her great grandfather, Jacob Owen. Jacob, an important church leader from the past, shared how he longed for all the members of his family to be with him one day. This had a profound impact on her.

With deep emotion she shared this message with her friends, Pat and John Pankratz. As the Pankratz's prayed, Delores made a commitment to Christ that day, and ever since she has been walking on the winning side. Praise the Lord!

In the mean time, Delores was asked if she would consider baptism. She keenly desired such, but because of her blindness, found the immersion tradition of her great-grandmother a frightful prospect. We explored various ways around this – pouring, kneeling in a few inches of water – but in the end, Delores decided that she would undergo immersion with the support of some women and men to physically help her out of the water.

On July 10th, Delores was baptized before the church, many community members, plus a group of volunteers

from Athletes in Action. As she emerged from the water, she exclaimed with great joy that she was not going back to her old ways, that she was going ahead with the Lord. It was amazing!

The next day, Delores gave me a call and sang the following song:

*As a child I thought my dad could walk on water
Others had their heroes, he was mine
He never traveled far to gain much worldly honor
But he could reach the throne of God at any time.*

*Lord, won't you please tell my father
That tonight his prayers are answered
When the angels were rejoicing it was for me
From the path of sin my soul has been delivered.
Lord, won't you please tell my father
By his prayers I now am free.*

*With each passing day he prayed for my salvation
But his Christian ways could never fit my life
But since he made it home I know he'll be there waiting
I wish I could see his face when he gets the news tonight.*

It's been a few months since Delores' baptism. She's still going strong. Moreover, there have been a number of young people who have noticed the change in Delores. They've asked her what they might do to stop drinking, and asked her to pray for them.

We wish Delores and her community many blessings as they continue to walk with the Lord.

Henry Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB



Ryan Dueck with his family.

making space

Back in 1970, an Indian Ecumenical Conference was held at Stoney Indian Park in western Alberta. At this gathering of traditional and Christian indigenous leaders, Bob Thomas (Cherokee), put forward the idea of an “Indian Day of Prayer.” The leadership liked the idea, and recommended that June 21 “be set aside as a holy day, as a day of prayer and fasting to all Indians everywhere, a day when we could think about our place in this universe and what we’re supposed to do to carry on what our old people told us.” In 1996, the Government of Canada, having been pushed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that took place a year earlier, declared June 21st as a day to celebrate the contributions that indigenous peoples have made to Canada.

This past June 21, Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, reflected on what this day means to him, and what it might mean to others.

Today is National Aboriginal Day here in Canada. It is a day which, since 1996, has been set aside to learn about and honour the diverse cultural heritage of Canada’s First Nations, to recognize their ongoing contribution to Canada, and (hopefully) to remember that there remains much work to do in addressing the many problems that remain from Canada’s mistreatment (past and present) of its first peoples. Southern Alberta has a significant aboriginal population, with the Blood and Peigan tribes to the east and the

south and the Siksika to the north, all three of which, along with the South Peigan in Montana, are part of the Blackfoot Confederacy. It is a region of Canada blessed with a rich and diverse aboriginal heritage.

Having said this, I am embarrassed to admit that as a kid growing up in southern Alberta I more or less swallowed the familiar stereotypes and latent racism that was all around me. I heard the comments about the “lazy, drunk Indians” we would see downtown, I saw the substandard

living conditions on the reserves in our area where I would go to play hockey, I laughed along with the racist jokes at school. Even though I went to school and played hockey with a few aboriginal kids, and even though I got along fine with them, the Indians were always an easy target to pick on. It was easy for a mostly ignorant white kid to just assume that there was something wrong with “those people” who lived on the reserves—some inherent flaw that accounted for why they lived the way they did, and why they didn’t have the same societal status and privilege as everyone else. Far too easy.

Over time, of course, I learned that there was (surprise!) more to the story. I learned about how the First Nations were conquered and had their land taken from them, I learned about church-run residential schools whose explicit goal was the “civilization” of the Indians, including the eradication of their languages and cultures, and often severe physical, sexual, and emotional

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abuse. I learned about how, despite our “official” posture of celebrating diversity and honouring our First Nations, and despite prime minister Stephen Harper’s official apology in 2008 (and the subsequent establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada which will be coming to Alberta next year), Canada’s aboriginal population still scores the lowest on almost every quality of life indicator, is still vastly over-represented in statistics about incarceration, addiction, mental illness, poverty, and suicide. I learned, in short, that there is a long, complicated, dark story behind what remains a very difficult and complex reality today.

Eleven years ago this week, I became the father of twins who are of Ojibway and Métis descent. This, more than anything I learned in a book, has changed how I view the issue of how Canada has dealt and continues to deal with the First Nations. From that point on, I began to look at things differently. Increasingly, I would almost instinctively see and hear things through their eyes and ears (or, what I imagined these to be). Every casual comment, every quasi-racist insinuation, every

newspaper article, every radio or TV program, anything that had to do with a negative portrayal of aboriginal people in Canada began to put me on high-alert. I found myself feeling angry and defensive a lot, even if only internally. Perhaps it was an implicit attempt to assuage some of the guilt from my own stereotypes in the past. Perhaps I was (and am) bracing myself for the day when my children will have to face the racism that I was such an uncritical participant in during my own childhood.

The text I am wrestling with for this week’s sermon is Genesis 26:12-33. It is the story of Isaac’s dealings with the Philistine King Abimelech after he moves down to Gerar to avoid famine. Isaac is initially allowed to stay but because he is so prosperous and powerful, the Philistines become envious and Abimelech asks him to leave. Isaac tries to settle and dig wells in a number of places, but meets resistance at each step along the way. Eventually, the quarrelling stops, and he and the king sign an agreement whereby Isaac is allowed a place to stay. Isaac names the spot “Rehoboth,” which means “room” or “space.” It is the story of a gradual-

ly-arrived-at peace, a slow, somewhat reluctant “making of space.”

I don’t know what the next few years and decades will look like for Canada’s First Nations. I don’t know what the fruit of the Truth and Reconciliation process might be. I don’t know what challenges my own children will face in their lifetimes because of the colour of their skin and the (often tragic) narrative they find themselves a part of. But I am hopeful. I am hopeful that, like Isaac and Abimelech, we Canadians can learn to make space for one another, whether this “space” is the physical land, or spiritual, emotional, and relational space. I am hopeful that, however slowly change comes, however the blame and responsibility are finally apportioned, however attempts at reconciliation are offered and accepted, however reluctantly or fitfully peace is arrived at, that we can—as individuals, as communities, as a nation (or nations!)—arrive at a point where we see that there is, truly, room enough for all.

*Ryan Dueck,
pastor of Lethbridge
Mennonite Church*



Community News



Congratulations to **Daisy and Richard Charlie** of Tachet, BC who welcomed a baby boy into their home on May 22, 2012 - Silas Sylvester Joseph Charlie 6 lbs 6 oz.

Edna Gladys Moar of Winnipeg, originally of Little Grand Rapids,

passed away on July 13th as the result of a stroke. Edna was 63 years of age, and was predeceased by one of her 4 sons. She received extensive support from her siblings and extended family, and will be missed by many.

Esther Ellen Lea of the Fisher River Cree Nation, Manitoba, passed away on May 30, 2012 at the age of 86 years. Ellen spent her life in Pine Dock until failing health necessitated her move to the Fisher River Personal Care Home. She is predeceased by her husband, Henry (Buddis) Collins, and is survived by her children Alfred, Walter, Glen, Leonard, Diane, Rodney, Willard, Herbie, many grandchildren,

and a large extended family.

Alfred (Alfie) Monkman, aged 62 years of Selkirk, Manitoba, passed away on August 9, 2012. Alfred lived his early years in Loon Straits, Manitoba, attended high school in Cranberry Portage and moved to Selkirk in the early 1970s. He worked at the Manitoba Rolling Mills for 38 years, retiring on January 1 of this year. Alfred was predeceased by his parents Lindsay and Edith and a brother Kevin. He is survived by daughters Cindy (Theron) Black and Leah (Dennis) Stevenson, a son Mervin Buddy (Terri); many grandchildren and friends.

Three Sisters Fry Bread

For thousands of years, indigenous peoples in North America grew corn, beans and squash together because of their synergistic qualities. In this recipe, the three sisters come together in this minutes-to-make fry bread.

Ingredients

1c flour
1c cornmeal
1c cooked mashed pinto beans
1c cooked mashed butternut squash
1tsp baking powder
1tsp dried crumbled sage
Warm water
Vegetable oil

Directions

In a large bowl combine first 6 ingredients. Mix well, adding a little water as needed to make a soft but not sticky dough.

In large skillet over medium heat, heat a thin layer of oil. On a work surface, divide dough into 6-8 pieces and flatten to form patties.

In hot skillet, carefully add flattened dough, in batches if necessary. Fry 3-5 minutes until golden brown. Flip and repeat. Drain on paper towels, serve warm.

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



Events

September 28 – October 8:

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.

October 4: Sisters in Spirit Vigil

In every major urban center there will be a vigil to honor the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is shockingly high; more than 600 have gone missing or been murdered, most of them in the past two decades. Nearly half of the murder cases remain unsolved; by contrast, as of 2005, 84% of all homicide cases in Canada were cleared by police. Please participate and take action against racism, sexism and violence. Everyone is welcome.



October 27: Manitoba Partnership Circle (Winnipeg)

Gathering of native and non-native church leaders and interested members to encourage one another as we seek to equip and mutually serve each other, and plan the spring 'Building Bridges' event. All are welcome. If you haven't participated, and are interested in doing so, contact Norm Voth (nvoth@mennochurch.mb.ca) or Steve Heinrichs at the Indigenous Relations office.

November 4 - Peace Sunday

Every year on Remembrance Day our nation invites us to reflect on the wartime sacrifice of soldiers. Many Anabaptist churches, as peace churches, choose to observe Peace Sunday. It is an occasion to reflect upon Jesus' gospel of peace and to offer a witness against violence and war.

November 27 - A Day to Remember

For their part in what settler society labeled "the Frog Lake Massacre," the starving Cree, Wandering Spirit and five other warriors: Round the Sky, Bad Arrow, Miserable Man, Iron Body, Little Bear, Crooked Leg and Man Without Blood, were convicted of treason. They were hanged on November 27, 1885, along with two other Cree convicted of murder - it was the largest mass execution in Canadian history

