

my friends

Intotemak

Spring 2014 Vol. 43, No. 1



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Neighbourly Advice from Brother Bear

Last month, Steve Heinrichs put together a pamphlet of ideas on how settler Christians could walk in a good way with Indigenous neighbours (“Paths for Peacemaking with Host Peoples”... you can check it out here: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2249). Steve asked Brander “Standing Bear” McDonald, Indigenous Relations Co-ordinator for Mennonite Church BC, if he could offer up his own perspective. Brander’s a Cree who has lived and worked in Sto:lo territory for a few decades. In the following guest editorial, he shares some of the concrete ways and virtues that he believes are critical to right relationships between settler Christians and host peoples.

Oh Siem (Honored Elders)... wisdom people...
i raise my hands to you in respect and recognize the indigenous territory and peoples where you dwell...
as mennonite people i honour your desire to build relationships with my first nations people...
we have spoken many words together and continue to do so...
now it is time to carry out our conversations about peacemaking and justice and walking together as fellow human beings...
gleaned from many experiences... good ones... and even hard ones... here’s what we can do...
here is your challenge...

set the table... and remember protocol...
explore the history, learn the worldview.... and find an elder/ teacher who can help you
it’s hard – i understand – but shelve your bibles and evangelistic hearts for a little while... just spend time in the community building relationships for no purpose of your own...
love... and love...
love as Jesus did... love the outsiders, the elders and the children...

it’s not about your guilt... it’s not about making wrongs right quick... it’s about real friendships...
think long term... long term....looooooooooong... it takes a lifetime to earn permission to share the “foolishness” of your faith... so be humble, and share it in who you are and what you do
don’t come as a representative of the church...come as a fellow human being...
accept all invitations...

when you’re with us, learn the non-verbals (they’re most important)... sometimes no means yes... sometimes yes means no...
never pressure people to make a commitment that might embarrass them or put them in a spot to have to publicly decline...
find ways to connect... to connect... and connect....

shelve your bibles and evangelistic hearts for a little while... just spend time in the community building relationships for no purpose of your own

come as a learner... this is about your growth, not about being the missionary or saint... we can smell that stuff a mile away...
come with the heart of a child, curious and eager to learn... come as a servant... come with a gift... and recognize the land... always recognize the land...

come with an open spirit...come to see visions and dream dreams... come and receive our sacred gifts... come to smudge, sweat, dance, eat and laugh... come to experience a new and perhaps more holistic understanding of Creator and creation... come and be changed...

come and see the church in a new light... or darkness...
come and see its brokenness.... come and grasp how it’s been used as tool of the state... a tool of the devil... a tool to fracture n’ assimilate communities into another “body politic”...

come and be called cousin, auntie, uncle... come and discover why you can walk into any house on the rez... come and be named and hold on to that gift and its meaning...

come and experience a church 10 000 years old... the church of the longhouse...the church of the pow wow... the healing circle, the water ceremony, the tobacco ties and sundance...

come and be prepared... your family and friends may not recognize who you become... your motivations and heart will change... you could become a warrior... a protector for our native people... a provider of good relations... you can walk softly with wisdom to share what you have learned... and if you make this sacred journey our native communities will offer their highest respects....

maybe some of you are well on the way... maybe some are intimidated but drawn by a deep curiosity of soul... in all things, show kindness and respect... those are the golden rules... we are watching to see if newcomers can lay aside agendas and just come...
come and be with us... just be a part of us...

Guest Editorial by
Brander “Standing Bear” McDonald
Indigenous Relations Coordinator
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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.

*COVER: Chantal Chagnon and Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes
share a drum song at the “Smoked Fish” Reconciliation
Event in Calgary.*



Smoked Fish, Bannock and Indian Tea

An evening with Richard Wagamese.

On January 24, on an unseasonably warm Calgary night, over four hundred people packed into St. David's United Church for an evening with Ojibway author and speaker, Richard Wagamese. Through a combination of storytelling, dramatic monologue, and song, Richard invited his listeners into an appreciation of how through the sharing of stories we can break down the walls that human beings so quickly and reflexively put up between one another.

In addition to Richard's presentation, which was at times bracingly blunt, profoundly moving, and side-splittingly hilarious, guests were treated to drumming and song from Chantal Chagnon and Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes (from the Cree tradition), as well as opportunities for book-signings, food (including bannock!) and conversation afterward. All told, it made for a truly memorable and inspiring evening.

The event was the culmination of the efforts of an ad hoc group of Mennonites in Alberta, including Mennonite Central Committee Alberta, Mennonite Church Alberta and Mennonite Church Canada, that formed two or so years ago to talk about what it means to love and honour our Aboriginal neighbours in the long shadow cast by Canada's colonial past. The group was formed to raise awareness, understanding, and engagement among Mennonites (and beyond) about the injustices perpetrated upon First Nations people in the past and how these injustices continue to manifest themselves in the present. The fact that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was coming to Alberta (Edmonton, March 27-30) lent urgency to these efforts. The invitation to Richard Wagamese and the creation of this event was extended out of the twin convictions that as followers of Jesus we are to be good listeners, and that we are to attend with particular care and attention to stories that have been marginalized in the past, whether inside or outside of the church.

The event was a powerful one for me on many levels. However, if I were to identify one overarching theme that came through over and over in Richard's presentation it would be that of how attending to each other's stories—truly *hearing* one another, rather than listening through already existing prejudices—can be an antidote to fear. And the elimination of fear is a necessary prerequisite to things like gratitude, grace, and love springing up—things that lead to life, hope, and strength for all people.

The irony probably was not lost on many of us, as we sat in this majestic old building that historically represented the very institutions responsible for the stifling of Aboriginal stories. As a follower of one who frequently told stories both to unsettle and disorient, to broaden categories that had grown rigid and narrow, to hold out a vision of what it means to be a truly *human* being, and to expand our conceptions of who our neighbours are and how we are to honour them, I was grateful for both the stories we heard from Richard and for the call to live up to the high and holy calling of love that we have all been entrusted with.

Ryan Dueck,
Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alberta

Honour Walk covers 550/k

March 7-26 walk for Indian Residential School survivors

When Brad Langendoen told an Indigenous friend that he planned to walk 550 km to honour Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors and encourage awareness about truth and reconciliation, he got an unexpected response.

“He offered me his boots,” Langendoen says. His friend is an IRS survivor.

Langendoen, along with Erin Sawatzky, Laurens Thiessen van Esch and Ann Heinrichs will walk from Stoney Knoll, Sask. to Edmonton, Alta. March 7-26.

The departure point has historical significance. In 2006 Mennonites, Lutherans and First Nations signed a memorandum of understanding there outlining the need for all parties to respect “the sacred nature of covenants” and agreeing to work together for “peace, justice and sufficiency for all our communities.”

A spiritual journey as well as a physical one, the walk fittingly coincides with Lent, the season of lament. It concludes just in time for walkers to attend the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) event beginning March 27.

Participants invite others to join them—for part of the journey as companions, as supporters in prayer or hospitality, by fasting or through donations of funds and supplies. They will be accompanied by a van and a driver for transport during off-walk hours and safety purposes.

Simultaneously, others will fast in Winnipeg, including Steve Heinrichs, Ann’s husband and Mennonite Church Canada’s Director, Indigenous Relations. The couple has two adopted First Nations daughters with relatives who experienced IRS first hand.

“I wouldn’t have my daughters if the colonial system hadn’t messed up native communities,” says Ann Heinrichs, pointing out the emotional conflict she wrestles with. The walk will give her time for reflection and prayer. Though Heinrichs says she will miss her family when she leaves them



L to R: Laurens Thiessen van Esch, Erin Sawatzky, Ann Heinrichs and Brad Langendoen are walking 550km from Stoney Knoll Sask. to Edmonton Alt. March 7-26 to honour IRS survivors and draw attention to the need for truth and reconciliation. Erin, who recently sprained her ankle, expects to put her crutches away in plenty of time to prepare for the walk.

By throwing myself into this walk, I will be challenged to spend more time learning about the past and learning what my role is in the present.

for three weeks, it doesn’t compare to the forced separation inflicted on so many survivors and families. “I hope to honour the stories of my daughters’ birth communities.”

The walk emerged from weekly meetings of Student Christian Movement (SCM) Manitoba where discussions about Indigenous/Settler solidarity led to participation in Winnipeg Idle No More events and a desire to do more. Inspiration came from Cree teens who hiked 1600 km between Quebec and Ottawa last year, drawing public attention to justice issues.

Sawatzky, a 4th year student at CMU, spent last summer with a reforestation group in an illegally logged northern BC community. She heard Indigenous stories first hand. “By throwing myself into this walk, I will be challenged to spend more time learning about the past and learning what my role is in the present.”

Born and raised in the Netherlands, Thiessen van Esch learned about the history of Indigenous Canadians through a delegation assignment with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Ontario. “I was blown away by the stories I heard, which struck me as incredible in a country that has such a positive image.” He has been

attending SCM Manitoba meetings since a recent move to Winnipeg.

Langendoen just completed Peace and Conflict Resolution studies at CMU. “I didn’t know about Indian Residential Schools until I came to CMU,” he says. But since then, he has actively supported Indigenous relationships, travelling with Steve Heinrichs to the TRC in Quebec last year, and producing a powerful video about the experience. (www.mennonite-church.ca/tiny/2276)

Whether or not he wears his friend’s boots may come down to foot size, says Langendoen. Still, he appreciates the gesture. “I took the offer to wear his boots as a kind of commissioning.”

The Honour Walk and Fast for Truth and Reconciliation is supported by SCM Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada. To learn more email sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca or download www.mennonite-church.ca/tiny/2277.

Deborah Froese, Director, News Services
Mennonite Church Canada



Indigenous Issues: From Education to Reconciliation

Understanding Injustice beyond Popular Portrayals

Siksika Nation, a First Nations reserve located east of Calgary whose six communities were hit hard by the flooding.

When flood waters swept across southern Alberta last June, Dan Rossi was eager to help those affected.

Still, Rossi, a committed Christian and member of the Calgary Police Service, asked God not to send him to Siksika Nation, a First Nations reserve located east of Calgary whose six communities were hit hard by the flooding.

“As a police officer, my views on First Nations people were very limited to the five per cent who are involved with drug and alcohol addiction,” Rossi says. “I think a lot of the information I’ve received about First Nations people came from colleagues ... [who would use] derogatory terms. It wasn’t something I would repeat—just loving people the way I do, I wouldn’t reduce someone to a label or term—but I was frustrated with the addiction, the abuse and the entitlement I would see” working as a police officer.

While Rossi’s views have changed over the course of his work in Siksika, they are indicative of the way many Canadians—Christians included—view Indigenous peoples, which includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Terry LeBlanc believes that Christians are often very uneducated about Indigenous peoples. Even when they are, that education is largely built on stereotypes

perpetuated by the mainstream media.

“Media portrayals...don’t paint the whole picture,” says LeBlanc, a Mi’kmaq/Acadian who is currently the chair of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies. “People take snippets of news and information they have received and create a picture. Unfortunately for many Christians, that is a narrowly-framed picture that says, ‘All First Nations people are this way,’ when really, they aren’t.”

This narrow focus prevents Christians from understanding how Indigenous peoples got to be where they are today. Many believe that enough work has been done to repair relationships with Indigenous peoples, who are still affected by the deep impact of Canada’s residential school system.

“Many people believe, ‘If those [Indigenous] folks just got over it and moved on, we’d all be OK,’” LeBlanc says.

The issues are more complex than that.

* * *

LeBlanc acknowledges that Indigenous communities are plagued by a number of issues.

“These social ills wouldn’t be specifically different for First Nations peoples than

the rest of Canadians, other than they appear more obvious given the focus media and government agencies tend to give First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities,” LeBlanc says. “We struggle with the same kinds of things that other Canadians struggle with.”

Those issues include family breakdown, violence, poverty, and health issues that range from common diseases related to aging, to more devastating illnesses like HIV and AIDS.

Indigenous communities also experience high rates of teen pregnancy, LeBlanc notes. The greater level of transience in relationships today means that children are being born to teenage and young adult women who do not have a committed spouse or partner who can help them raise their child.

LeBlanc says that Indigenous peoples experience these social ills “in a far more extensive and intense way” due in large part to land treaties, made over the past 250 years, not being honoured.

Then there is the matter of residential schools, which, during their 150 years of operation, extricated First Nations, Inuit and Métis children from their families and attempted to assimilate them into the rest of society.

“Even though residential schools have



Terry LeBlanc, a Mi'kmaq/Acadian who is currently the chair of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies.



Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada

not operated since the early to mid-1990s, they left many aboriginal families—if not most—with very fractured sets of family relationships and an increasing number of dysfunctional behaviours in child-rearing and management,” LeBlanc says.

Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada, believes that a sense of balance and wholeness needs to be restored to Indigenous communities.

“There are issues of basic infrastructure, like water and housing, which are absolutely necessary [to address], but also, it’s important to remember that it was the policy of the government and many churches to disrupt Indigenous communities and families,” MacDonald says. “On one level they thought Indigenous people would die off soon, but on another level, they felt it was in the best interest of Indigenous people to assimilate as quickly as they could into the broader population.”

Indigenous communities are trying to recover from these policies, MacDonald adds. People often use words like ‘self-determination’ and ‘sovereignty,’ but MacDonald recalls hearing one elder say that what self-determination means for Indigenous peoples is that they become what God wants them to be: people who are healthy, whole and faithful.

“I don’t think that’s too far off from the agenda right now,” MacDonald says. “A lot of what [Indigenous peoples are] about is being a good dad, being a good spouse, being a faithful person [and] living out the purpose that God intended.”

One of the biggest factors that many people, including Christians, get hung up on is the issue of leadership corruption among Indigenous communities and governing bodies. While few would dispute the need for clean water and acceptable housing, reports of communities mishandling finances often lead to indifference among non-Indigenous Canadians, who might ask “why should I help them if they can’t even help themselves?”

While such views may not be entirely unfounded, MacDonald is quick to point

out, “there is great diversity from one place to another; it is difficult to characterize the whole by the grossly visible, as in Toronto right now—do all mayors smoke crack?”

“Many First Nations leaders are unapologetically and boldly Christ centred,” he adds.

To better understand issues of leadership corruption, it’s important to recognize the historical factors that have played a part.

“We are seeing the results of generations of forced and relentless disruption... To now say, as so many do, that Indigenous Peoples are solely to blame for their corruption and difficulties is, as National Chief Shawn Atleo said, like ‘breaking someone’s leg and blaming them for limping.’”

* * *

So what can Christians do to help? Steve Heinrichs believes it is important for non-Indigenous people to recognize their privilege, and that they are beneficiaries of a system that is unfair.

“We didn’t choose this way of being, but it’s what we inherited,” says Heinrichs, Director of Indigenous Relations for Mennonite Church Canada. “We need to redress the wrongs of the past because they’re still [going on]. ... This is not abstraction for native communities. This is real life.”

Many people feel a sense of paralysis or guilt surrounding these topics, Heinrichs says. Educating oneself and building relationships with Indigenous peoples are steps in the right direction.

He points to an essay by Leanne Simpson, a writer of Mississauga Nishnaabeg ancestry, titled “Liberated people, liberated lands.” In the essay—published in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry*, a collection of writing on Indigenous topics that Heinrichs edited—Simpson argues that the Canadian education system teaches children very little about Indigenous peoples.

“I hope that Canadians take it upon themselves to learn a more faithful history of this place and to teach their children to

recognize these injustices and to understand how they contribute to the colonial legacy,” Simpson writes.

“I hope that Canadians learn to acknowledge whose land they are living on, and to recognize how their presence on our land interrupts our ways of being in this world. I hope they take up the responsibility to prevent further intrusion into Indigenous lives, and, if called upon, I hope they will lend their support to various expressions of Indigenous nationhood. Ultimately, choosing to resist the colonial system means making some costly choices in mind, spirit, and body—individually and collectively—as we begin to recognize that Canadians are living on top of someone else’s home, and as we try to work out the implications of that truth.”

LeBlanc agrees, saying he is surprised at how many people have not familiarized themselves with the information from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, an initiative that seeks to inform all Canadians about the atrocities committed in the residential school system.

“It’s curious, because Christians should be concerned with truth—and certainly, given the gospels—concerned with reconciliation,” LeBlanc says. “Education beyond sound bites found in the media is key.”

MacDonald urges non-Indigenous Christians to get to know their Indigenous brothers and sisters. He notes that one of the most Christianized ethnic groups in Canada is Indigenous peoples.

“I think people would be very pleasantly surprised at the level of fellowship that’s possible, and the level of spiritual commitment they will immediately see when they meet Indigenous people,” MacDonald says. “For most Indigenous people I know—even ones struggling with chemical dependency—the dearest thing to their heart is to be a good dad [or] be a good mom. I think they appreciate and enjoy fellowship—especially with Christian people.”

* * *

Getting to know Indigenous peoples, and the education he has received from the relationships he has built, has certainly made a difference for Dan Rossi. By working alongside members of the Siksika Nation as they work to rebuild their flood-ravaged community, he has found a broader perspective on Indigenous peoples.

He has gotten to know a people who are proud of their rich heritage—people who are willing to work at the problems and issues they are faced with.

“I’ve been extremely blessed to work with amazing people,” he says. “It really opened my eyes to the resiliency of the Siksika people and changed the exposure I had from policing.”

LeBlanc cautions that solving the issues facing Indigenous communities, and working toward reconciliation, requires patience.

“As a person involved in ministry 39 years, I know in mainstream Christianity...there’s a great deal of impatience,” he says.

These problems were not created overnight, and “we’re not going to get out of it overnight,” LeBlanc says.

MacDonald adds that he is encouraged by what he sees when it comes to communication between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Christians.

“There is no situation in Canada that calls more urgently for reconciliation, and it’s not good that the church be silent on this issue,” he says. “The church should aggressively move forward to pursue an agenda of reconciliation.

“I think that’s really what our destiny in God is.”

Article courtesy of Seven magazine (originally published January/February 2014)

*Aaron Epp,
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Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada

choosing to resist the colonial system means making some costly choices in mind, spirit, and body – individually and collectively – as we begin to recognize that Canadians are living on top of someone else’s home



Respecting the Water in My Tap

*W*e humans are dependent on water. Yet we are living in an age in which fresh waters are becoming scarcer, and polluted waters more common. What would it look like if we respected and loved the waters around us? Soren Mennohawk was recently invited to speak at a conference that was engaging this topic. In his address, he invites us to ponder both Biblical and Indigenous wisdoms as we search for answers.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I'm here with those who elders to me, in age and experience. And I give thanks to you, for the wisdom and gifts you bring to the circle. I also acknowledge that we gather in Treated Territory – lands covenanted to many peoples by the Cree and Anishinaabe. I lift my hands to them.

To engage this topic of “Respect for the Waters,” I'll offer up some of the questions and stories I am currently wrestling with. I'm certainly no expert on these matters, but I pray my searching may resonate with you and spark some helpful conversation.

Every morning when I wake up, I go to the kitchen sink and release water – about a litre – into my kettle, and boil myself a cup of tea. Every morning, I do this ritual... I receive this gift. Sometimes I thank God for it – the water – but more often, I just receive, take, and drink it in.

This morning, with hot tea in hand, I opened my Bible and received a text. Mark 4...Jesus on the waters. Jesus with disciples. Lake thrashing, waters upset, disciples fearing. They are scared spitless of those chaotic waters. And Jesus, as we all know, does his thing – he commands the seas, and they stop. *He commands*. Note that. Jesus doesn't whisper peace; he doesn't silently offer the sign of the cross; he doesn't preach a gentle homily, like a St. Francis would. The text is loud and clear – he shouts an imperative to these waters – “SILENCE!” “BE STILL!”

Jesus put the lake in its place.

The story usually leaves me in awe. Yet this morning, I am forced to wonder...*does Jesus respect the waters?* They certainly obey him. *But does Christ show respect?* There is control. Yes. But is there consent? And does this relationship that the Master has with the waters...does it influence the disciples? And does it influence us, some 2000 years later? Does it move us – witting or unwitting – to silence and control and shout down the wilds of the



Jesus stills the storm



Building the Shoal Lake Aqueduct

waters around us?

Putting Bible down, I hear another water story...this one from the early 1900s. Not far from here, in Minnesota, there was a man named Ruffled Feathers, or Niski'gwun. Niski'gwun is an Anishinaabe medicine man. In his youth, Niski'gwun had visions and dreams of the "Spirit of the Water." He dreamt of smooth, quiet water, and through that dream, a relationship formed with the water's spirit. One day, Niski'gwun is travelling with his tribe when they reach a river. The water is too rough for them to cross. The waters are thrashing, the waters are upset, and Niski'gwun's friends are afraid. How will they cross? Someone in the group asks: "Does anyone know how to make peace with the Spirit of the water? Can anyone make treaty?" Niski'gwun steps forward and volunteers for the task. Grabbing some tobacco from his pouch, he strews it on the water. Niski'gwun prays and makes his

appeal. About half an hour passes, and the waters... they settle down. The waters became smooth. And the tribe is able, miraculously so, to go on their way.

The waters listened to Niski'gwun. They respected his prayer. And I wonder why? Niski'gwun didn't speak a commanding word. He didn't yell at the waters. He spoke *weak* words of peace. He whispered an appeal and offered a gift – medicine, tobacco. It wasn't control that he sought. It was consent.

It's a beautiful and disturbing story. And it makes me wonder: if this story was found in the pages of our sacred Scriptures, if this gospel was there in Mark 4, how might that affect our relationship to the waters and the wild around us? If Jesus had put tobacco on the waters, would I and my faith community relate differently to the waters that flow into our homes and cups here in Winnipeg? Would we drink the water differently? Would we be filled with a word and prayer of

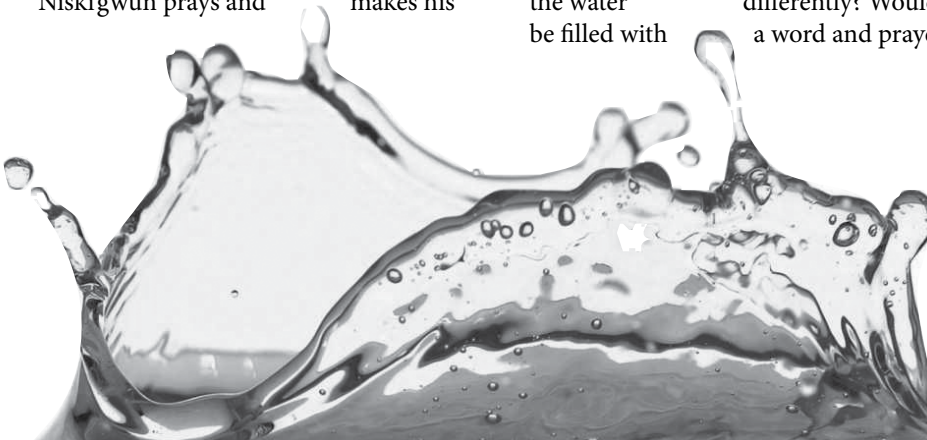
thanks, not only to the Creator, but also – dare I say – to the Spirit of the water?

The water in my tea-cup...I do thank God for. But it didn't fall from the sky (at least, the Winnipeg skies)...it's water, as you all know, that's been claimed and re-routed 140 kilometres south-east of here through a five foot wide aqueduct. *Winnipeg water isn't Winnipeg water.* 225 million litres are taken every day from the wilds of Shoal Lake to slake the thirst of our civilized urban city...60 million gallons for the hundreds of thousands of human beings, and our many industries.

We all know the story. Back in 1917, the city voted in favor of this bold feat of engineering. And so we went to Shoal Lake and expropriated the land of the First Nation that was living there to make our waterworks. We moved that inconveniently located community onto a peninsula, which was made into an island, to build the intake that feeds our needs (and wants). And that aqueduct was built on holy ground...cutting across the bones of the mothers and fathers of that land...an ancient burial ground.

Where does respect fit into this old story...and the water I drink today?

I turn on the tap and drink from the Spirit of the Water of Shoal Lake. Meanwhile, the residents of Shoal Lake have been under a boil-water advisory for the last dozen plus years. They have to haul in their drinking water from Kenora at the



cost of almost a quarter of a million dollars a year.

The water taken from Shoal Lake for the aqueduct has required artificial maintenance of lake levels. That has led to a loss of fishing and wild rice resources. In other words... our wealth is their loss. And it's not just First Nations who are suffering.... it's the fish and the plants. These fellow creatures are being oppressed too.

What might it mean to drink water in Winnipeg with respect, with love, with consent, with gifts of tobacco?

When I drink my morning tea...I want to drink it justly. But since this water doesn't come from my bioregion, I wonder if we were ever meant to have it? Yet we do have it, so what can I do to repair this broken relationship? Can I offer a gift...can I seek consent? I pay the city of Winnipeg for it. Can I offer a costly gift to the many peoples of Shoal Lake? Would that lead to respect? Would that be a prayer *and a treaty* to the Spirit of those waters?

In 2007, Indigenous peoples around the world crafted a manifesto of respect to be headed by the non-Indigenous nations of the world. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples outlines a better way for native and non-native peoples to relate to one another. In it, we read the following:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise used lands and waters.... and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard. Moreover, states shall consult with indigenous peoples in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands and waters...

This past summer, many native peoples under the banner of Idle No More gathered every Wednesday here in Winnipeg to talk, pray and act around Water issues. They invited non-native peoples to join them, and many did. This is encouraging: many mainstream Canadians are hearing the concerns raised by host peoples, peoples whose homelands are disproportionately impacted by the decisions of corporate Canada. We give thanks to those who have heard. We pray that more will hear. But I wonder if we should also pray for another kind of hearing –one that can hear, not only the human beings impacted, but the other-than-human beings...the animals, the plants, and the water?

“Shh...water is speaking.” In the western mind, that's a metaphor – a rich metaphor, but still...a metaphor. Yet for many Indigenous peoples, “water

is speaking” is something real. And for most of human experience - through some 250 000 years of homo sapien modality – that was real. Listening to nature was not a poetic re-creation, but an actuality. The rocks do cry out...and the waters will give wisdom “if we have ears to hear.”

Consider these words by a Mattole First Nation....it comes from the early 20th century:

“The water watches you and has a definite attitude, favorable or otherwise, toward you. Do not speak to rough water in a stream. Do not look at water very long for any one time, unless you have been to this spot ten times or more. Then the water there is used to you and does not mind if you're looking at it. Older men and women can talk in the presence of the water because they have been around so long that the water knows them.”

We can dismiss this as romanticism or primitivism – I confess I am tempted to do so. Our modern sensibilities laugh it off. But as David Abram says – “Even if you think it's inappropriate to attribute “soul” to water, it still inculcates a steady respect for that element, ensuring that the community will not readily violate the health of the local waters, or the vitality of the watershed.”

I wrestle with this. But my gut says



there is something right and true here that I need to learn...that I need to discover a posture of listening to the water that flows through aqueducts and pipes some 140 kilometres away into my mouth and tummy.

Allow me to close with the thoughts of Richard Atleo, a Nuu-chah-nulth scholar and traditional scientist who teaches at the University of Manitoba. In his book *Principles of Tsawalk*, Atleo says something like this:

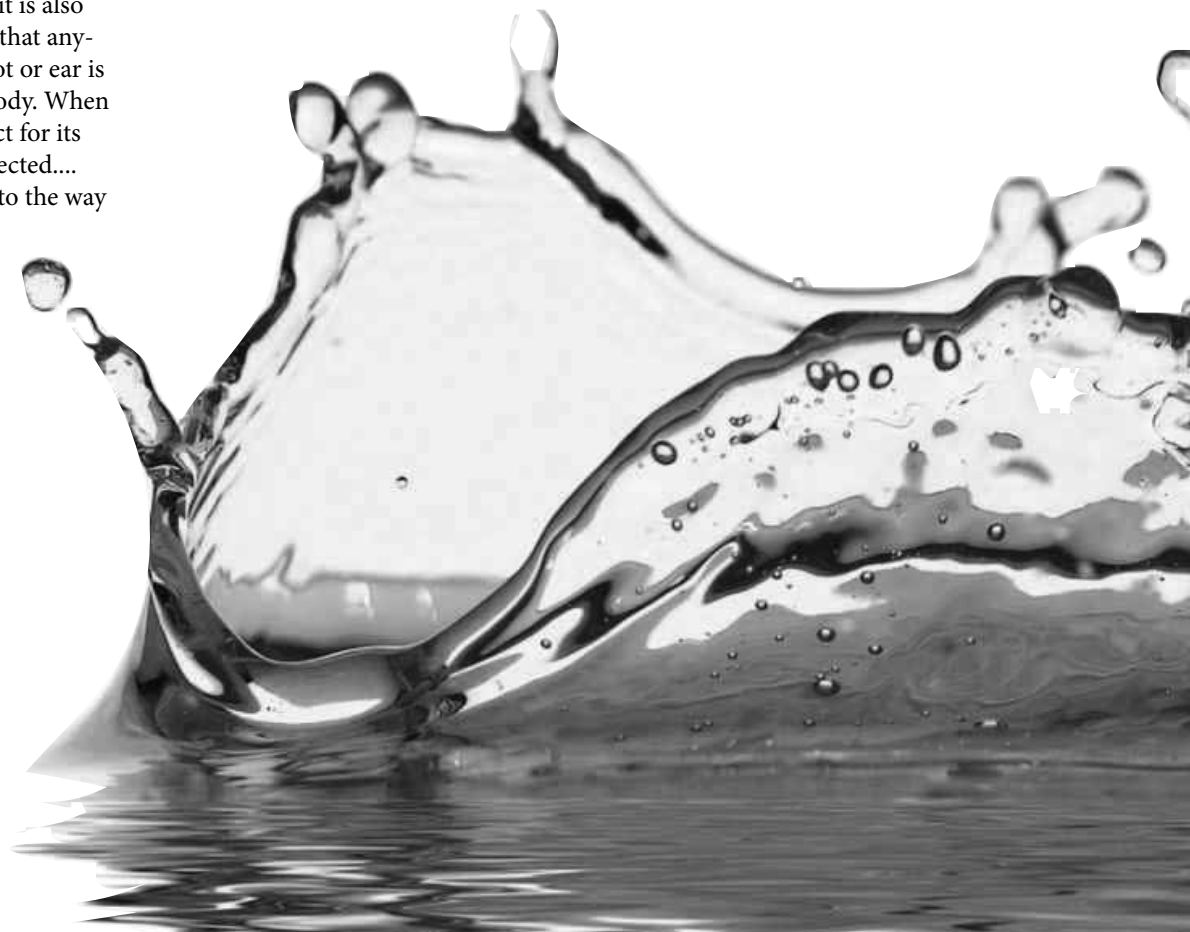
“When the Nuu-chah-nulth take down a great cedar tree to transform it into a canoe or into parts of a house, the tree is acknowledged as a person and paid much respect and honour. Although the tree is essentially a captive resource that has no power of resistance, it is nevertheless recognized as an organic and living part of a larger entity that scientists today refer to as nature. Because a tree is a member of a larger entity, what one does to it is also done to nature, in the same way that anything done to a human hand, foot or ear is also done to the entire human body. When a tree is cut down without respect for its life force, nature is negatively affected... and nature will respond in kind to the way

it is treated. If it is abused, it will “strike back.” Climate change, pollution, dying rivers, lakes and streams...this is a creation that is [not only suffering but also] actively responding to abuse suffered through violations of the principle of consent.”

Consent. Listening. Honouring. Gift-ing.

That’s what I imagine respect for the waters to entail. And I long for ways, personally, and collectively, to put bodily life to such imagining. May it be.

Soren Mennohawk

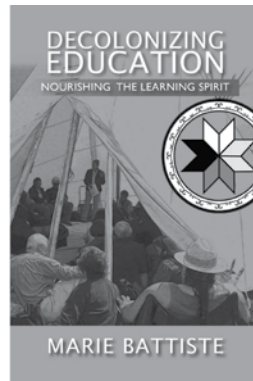


Decolonizing Education, Rediscovering Good Truths

The books that have been most influential in my life are often the ones that cause me to reconsider foundational assumptions that I carry. In Marie Battiste's most recent work, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, I have found another thinker who inspires me to this deeper level of reflection.

One of the assumptions I carry about education is that it is *good*. Perhaps, even, that it is *universally good*. In Canadian society, we see it as the key to individual and communal success. Certainly, most Canadians conceive of education as being a neutral and fair process. It is this basic assumption that Battiste convincingly challenges. Early in the book, Battiste explores the history of the early years of contact between European missionaries, explorers and the Mi'kmaq people. Through her presentation of this history, Battiste outlines how from very early on the European settlers have used education in order to control and seek the assimilation of First Nations. For the Mi'kmaq, and all other Indigenous peoples, the learning journey laid out for them by the French, English, and eventually, Canadians, became a civilizing journey where each Indigenous student was thrust into a "long and arduous journey upward, culminating in being 'them'" (31).

If we are willing to look, it is easy to see how our nation historically used education as a tool of its assimilationist agenda (especially in this time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has shone a spotlight on this matter). With this book, Battiste helps us to see the ways that this imperialist approach to education continues today in the Canadian educational system. Her writing introduced me to a new idea, that of cognitive imperialism. She argues that there is a silent curriculum at work, which assumes the superiority of a Eurocentric worldview and way of knowing. A worldview that excludes and diminishes other forms of learning and is in large part to blame for the great dispar-



Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit
 Marie Battiste
 Purich Publishing Limited
 Saskatoon, 2013
 ISBN: 9781895830774

ity in educational achievement between First Nations students and the larger Canadian population. In response to a learning context where their own traditions and cultures were continually being dismissed as irrelevant (at best), most Aboriginal students have chosen to resist with their feet by walking out the school doors, never to return (26).

While I found Battiste's analysis to be very helpful in my own learning, what I am most grateful for from this work is the vision Battiste lays out for the transformation of how we think about knowledge and learning in this country. It is this part of her work in particular that makes this a relevant read for any Canadian, not solely educators. Battiste calls for the development of a trans-systemic approach to education where Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing are held up as equals, as each having unique contributions to make to education.

Cree educator Willie Ermine suggests that the encounter between Europeans and First Nations, was an encounter between two disparate worldviews. The Eurocentric approach being focused on the outer world or the physical, while Indigenous cultures are on a path into inner space or the metaphysical (160). Both paths are needed, and it is long past time for Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing to be given their full and honoured place in Canadian society.

Battiste argues that we will all benefit from a critical engagement with Indige-

nous knowledges and traditions. I couldn't agree more. In articulating what makes Indigenous ways of knowing unique (chapter 4), one point she emphasizes is the significance of ecology for Indigenous knowing. The particularity of place is the starting point of all knowledge. And since Creation is the basis of knowledge, as a gift of the Creator, learning is always a sacred project.

In her description of a land-based knowledge passed on through the teaching of elders, ceremony, and ritual, I am struck by how much this reminds me of the Gospels. I imagine that Jesus' approach to teaching and knowledge was probably much more akin to an Indigenous approach than the dominant Western scientific framework. And this thought causes me to wonder, as I have before – "Could my Indigenous neighbours help my Christian community (of European descent) to re-discover and go deeper into our own tradition, our own truth?" We too have gotten lost in our culture's disconnection from our Creator, from the earth, from ourselves, and from one another. We too need a community of learning that honours Indigenous ways of knowing. For as Battiste reminds us, when we do justice and honour all peoples, we all find ourselves closer to healing and wholeness.

Tamara Shantz,
 Student Services Program Assistant
 Conrad Grebel University College

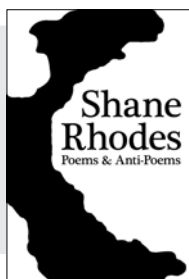
Check Against Delivery

In 2008, the Federal Government of Canada delivered an apology to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools, their families and communities. In the following, Shane Rhoads – an activist poet – reflects on the apology some five years later in the context of Idle No More protests and the efforts of big corporations to expropriate Indigenous lands to extract and transport fossil fuels. This poem is shared with the permission of Nightwood Editions, and can be found in *X: Poems and Anti-Poems* (2013).

an apology for this thing we did I stand before you now
 for what happened then it was wrong to apologize
 for having done this we won't do it again it was
 wrong we played our role it was our obligation
 it was our history so let's close the sad chapter
 of that sad book it has no place
 in our we are sorry country except
 the reserves they nous le regrettons remain the same
 the profits the land 44¢ a square mile it was fair
 back then it is nimitataynan ours and history
 mined the goldcut the trees pumped the oil
 nimirchinowesamin jailed the men we apologize
 the compensation will be coming soon except
 the women mamiattugut the poverty the budgets
 cut poisoned we apologize murdered the water
 we are
 sorry it's with the courts the departments the negotiations
 we apologize are ongoing we are so sorry



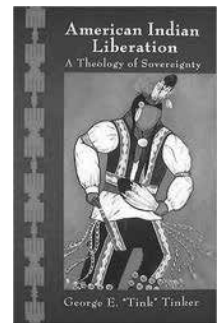
Shane Rhoads



Worship Banners:
 S. Dorothy Grills (Saagimasak - Spirit Walker) is a professional artist who offers her art to speak and collaborate in the sharing circle of life. Borrow one or the set of four for worship or educational setting - www.mennonite-church.ca/tiny/2291



American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty by George E. Tinker, Orbis Books, 2008. "Tink" Tinker of the Osage Nation describes the oppression suffered by American Indians since the arrival of European colonists, who brought a different worldview across the ocean and attempted to convert the native population to the religion they also imported. The methodology, language, and understandings of Christian beliefs of the colonists and the majority society since the colonial period have largely failed to Christianize the native population. Different conceptual frameworks and different understandings of terms made (and make) Christian doctrine particularly unappealing and at times incomprehensible to Indians. Borrow here - www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2292



To see more resources on Indigenous peoples, see <http://resources.mennonite-church.ca/Home>.

Community News

Kris Meekis-Leveque was still-born on Nov. 17, 2013 to Crystal Meekis and Chris Leveque of Winnipeg (originally Little Grand Rapids). She is survived by the parents, 5 siblings, plus a number of extended family members. A wake was held in Winnipeg with interment in Little Grand Rapids with Allan Owens officiating.

Winston Churchill Keeper Jr. of Little Grand Rapids passed away at Little Grand Rapids December 23, 2013. He was 40 years old. He was predeceased by his father Winston Churchill, survived by his wife Delvina, 5 children, mother, several sisters, many relatives and friends. He will be dearly missed by all. Interment took place at Little Grand Rapids with Allan Owens of Pauingassi officiating.

Neilson Garnette Owens of Pauingassi passed away in Pauingassi December 24, 2013 at the age of 27. He was predeceased by his mother Lorna May, brother Kenneth, and Sister Kathleen; survived by his father Lornie, two brothers, one sister, relatives and friends. His absence will be noticed by many. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owens officiating.

Michelle Owen passed away in Pauingassi January 1, 2014 at the age of 24. She is survived by her mother, three siblings, relatives and friends. She was predeceased by 2 siblings. Many will miss her. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owens officiating.

Ernest (Ernie) Eusebe Fontaine of Riverton, Manitoba passed away on Friday, February 7, 2014 at the age of 82 at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg. He was born in Pine Falls, Manitoba and moved to Riverton in 1997. The Riverton Fellowship Circle was building their church building that summer and Ernie received a plaque at the church dedication service for volunteering at the building project every day. Ernie was an important part of the congregation and he readily shared his love of singing and guitar playing and was renowned for sharing his delicious pies at fundraisers and potlucks. Ernie is survived by his sister Doris Kozub, his daughter Heather and many relatives and

Meditation

In 1885, the Canadian Colonial powers banned the traditional Indigenous practice of potlatching. Some argued that it kept Indians poor. Others said it was bound up with pagan spirituality. A number of Indigenous leaders were imprisoned in Burnaby's Oakalla prison for ignoring the ban. On April 1, 1896, Nootka Chief Maquinna published an article in the Victoria Daily Colonist, explaining the injustice of the situation. To drive home his point, he appealed to Acts 2 and the early Christians:

"They say it is the will of the Queen. The Queen knows nothing about our potlatch feasts. She must have been put up to make a law by people who know us.... The potlatch is not a pagan rite; the first Christians used to have their goods in common, as a consequence [they] must have given 'potlatches,' and now I am astonished that Christians persecute us and put us in jail for doing as the first Christians."



Chief Maquinna

44 And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything with each other, 45 selling their possessions and dividing with those in need. 46 They worshiped together regularly at the Temple each day, met in small groups in homes for Communion, and shared their meals with great joy and thankfulness, 47 praising God. The whole city was favorable to them, and each day God added to them all who were being saved.

ΔΙΓΓ·Δε 2:44-47

44, βαε ες ΔΥ·VCLJ^b PLL·ΔΔΠ·Δ^b, βαε β4 ΔCΔΓ·Δ^a VVJ·b^a VPΔJ LL·ΔΓ·Δ^b, 45, ΔPΔC·ΔΓ·Δ^b ες ΔCΔΓ·Δ^a, UVCL·Δ^b β4, ΓC^a βΔσ ΔJ ΔΓσ·9 LL·ΔCΔσΠ·Δ^b Δσ^a 4 d Δ·Δ^b ΔJ ΔU·4σ^b, 46, ΔCΔPJ^b ΔC^a PσCL·ΔΓΔΠ·Δ^b ΔβΔΔ PΓΔαΓ·ΔβΓd^x ΔC·Δσ·Δ^x VPΔJ <·9Λε^b <·9Jβε^a ΔPLL·Δ·ΔΓσ·Δ^b, ·9 VP PΓCJ·Δ^b ΔUΔ·Δ^x, 47, VPααdL·Δ^b PULσ^a, βαε β4 Δ·Δ^a ΔPΓ·α<Γ·d·Δ^b, βΠVΓ^a ες ΔPΔσ C·bPL^a ΔΔ ΔCΔPJ^b βP ALPΔΓ^a.

friends. He was a loving man and he will be sadly missed by many. Funeral services were held in Sakeeng and at the Riverton Fellowship Circle on February 14 and 15 respectively.

Nancy Mary Keeper, age 41, passed away February 8, 2014 at Pauingassi. She is survived by her parents Mike & Edna Keeper, plus 8 siblings, many relatives and friends. She was predeceased by one sister. She will be missed by many. Interment took place at Pauingassi with Allan Owens officiating.

Timothy Damien Goosehead of Bloodvein passed away February 10, 2014 at the age of 32. He is survived by his common law partner, 5 children, mother, 8 siblings, many relatives and friends. He was predeceased by his father and 4 siblings. He will be missed by many. Interment took place at Bloodvein with Riley Bear officiating.

Sorrow is a fruit. God does not make it grow on limbs too weak to bear it.

—Victor Hugo



Events

March 8, 2014 *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Canada: A National Tragedy.* (Toronto, ON.) The Church of the Redeemer's *Aboriginal Issues Working Group* marks International Women's Day with a teach-in on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.



March 27-30, 2014 *Alberta National Truth and Reconciliation Commission Event* (Edmonton, AB).

Free to the public. Come for a day, or for the full event. Come to hear survivor's of Indian Residential Schools share their truths and the paths that we can all take, together, to go forward.

April 25, 2014 *Building Bridges* (Winnipeg, MB). Justice Murray Sinclair (TRC Commissioner), "What are the Next Steps for the Church in the Path towards Reconciliation?" Special music by noted artist, Vince Fontaine.

May 2 -21, 2014 *Christian Peacemaker Team Aboriginal Justice Delegation to Treaty #3 (CPT Ontario)*

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

June 5-7, 2014 *North American Indigenous Institute for Theological Studies, 11th Annual Symposium* (Newberg, Oregon). This year's theme - "Indigenous Reality: Moving Beyond the Colonial and Post-colonial Conversation." Check out www.naiits.org for more info.



June 16-20, 23-27, 2014 Two great classes are being held at the Canadian School of Peacebuilding (Winnipeg, MB). "Indigenous Justice and Healing," with Rupert Ross; "De-Colonial Theology" with Terry Leblanc. See csop.cmu.ca for more info.

July 3-6, 2014 *Mennonite Church Canada Assembly* (Winnipeg, MB). Theme is *Wild Hope, Faith for an unknown season.*

July 28-31, 2014 *Native Mennonite Assembly* (Winnipeg, MB). Mennonite Church Canada and the Partnership Circle of Mennonite Church Manitoba, will host the first ever urban Native Assembly. Teachers, workshop leaders and musicians will help participants bend their ears to the earth, as we seek to listen to the God who speaks through land. This significant relationship

building event will take place on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. If you would like to be a part of something big next summer, please plan on coming out. We also need to raise money to support the event. If you are able to give, please call Ingrid Miller at 204-888-6781. To register or find out more, please see <http://home.mennonitechurch.ca/event/Native-Assembly2014>.

Mennonite Central Committee Maritimes partners with the Tatamagouche Centre (Nova Scotia) and the United Church Maritimes Conference to host a variety of exciting learning experiences. The following events are happening this summer:

Aug 8-10, 2014 *Mi'kmaq Basket Weaving* - Learn the traditional art of basket weaving with Mi'kmaq artist Ursula Johnson.

Aug 11-15, 2014 *Peace and Friendship: Building our Relationship Together - Annual cross-cultural gathering.* Meet Aboriginal leaders and Elders from our region, experience indigenous-led programs and learn about current issues to live out our Peace and Friendship Treaties together.

Mi'kmaq Herbal Healing

July 4 - 6, 2014
Fri 7pm - Sun 1pm at Tatamagouche Centre



Our land is our medicine.

Local Rates Available

Leadership: Judy Googoo is an Elder who has been studying and cataloguing medicines and infusing her own experiences and practices with traditional knowledge.

Learn about the traditional healing properties of plants and the cultural traditions used by the Mi'kmaq people. Create your own medicine pouch and learn remedies that have been passed on through the generations.

Program Cost: \$380 (\$225 tuition+\$155 meals/accommodations) Please register at least 2 weeks in advance. Fees cover the cost of this program only. Tatamagouche Centre ensures that it does not exploit Indigenous culture or knowledge.

For details and registration: Tatamagouche centre
1.800.218.2220 www.tatacentre.ca

EARSTO EARTH EYES to GOD

Native Assembly 2014

July 28-31, 2014 • Winnipeg, MB, Treaty 1

*"Ask the animals what they think – let them teach you...
Put your ear to the earth – learn the basics...
Isn't it clear that they all know that God is in control?"*

-Job 12:7-10

In a time of ecological concern and ongoing loss of native lands, what is our Creator saying to us? At Native Assembly 2014, we'll attend the wisdom of Job, bending our ears to earth to know God more. Over three and a half days – through music, workshops, food, and learning tours – we'll discover old and new teachings which will bring us closer to the Spirit, to each other, and to the land.

Everyone is Welcome!

Please join us for a life-giving and memorable experience as we gather together on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University.

FOR INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION
home.mennonitechurch.ca/event/NativeAssembly2014
Ingrid Miller 1-866-888-6785 ext. 136

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