

# my friends Intotemak

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*Willard Metzger, Executive Director of Mennonite Church Canada (left), joins the Honour Walkers (Brad Langendoen, Ann Heinrichs and Laurens Thiessen van Esch) and others in an expression of reconciliation at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Edmonton, March 2014. Sara Stratton/KAIROS Canada.*



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# Willing to Weep

“Christianity kills.”

I didn't like what Jim Dumont (*Onaubinisay - Walks Above the Ground*) was telling me and the other Christians in the room. We were gathered at the “Doing Theology on Occupied Land” Conference in Saskatoon, and Dumont didn't shy from speaking his understanding of the faith that many of us hold dear.

“Christianity produced a Holocaust in these lands; a holocaust on a scale like no other.”

Dumont, an Ojibway-Anishinabe of the Marten Clan (Shawanaga First Nation), described how the Church fuelled the colonial conquest of the Americas, devouring native lands and millions of native lives. And that conquest is not over (think Tar sands, fracking, hydro dams, and the ongoing dismissal of Treaty relationships by the dominant society).

The Church, Dumont contended, has some radical work to do. “Violence is not something tangential to Christianity,” he said, pointing to Deuteronomy 7 which commands God's people to annihilate the native people of the promised land. “It is at the heart of the Scriptures.” The plunder of Turtle Island is no accident. It is the result of a religion that has colonialism in its bones and soul.

I wanted to tune it all out. I love my tradition. I wanted Indigenous Christians in the room to have opportunity to share their thoughts. Surely they could challenge Dumont's critique, and help us distinguish between Christianity gone terribly bad and the Christianity that gives life?

But I asked myself, “Why am I feeling this? Am I trying to avoid the dark truths that Dumont was pointing us to? Am I trying to protect myself, and my church? And if so, from what?”

Dumont is no stranger to Christianity. He speaks from experience. He knows his Bible, has a Masters in Divinity, and at one time had thoughts about going into Church ministry. But he decided otherwise, and became a Native Studies teacher at Laurentian University. Today, Dumont is a traditional spiritual leader, the Chief of the Eastern Doorway of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge.

“Christianity kills.”

I hate hearing that. And I hear it a lot these days. And



*This Australian Aboriginal art recognizes that the Crucified is found amongst their own.*

when I look at the historical record, I can see why people say that. The Doctrine of Discovery, which justified European seizure of native lands, was an official teaching put forth by the Church in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Residential schools, stripping native communities of their children and cultures, were run by the Church for over a century. Government policies of assimilation and repression – from the Gradual Civilization Act (1857), to the ban on Indigenous spiritualities (1884) – were enthusiastically supported by Christian Canadians. Similar policies are supported by good Christians today (think First Nations Property Ownership Act, 2012).

“Christianity kills.”

The bloody history of the majority church troubles me deeply. I have friends that have left the Christian community, or contemplate doing so, as they've uncovered this colonial story and its devastating impact on Indigenous life. For them, the burden is too much to bear.

Yet I dare not shut my ears to these difficult truths, though I really want to. I need this. And I believe we all need it. My friend, Melanie Kampen, reminds me why:

“One of my elders, Adrian Jacobs (Cayuga) often speaks to groups about colonialism and Indigenous justice. The most common question White people ask him after his talks is, “What can we do?” His response: “Listen to our stories until you are reduced to a puddle of tears. Then sit there, stay there, and wait for God to resurrect you. And when God does, you will find yourself standing in solidarity, hand in hand with Native peoples.”

As we settlers listen to Indigenous peoples share their stories of crucifixion, as we weep and lament what has happened in the name of Christ and Christian progress... the healing gifts of the Creator can come - gifts that can animate understanding, anger, friendship, works of justice, and hope.

It is not easy. It hurts. Yet, together, we can listen. Together, we can hold each other and persevere with courage. Together, we can be reduced to that puddle of holy tears.

*Steve Heinrichs,  
Director, Indigenous Relations*

# Partnership not Proselytization

At the conclusion of the Edmonton National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair spoke these words, “If you thought truth was hard, wait till we get to reconciliation!”

The head of the TRC repeated the comment at a recent event sponsored by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Manitoba called “Building bridges: Next steps for the church in the reconciliation journey.” He also said other important things to the audience of several hundred.

Sinclair began by insisting that reconciliation is a process and a journey; it is not a destination. Moreover, the journey is an ongoing one, requiring fresh commitment each and every day.

Within the context of the Indian Residential School System, Sinclair insisted that the objective of reconciliation is respect – the establishment of self-respect for Aboriginal people, and mutual respect between Aboriginal people and all others. Initially, victims need to be healed. What has been lost must be found, what has been damaged must be fixed, what has been taken away must be returned.

Then he spoke directly and forthrightly about what was required of Christians and the churches. “Apologies are not enough,” he said. Apologies are important and necessary, but they must be accompanied by changed behaviour.

A key to changed behaviour, for Sinclair, is that Christians and their churches must demonstrate respect for traditional Aboriginal spirituality. Christians and their churches must acknowledge the validity of traditional Aboriginal spirituality alongside the Christian story. They must no longer insist that Christianity is the only way for all people, Sinclair insisted.

Can you do this, he asked? Can you show genuine respect for our spirituality and the way we worship? Can you engage with us as partners, rather than seeking to proselytize us?

To be clear, Sinclair did not denigrate the Christian faith. Nor did he suggest that indigenous people who identify as



*l-r: Norm Voth, Justice Murray Sinclair, Steve Heinrichs*

## A key to changed behaviour, for Sinclair, is that Christians and their churches must demonstrate respect for traditional Aboriginal spirituality.

Christian should turn away from that faith – he acknowledged his grandmother’s deeply-held Catholicism. He did imply, however, that as long as Christians and their churches do not accept traditional Aboriginal spirituality as equally valid to the Christian faith, there will be no true reconciliation in this land.

For some Mennonites, these questions are not new ones. But for others, they will be.

Judging from the lengthy standing ovation at the conclusion of Sinclair’s speech, I sensed most people at the event wanted to say YES to Sinclair’s invitation. But I also wonder if we really know what he means. We need to listen and learn much more. We need to understand much more.

We especially need to open ourselves to the kinds of deep listening and honest dialogue about spirituality that Justice Sinclair and other aboriginal people are calling for. We need to demonstrate respect for people who hold to views and spiritualities other than those of our own. That is, after all, the kind of stance to which Anabaptist leaders committed us, in their expression of reconciliation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Edmonton.

But even before that – even before we

can presume to pursue reconciliation – we as Christians in the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ tradition still have much truth-telling to do. We need to name our part in the system of residential and day schools that separated young aboriginal children from their families, language, culture and community. We need to own and take responsibility for our part in the history of colonization that continues in the present. We need to do our part to make things right.

The journey of reconciliation will no doubt be long and likely painful, and it will require renewed commitment each day. We do not know where it will lead. But it promises restoration, healing, life, peace -- and authentic partnership -- for those who commit to it. How can we not join in the journey?

*Esther Epp-Tiessen, public engagement coordinator for the Ottawa Office of Mennonite Central Committee Canada.*





## Exploring Justice Murray Sinclair's Challenge to the Church

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**Steve Heinrichs**

“Can churches make a statement acknowledging Aboriginal spirituality as a valid and equal means of worship?” According to Justice Murray Sinclair of the TRC, this is a critical step towards reconciliation. I posted Sinclair’s challenge on FaceBook and asked Indigenous Christians and settler Christians to respond - What do you think? How would you like your church to respond, and why? Here are some of the thoughts they offered up.

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Willard Metzger, Ken Warkentin, Elsie Rempel like this

### David Driedger

I think the word ‘acknowledgement’ is key here. I am not sure I want to see us give ‘theological justifications’ for the validity of Aboriginal spirituality... in the sense that I don’t want us to preserve our theology as being able to position how we understand Aboriginal spirituality.

### Kaitlyn DK

I remember a woman in one of the church listening circles in edmonton telling her story and then telling the listeners that all she was looking for was acknowledgement of the legitimacy of her spirituality. the response felt pretty inadequate. i think it’s one of those things that has to happen publicly, but also in daily interactions. make it church practice to show up at open ceremonies, for example. show respect by living respect.

### Cheryl Bear-Barnetson

Valid. In fact, Native culture is closer to the Biblical way of life than any other culture I’ve come across. It’s better to give ....share...everyone has enough... respect for elders, respect for those who are different... care for the earth....plus General Revelation: that’s the main point of Native spirituality; Creator made known through creation.

All our ceremonies, all of our ways and beliefs point straight to Jesus. Special Revelation (part two! :) where Creator is revealed perfectly through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

### Randy Woodley

The only judgement the Church should make towards Aboriginal Spirituality is to say, “based upon our historical record we are in no place to judge the validity of spirituality in another culture but based upon the light and grace of forgiveness Aboriginal people have shown, we ask you to help us find a more consistent and Christ-like spirituality.”

### Wendy Beauchemin Peterson

Semantics is everything in these discussions. If Residential schools and the whole colonial process should teach contemporary followers of Jesus anything, it should be humility. Humility about our history, about prospering on stolen land and through stolen labour and genocide; humility about our fundamental western biases and our arrogant theology. And then the conversations can begin. I admire so much the work you and your people are doing, Steve.

**Mike Hogeterp**

Thanks for sharing this Steve! & thanks all for the great thoughts so far. Yes to the humility that Wendy calls us to! That humility includes a deliberate seeking of awareness of the syncretisms and idolatries that live in the euro-christian worldview that colour my church and my faith. The history of the Doctrine of Discovery shows that some of those idolatries include a sinful presumption by some of my forebearers that non-europeans and non-christians were in-human.... a heritage of colonialism and paternalism was a result. This also means that a Gospel heritage and witness has been shrouded by idolatry and injustice. So recognizing and celebrating Creator God's revelation to our Indigenous friends is a way (to paraphrase Mark MacDonald) to have the Gospel come to North America.

**Sandra Goldsby**

I agree, humiliiy

**Sandra Goldsby**

These iPads always move before the words are completed. I was trying to write the church needs more humility towards Native people. It is time for negative thinking to stop in the church.

**Steve Heinrichs**

I find it deeply unsettling that I, and the vast majority of Christians, know little or nothing of the spiritual traditions that have graced these lands for thousands of years. Without appropriating, many of us need to go on a learning journey. How can we respect that which we do not know? Second, I am challenged by the posture of so many Indigenous friends and neighbours who readily acknowledge the Jesus-way as a valid and equal means to the Creator, yet the church (broadly speaking) does not do either in regards to traditional paths because we believe Jesus - the exalted Christ that is, not that cruciform Nazarene who walked largely on the fringes of the church and praised the faith of heretics - prevents us from doing so. Why do I feel that our dominant posture is dangerously close to religious supremacy?

**Jerry Buhler**

I think that the church needs to make the acknowledgement that Murray Sinclair is suggesting.

**Mark Bigland-Pritchard**

I feel I am just beginning to learn about the spirituality of my Indigenous neighbours. I see much there to learn from, and much to admire, and much in which I can participate. And I love working with these people. In some of them I see a deep trust in God that I find rare in the church. And yet I cannot go as far as Murray Sinclair is asking, at least at present, for two reasons:

1. I also hear stories from Indigenous friends about curses and "bad medicine" - is this part of the tradition too? (I can readily describe so much of the oppressive history of the church as "not the way of Jesus", but can Indigenous folk

do likewise with the dark side of their traditions? I don't know. I haven't asked anyone yet. Until now).

2. What do I do with Jesus' clear statement that no-one comes to the Father but through him?

Maybe when I have learnt more I will think differently.

**Cheryl Bear-Barnetson**

I don't think we have a choice but to accept Native people ...and their beliefs. Why do we feel that we are in a position to tell anyone that their religious beliefs are not as good as ours? Do we have a sense of superiority that allows us to correct the wayward ...maybe only when it comes to First Nations, not the rest of the cultural world around us. When's the last time any of us told off the Chinese restaurant for the Buddha? We, as Christians, should be the first to walk alongside of people where ever they are at and find out what God has been up to in their lives. I've learned so many things from my Native people all across the land. It takes a great humility to walk alongside. Are we ready to love that freely? It's not our job to judge, it's our job to love.

**Ramone Romero**

Somehow the words "valid and equal" suggest a posture of greater authority that gives one the right to confer legitimacy upon the lesser— much like assuming that Native nations receive their "legitimacy" through federal recognition in the U.S. Inherent in the process is this assumption of "domestic dependency"... that the Native nations can't stand in their own sovereignty; in the church parallel, the assumption seems to be that Aboriginal spirituality \*needs\* the recognition of the non-native church.

I don't think Murray Sinclair felt those things when making the statement, but instead it just goes with the territory, so to speak. The word "valid" is charged because of the church's history of assuming the authoritative position (rather than searching for the eternity that God set in the hearts of indigenous peoples).

But practically speaking, I don't think the non-native church needs to make much more of a statement than this: (1) Repentance (2) That the church did not take time or care to recognize the eternity the Creator had set in Aboriginal hearts. (#1 being the most paramount.)

Going beyond that could likely cause an upset among the conservatives because it seems to skip the conversation on syncretism and go straight to saying everything Aboriginal is ok— the non-native church needs to discuss those things in conversation and be involved in that. Saying it's all ok could cut short a conversation that needs to happen for the conservatives. Not to mention the above points of how this "affirmation" can come across after a history of teaching that legitimacy comes from white approval.

Another thing to consider is that in a real way, perhaps the last thing needed at this point is another "statement"... actions would be vastly more appreciated, I suspect, and

would communicate far more than a statement.

I don't have much experience at all with these things, but something in my heart wanted to speak when thinking about the statement and the "valid" acknowledgment. My heart just says, "It hurts." It hurts to hear any talk of valid and equal without great repentance and great acts of love, reconciliation, and efforts to form loving relationships. The paternalistic posture just hurts.

### **Adrian Jacobs**

Cheryl Bear-Barnetson it does take great "humidity" to walk along side someone, especially if you want to identify with the sweating.

### **Cheryl Bear-Barnetson**

LOL!!!! Wow....even Wendy Beauchemin Peterson (my faultless editor till now) missed that one!

### **Terry LeBlanc**

As usual, I am not noted for brevity - which generally makes posting sound bytes on FaceBook a problem - but, bear with me... It seems to me that, as with anything so historically and contemporarily charged, language and terminology is important. As has already been mentioned, "valid" connotes there is someone who has, or has assumed the right to pronounce on the acceptability of something someone else does. This is realistic and needful in some things in life like having a valid driver's license. Is it realistic in the present discussion? Centuries ago, European mission thought they had such a right. "Acknowledgement" can also lend weight to the idea that one person or group has a higher authority that they lend to the support to those of lesser authority. The idea of "Great White Father (or Mother, with the queen)" comes to mind; colonial to say the least. "Worship" is yet another term that carries charge. Is there a common understanding of what we mean by this; is there a focus of worship that is required, intended, needful, and appropriate – and one that is not?

One way of thinking I have found helpful in this discussion is to remove one element that, itself, adds a huge charge to the conversation. When we use the term spirituality as in, "Hindu spirituality," "Buddhist spirituality," "European spirituality," or "Indigenous spirituality," we add an attempt at differentiation that is both unnecessary and, it seems to me, a continuation of the core of the problem.

Some of my own assumptions must now be stated here:

- I assume there is only one creator. Therefore, there is only one "kind" of created human being – though differentiated in gender and various physical and other characteristics we might refer to using terms such as race, ethnicity etc.

- All human beings are possessed of the same spiritual nature by reason of having been created since the creator is "spirit" and has created from that essence of being.

- This same spiritual nature, irrespective of the geographical and historical location of people, reaches out to know and be known by the creator and within the rest of creation.  
- Religious behaviour (yes, contrary to what we think at times, Indigenous people engage in religious behaviour too, though it is clearly more holistic and integral in nature) is an effort to understand, be understood, live within, and/or restore harmony with our common creator. Among other things, we might call this worship. I envision it in a symbolic and pragmatic way: creator -> creation -> context -> community -> ceremony (worship).

It seems to me then, based on the above assumptions, talking about individuated/community differentiated spirituality and worship, as is assumed at the core of this conversation, not only misses the point in many respects, but also inadvertently perpetuates the historical conflicts that such conversations have themselves precipitated. It is the "my mom is bigger than your mom" kind of thinking, often expressed in taunts children used in the playground during my childhood.

Inter-religious conversation would be better served by acknowledging we are all human and all in possession of the same human spirituality; that this is differently expressed in our various religious activities – ways that we use to organize our search after transcendence, meaning, and balance in life with the spiritual reality of the Creator and creation in which we live (Acts 17:22-27 says it well) – and then share our stories about the nature of these religious expressions, their intentions and efficacy.

### **Sarah Koi**

blah blah blah

Write a comment...



# Sacred Learning, Invitation to Action: Reflections on the Edmonton TRC

Travelling down the escalator of the Conference Centre in Edmonton, I headed towards the seventh and final Truth and Reconciliation Commission National Event. There was a solemnity surrounding this journey, as emotions and memories tugged in various directions. Among them, I recalled a similar journey to Edmonton in the 1990's, attending a national Aboriginal Conference for the expressed purpose of learning more about indigenous concerns and in particular, to learn first-hand about the legacy of the Residential Schools. Intuitively, I understood that this time we'd be digging deeper into the past.

The Event began at 6:00 am with the 'Lighting of the Sacred Fire' just outside the Conference Centre overlooking the North Saskatchewan River. Alongside the fire pit stood a tee pee, where native elders gathered for prayer. By 10:00 am the ceremonies had begun, as dignitaries, including Justice Murray Sinclair and the other Commissioners, Honorary Witnesses and elders were drummed in. Justice Sinclair led with clarity of purpose, calm and quiet wisdom as nine thousand people gathered in the Centre on the first day.

Soon truth telling and listening began in various venues on the site. One-by-one, Survivors walked on stage, in the auditorium, standing room only with a TV monitor capturing every word and gesture for a global audience. It was as though the tongues of silent Survivors had become loosed as victims found their voice and claimed their memories as part of their journey towards healing their broken spirits. A collective lament breathed into the auditorium as the scars of injustice, forged by institutions and their minders, then passed along from generation to generation, were exposed. Throughout these proceedings, care providers silently walked the isles, offering water, a tissue or gesture of comfort to the grief stricken.

Miraculously for many Survivors, the lament had already shifted towards forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. The breath of the Spirit could be felt in

A collective lament breathed into the auditorium as the scars of injustice, forged by institutions and their minders, then passed along from generation to generation, were exposed.

this sacred space where the disgrace was exposed. Sadly, for others the raw pain of their experiences remained overwhelming. Listening was so intense that by dinner time I needed to withdraw into silent reflection.

On Sunday morning, the final day of the event, I arose early, planning to make my way to the Sacred Fire before the closing ceremonies commenced. Upon approaching, I was immediately greeted by an elder. He shared with me the symbolic significance of the fire, the smudging ceremony and the sweet grass; then extended an invitation to participate. He spoke about prayers to the Creator, and how people sometimes prayed for wisdom as part of the ceremony in preparation for public speaking. Together we stood in prayer.

Upon reentering the building a stranger sitting at a table greeted me. As I continued to make my way, another stranger greeted me. The woman invited me to share the breakfast she was serving: bannock, jam, and elk. What a gracious gesture, I thought. So, I joined her friend and together shared another sacred moment.

On this final day, it was time to go beyond listening, and to speak. A group of Anabaptist leaders from five Mennonite denominations had written a Statement (see page 8), and been granted permission to read it into the public record as an 'Expression of Reconciliation.' In it, we expressed "regret that at times, the Christian faith was used wrongly, as an instrument of power, not as an invitation to see how God was already at work before we came..." We acknowledged "the paternalism and racism of the past..." We repented that "our denominational encounters with Indigenous People that at times may have been motivated more by cultural biases than by the unconditional love of Jesus.

We repent(ed) of our failure to advocate for marginalized Indigenous Peoples as our faith would instruct us to...and that words without actions are not only ineffective but may also be harmful." We committed ourselves to walking with Indigenous neighbours to "listening and learning together as we journey to a healthier and more just tomorrow."

As a final gesture, we offered a hand-crafted quilt made by a group of Mennonite women in Rosemary, Alberta. It was a gift from us and our Anabaptist brothers and sisters, placed into the Bentwood Box "in memory and honour of the children who lost the security and warmth of their homes when they were taken into residential schools." Looking into the crowd, as we spoke these words was most humbling. It was an honour to be in the midst of these courageous Survivors.

Now the question for all of us is how will we take the challenges seriously and work towards building relationships?

*Hilda A. Hildebrand,  
Moderator,  
Mennonite Church Canada*



# Anabaptist Leaders offer Expression of Reconciliation

*On March 30, 2014, Canadian Anabaptist church leaders shared this statement as an expression of reconciliation during the Truth and Reconciliation Event in Edmonton, AB. Willard Metzger signed on behalf of Mennonite Church Canada.*

We are leaders of a group of Canadian Christian churches known as Anabaptist denominations. Our delegation includes Mennonite Church Canada, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, the Brethren in Christ Church of Canada, and Mennonite Central Committee Canada. Many people from our churches have come to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission events, including this one, to volunteer, to listen, to learn.

We acknowledge that we are all treaty people and that we are meeting on Treaty 6 territory, on land that is part of an historic agreement between First Nations people and newcomers, an agreement involving mutuality and respect.

Throughout the period of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission events across the country, we have watched and listened with respect, as residential school survivors have told stories with graciousness and courage, sharing experiences of the Residential School Legacy from its beginning. We are humbled to witness this Truth and Reconciliation Commission event.

As we have listened to your stories, we've added our tears to the countless tears that you have shed. We acknowledge that there was, and is, much hurt and much suffering. We have learned much and we have much to learn.

We heard the wise words of Justice Sinclair encouraging us to acknowledge that all of us, in one way or another, have been affected by the Residential School experience. We recognize that being part of a dominant culture, our attitudes and perspectives made the Residential School experience possible and that these attitudes and perspectives became entrenched in our relationships and in our culture.

We regret our part in the assimilation practice that took away language use and cultural practice, separating child from parent, parent from child, and Indigenous peoples from their culture.

We regret that, at times, the Christian faith was used, wrongly, as an instrument of power, not as an invitation to see how God was already at work before we came. We regret that some leaders within the Church abused their power and those under their authority.

We acknowledge the paternalism and racism of the past. As leaders of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ church communities, we acknowledge that we have work to do in addressing paternalism and racism both within our communities and in the broader public.

We repent of our denominational encounters with Indigenous Peoples that at times may have been motivated more by cultural biases than by the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. We repent of our failure to advocate for marginalized Indigenous Peoples as our faith would instruct us to.

We are aware that we have a long path to walk. We hope to build relationships with First Nations communities so that we can continue this learning journey and walk this path together.

We are followers of Jesus Christ, the great reconciler. We are aware that words without actions are not only ineffective but may also be harmful. We commit ourselves to take your challenges to us very seriously. We will seek to model the reconciling life and work of Jesus in seeking reconciliation with you.

We will encourage our churches to reach out in practical and loving ways, including dialogue and expressions of hospitality.

We commit ourselves to walk with you, listening and learning together as we journey to a healthier and more just tomorrow.

Thank you.

my friends Intotemak

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## EDITORS

Steve Heinrichs  
sheinrichs@mennonitechurch.ca

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Ingrid Miller  
imiller@mennonitechurch.ca

## ART DIRECTOR/DESIGNER

Carpe Diem Communications  
Tammy Sawatzky

Printed by Christian Press  
Winnipeg, MB

Please send all communications to:

### INTOTEMAK

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

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*Intotemak* translates as my clan and are people who walk in solidarity. *Intotemak* is a quarterly "zine," published by Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

## VISION HEALING & HOPE

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



# Suffering Brings Us Together

Between May 10-13, Adrian Jacobs (Cayuga) travelled with five friends – one Anishinaabe and four Mennonites – to Saskatoon to participate in “Doing Theology on Occupied Land: A Symposium on United Church of Canada Engagement with Israel/Palestine.” In this piece, Adrian reflects on the perspectives raised by the Jewish, Palestinian, and First Nation conversation partners, as well as some of the happenings along the way.

Listening to Rabbi Dow Marmur tell the story of Modern Israel reminded me of Canadian ‘official history,’ that social construct of the modern nation state legitimizing the status quo. Palestinian Raed Ayad’s familial stories of dispossession sounded much like my own Haudenosaunee experience in land conflict matters in the Caledonia, Ontario conflict of 2006. Carmen Lansdowne, Hieltsuk First Nation, summed up the work she was involved in through the World Council of Churches and the clear Palestinian advocacy evident in this.

Professor Jim Dumont, Anishnabe graduate of a United Church college, and non-Christian traditional believer, began his talk with, “You’ll either wish I spoke first or be glad I spoke last.” I wish he had spoken first. It was not until he spoke that I had the sense of grounding in the land context that I am increasingly aware of as my need. Jim spoke of a harsh genocidal Scripture, Deuteronomy 7:16, and made a very Christian-provoking conclusion, “Christianity kills.” The challenge was there also for the Jew and Muslim who embrace this as sacred text too.

My van companions, our sixteen plus hours of travel discussion, and heady conversations with our billets also enriched my appreciation of Anabaptist questions and concerns. I always come away with a profound appreciation of Mennonite commitment to a lived theology. Sometimes this lived theology is so enculturated that I think my own Haudenosaunee perspective is a challenging and appreciated perspective. I am richer for my time with friends and new friends and I hope they are too.

As an Aboriginal follower of Jesus I always find myself having to adjust to how Canadians in general and academics in particular conduct themselves. Western ei-



*Suffering, by Paula Smith Heffel*

ther/or thinking is great for debate but we Indigenous people like to hear and accept everyone’s perspective before drawing our own conclusions. The passion fires were stoked Tuesday morning after a rather mild mannered first day on Monday.

The Rabbi provoked some with his version of history. His shallow rhetorical questions that made you sound foolish if you disagreed with him sounded so familiar as a right wing political tactic in Canada and Fox News in the US. His appeal to, ‘greater injustices in the world elsewhere,’ were so dismissive of the actual Palestinian suffering that I was provoked to incredulity too. Please don’t tell those who suffer that someone somewhere is suffering more than them!

The Palestinian did not react to the version of history told by the Rabbi but continued to simply tell stories that backed his people’s plight. After so many stories though he became very impassioned and with deep emotion said, “I am tired of being told ‘I do not exist!’” This same identity struggle has been our Indigenous one here in Canada – the struggle for recognition of existence. At one time Canada in the Indian Act defined a ‘person’ as ‘anyone other than an Indian.’ We Aboriginal people are still classified with the environment in the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and North-

ern Development Canada.

Palestinian people came to Caledonia/Kanestaton to show their support in 2006. Bob Dylan writes, “Strange how people who suffer together have stronger connections than people who are most content” (©1986 Special Rider Music) in his song Brownsville Girl from the *Knocked Out Loaded* album. I heard and felt the pain of dispossession and resonated with the Palestinian story and support them in their struggle against colonial oppression.

I am so thankful for the Mennonite engagement with this issue of occupied Indigenous land in Canada and the willingness to examine their involvement and complicity with colonialism. At Six Nations Reserve in Ontario I heard Haudenosaunee elders compliment Mennonites by calling them “real people because they help one another.” When I left my work with MCC Ontario in the Aboriginal Neighbours Program I told them, “Don’t spoil or waste this good will you have with our traditional people!” This remains my hope and I am encouraged by my ongoing involvement with the Mennonite community! Nia:wen gowa (Cayuga for “thank you big time”).

*Adrian Jacobs, Keeper of the Circle Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Beausejour, MB*

# I'm tired...

*Carmen Lansdowne was a keynote speaker at the "Doing Theology on Occupied Land" conference, hosted by the United Church in Treaty 6 Territory. Carmen shared this powerful poem during one of her talks.*

I'm tired.

I'm tired of racism.

I'm tired of ignorance and the millions of well-intentioned-church-going-folk who have no desire whatsoever to understand that this land on which they live was not empty when they got here but filled with thinking communities of human beings who were brilliant and dynamic and *smart-not-savage*.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of a legacy of brokenness that is so old and fragile that to start tinkering with what's down there under layers of decomposing flesh and brittle bones will mean the house of cards that I call home for this mixed-blood identity might fall down and the little parts of me I *do* know and understand will become vagrant – ungrounded spectres floating with the souls of stolen generations.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of holding a reverent position of authority backed by a church that inherited the colonial legacy of empires past, showing up to book club meetings and in a discussion on how it might be difficult to be a mixed-race woman being told that until I 'show up to church in a buckskin dress with a feather in my hair' I'm always going to be a little white girl.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of my beloved innocently, gently, asking why my uncle, Chief Wigwixba'walkus "owns" our crest and having to answer "I don't know..." And what I really want to say is, "I don't know because until two hundred years ago my people were thriving until companies and governments intentionally infected them with smallpox and ninety-nine percent of them died and overnight we went from thirty-thousand strong to less than four hundred survivors and the missionaries helped them and they became Christians and they were happy and liberated but then the government, bent on assimilating us, and the churches, bent on 'civilizing' us stole our children and broke our families and broke our culture and never told the babies they were actually human so they grew up empty and hollow and not knowing who they were so they couldn't teach my mother and she couldn't teach me and to talk about all of that would mean we might start crying and never stop."

I'm tired.

I'm tired of being accused of being anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish because I can identify with Palestinians who had a life fundamentally changed when the British and North American governments, who had enough economic power and legal procedures to create a nation state in a "land without a people," all of a sudden found themselves non-citizens before they had time to think or respond.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of well-meaning-white-liberals who acknowledge the sins of the past as if they are disconnected from the present – who ask me (as their token educated indigenous woman) to objectify myself by standing in front of them and asking *me* for answer to *their* problems-that-*they* share-with-*us*-yet-cannot-acknowledge and "Oh, Rev... if you could remember this reflection is theological and not political... just tell us the right way to dole out charity so we can assuage our guilt and move forward" – at the same time and with the same breath they make statements about the church needing to become more self-critical about its complicity with *EMPIRE* – whatever they think *that* means.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of the citizens who walk proudly down urban streets – secure in their first world standard of living – and pass by the Drunken Indian on the corner and mutter under their disgusted breath to "get a job!" without stopping to ask him: what it felt like to be ripped from his mother's arms and be taken away in an airplane (which he'd never seen before), get sent to an isolated brick school –

cold and imposing – be stripped naked by people who spoke only English (which he didn't understand) and then have his head shaved, delousing chemicals poured over him before being handed ill-fitting institutionalized clothes and a hand-me-down-pair-of-Oxfords from the boy who just died of TB; and then who was raped repeatedly by the older boys who are being raped themselves by priests and sometimes women and then they force him to eat a raw, dead, rat – all before his sixth birthday?

I'm tired.

I'm tired of the tension between wanting to be open and hospitable and welcome to the new immigrants who leave oppressed and oppressing lives in other countries to come to the *land of the free*, knowing that Canada's (and America's) dirty little secret that they think Indians are dirty will never be aired – not in the media or public school curriculum which don't teach that Native Savages – god forbid! – had any value in the history of these great nations which promise opportunity and salvation to these newcomers who will then (rightly?) be able to say that the genocide and racism and dehumanization of the first settlers was not their doing.... And trying not to hate them for that.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of reading page after page of philosophical mental masturbation about God's will and opting for the margins and the difficulty of responsible advocacy for the descendants of black slaves (who are over-represented in prisons) and undocumented workers whose lives are shit because our governments are scared to death of what changes might happen when people with brown skin are considered legitimate human beings – and all of this thought, written and printed within the context of a society or societies which do not *ever* except for one or two lines – if that – mention the Native Americans... and even then, only as an appendage or after-thought.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of the fact that this broken history has left by baby brother so lost and lonely that he had to write a masters' thesis about himself and figuring out who he is so that he can diffuse the time bomb of junk-in-the-guts and stop himself from ripping the face off a colleague or client or both, and who has no idea how to explain what it felt like at age thirteen to receive a piece of paper that said he was now legally Indian at the same time as he has no idea how to explain to his son why, at age one and a half, his own piece of paper saying he was Indian was taken away because his mom was white and "We're sorry, but he was never really Indian to begin with."

I'm tired.

I'm tired of being the sister of the dead-older-brother who couldn't handle his life and so took it from himself – not by hanging or drugs or a gun or drowning or slicing his arms or legs – but by slowly, carefully, and intentionally strangling himself in a position where once he passed out his body weight would finish the job.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of not having a place to call my own on an island that feels like home because there are no jobs for my people there.

I'm tired.

I'm tired of everyone thinking I get my education for free while I open my bank statement that says I'm fifty thousand dollars in debt after one year of doctoral-studies-so-I-could-learn-to-write theology (because apparently indigenous people don't know how to separate the theological from the political – we're so audacious like that!).

I'm tired.

It's five a.m. and it took me an hour to write this poem, and I'm tired.

*Carmen Lansdowne, a Heiltsuk woman from the central coast of BC  
and an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada.*



# Addressing the Colonial Legacy of The Doctrine of Discovery

In a 2010 preliminary study for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, United Nations Special Rapporteur Tonya Gonnella Frichner showed conclusively that the so-called Doctrine of Discovery, institutionalized in law and policy on national and international levels over a period of hundreds of years, lies at the root of the violations of Indigenous peoples' human rights, both individual and collective. This article provides a brief overview of the history of the Doctrine of Discovery (DoD) and its effects and will note what kind of remedial measures to address the DoD's pernicious legacy are currently being proposed.

The history of western colonialism has entailed the mass expropriation of the lands, territories and resources of Indigenous peoples. Embedded within a theological and ideological framework that some have called the Framework of Dominance, the DoD offered the legal justification for centuries of virtually unlimited resource extraction from the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples. This, in turn, has resulted in the dispossession and impoverishment of Indigenous peoples and, as U.N. Special Rapporteur Gonnella Frichner has shown, is the underlying reality from which the host of problems that Indigenous peoples face today emerges.

The DoD's beginnings can be traced to the Crusader era and its conceptualizations of non-Christians as enemies of the Catholic faith and even as less than human. In his bull of 1452, Pope Nicholas directed King Alfonso V of Portugal to put these enemies of Christ into perpetual slavery and to take all their possessions and property, leading Portugal to traffic in African slaves, with Portugal expanding its domain by claiming lands along the western coast of Africa as Portuguese territory. In 1493, upon the return of Christopher Columbus and his infamous *discovery* (a not only inaccurate, but far-from innocent term) of the Americas, another papal bull was issued allowing for the control of the discovered lands and any future discoveries of Spain. A subsequent bull forbade the taking of lands already claimed by self-proclaimed "Christian lords" such as Portugal's rulers, leading to a mapped line of demarcation showing which lands would fall under Portuguese rule and which under Spanish sovereignty. This pattern of presumptuous dominance grew and developed over time, outlasting European monarchies and eventually providing the legal foundation for state-owned land and property laws in colonial states such as the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The DoD has become enshrined within the norms of international law that governs the interactions of sovereign states with one another and is used by these states to assert their authority over and their right to exploit Indigenous lands to this day.

Over the last few decades a growing number of voices, primarily those of Indigenous peoples, have called attention to the legal construct of the



*Pope Nicholas V*

DoD and its horrific effects. Several Christian denominations and organizations have been moved to adopt statements addressing the DoD and its legacy. Statements are certainly important, but must be complemented by processes that practically address the DoD's legacy for Indigenous peoples. Three to five hundred million Indigenous persons in over 72 countries continue to live with the corrosive and destructive legacies of their encounter with colonial forces.

In most Indigenous communities the effects of genocide, dispossession, forced removal from homelands and families, inter-generational trauma and racism have manifested in poverty, alcohol and drug problems, violence and other forms of social breakdown. One of the most devastating effects of colonization was changing the worldview of Indigenous peoples, who had traditionally valued women's leadership, by promoting gender-encoded hierarchies and patterns of leadership more easily controlled by colonial powers, with women's leadership in Indigenous communities suffering as a result. Indigenous communities' ways of life, identities, wellbeing, leadership structures and very existence are threatened by the continuing effects of colonial national policies, regulations and laws that attempt to force them to assimilate into majoritarian societies.

A main principle of MCC's work with Indigenous people is to work at root causes. MCC at its best seeks to address the pervasive colonizing root that continues to adversely shape Indigenous communities to this day. As a Christian organization founded by Mennonite settlers of European heritage on Indigenous land colonized by Canada and the United States, MCC is called



*Columbus' First Landing, 1492, San Salvador (1862 Di scoro Te filo Puebla Tolin)*

to take on the difficult task of exploring its own place in the colonial narrative. MCC has joined the growing number of people and organizations hoping to find ways of addressing the legacy of the DoD in practical ways, recognizing that lasting justice for Indigenous peoples requires addressing the ideological mechanisms that facilitated the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples. This task includes both the calling for Mennonites of European heritage to re-examine how their stories are intertwined with the colonial legacy of the DoD *and* the calling to join and take the lead from Indigenous peoples seeking to counter the DoD's colonial legacy and its continuing negative impact on Indigenous peoples.

Undoing the effects of the DoD construct involves at least three elements. First, healing from the legacy and trauma trail left by colonial policies and Indigenous encounters with colonizers both historical and contemporary. The Canadian Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is but one example of this type of process. MCC's organizational engagement in the TRC process as an organization has been part of the healing process.

Second, action to stop ongoing injustices from contemporary colonial seizure

of Indigenous land and resources that are justified in part by the DoD.

Lastly, de-colonizing our thinking to change patterns of how MCC operates as an organization. MCC must take direction from Indigenous communities and get resources into their hands so that they can do the work in the way that they see appropriate. This type of decolonizing action includes taking direction from Indigenous women.

The story of colonialism is centuries old. The DoD and its patterns of pervasively oppressive dominance are a part of this history. Sadly it is still with us today. However, its vastness and longevity should not deter us from taking immediate steps to undo it, even if those steps are seemingly small and difficult. Many small steps will lead to transformation as long as we keep moving forward.

*Harley Eagle,  
Co-Coordinator for Indigenous Work  
for MCC Canada and lives in Treaty 1,  
Winnipeg, MB.*

**Learn more**

James, M. Annette. *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization and Resistance*. Boston: South End Press, 1999.  
Newcomb, Steven T. *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Christian Doctrine of Discovery*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2008.

World Council of Churches Executive Committee. *Statement on the Doctrine of Discovery and Its Enduring Impact on Indigenous Peoples*. February 17, 2012. [www.dismantlingdoctrineofdiscovery.org](http://www.dismantlingdoctrineofdiscovery.org)





**OBITUARIES**

**Louise Risingsun Fisher** of Busby, Montana, passed away on February 2, 2014 at the age of 79 years. Her funeral service was held at the Busby High School gymnasium, with burial in the Fairview Cemetery, Hardin, Montana. Pastor Willis Busenitz and Scott Scheffler officiated.

Louise and her husband Floyd were very active members of the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, Montana. Louise is survived by her husband of 55 years, her children and grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a large extended family and many friends.

We mourn the loss of the following brothers and sisters; all originally from Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba. Interment for all three funerals took place at Little Grand Rapids with Allan Owens of Pauingassi officiating. They will be truly missed by their families and many friends. Our condolences go out to the families of the following:

**Edwin Leveque** was living in Winnipeg due to the need for dialysis. He passed away March 4, 2014.

**Roseanne Lee Eaglestick** of Winnipeg, passed away March 17, 2014 at the age of 23.

**Ingrid Cleo Keeper** passed away March 21, 2014 at Health Sciences Center at the age of 42.

**Sara Jane Leveque** passed away April 17, 2014 at the age of 81 years, one month after her husband passed away March 4, 2014.

**Brenda Lea** of Matheson Island, Manitoba, died suddenly and peacefully on April 8, 2014 at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg at the age of 59 years. Deteriorating health necessitated a move to Winnipeg for regular dialysis. Brenda is survived by her husband Stanford Oigg, her children, her grandson, her siblings, as well as a large extended family and many friends. The memorial service for Brenda was held in the Matheson Island Community Hall with Fred Peters officiating.

**Roselyn (Rosie) Myrna Barker Sinclair** of Hollow Water First Nation died suddenly and peacefully on May 4, 2014 at the General Hospital in Pine Falls, Manitoba at the age of 80 years. Rosie is survived by her husband Oliver, her children and her many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren and a large extended family. She was a sister to Thelma (Norman) Meade of Winnipeg. The funeral was held in Hollow Water on May 9, with Norman Meade officiating.

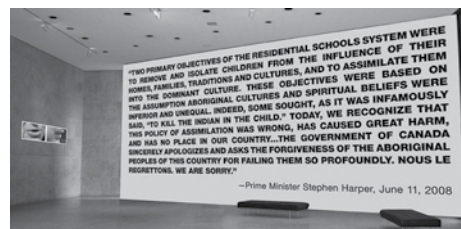
# Explore Aboriginal History and Art

The Manitoba Museum is exhibiting *We Are All Treaty People*, a new exhibit on the history of Treaties in Manitoba. A collaboration with the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba and its Commissioner James Wilson, this is the first time visitors will be able to see almost every Manitoba Treaty medal.



Exhibition runs until October 26. Read more at [manitobamuseum.ca](http://manitobamuseum.ca)

The Winnipeg Art Gallery is currently showing two Indigenous Relations exhibitions.



*We Are Sorry*, by Cathy Busby is an installation of two panels with excerpts from the 2008 apologies to Aboriginal people by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Installed until June 30.



*7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.* exhibits artwork from the groundbreaking 1970s artist collective that self organized to demand recognition as professional, contemporary artists.

The show runs until Sept 1. Admission is free to youth 18 and under until June 30.

Read more at [wag.ca](http://wag.ca)

## Special Offer!

6 *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry* books

6 study guides

6 Paths for Peacemaking



**Only \$99**

(includes shipping)

A great way to continue the conversation after the Truth and Reconciliation national gatherings have finished.

For more information, visit [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2335](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2335)

# 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](http://home.mennonitechurch.ca/event/NativeAssembly2014)  
Ingrid Miller 1-866-888-6785 ext. 136

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