DIGITAL EDITION

QUEST FOR RESPECT

THE CHURCH AND INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY

Mennonite Church Canada

QUEST FOR RESPECT

THE CHURCH AND INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY

DIGITAL EDITION
2023

Mennonite Church Canada

Attentive to the concerns of Indigenous peoples from across these lands, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has specifically summoned all churches and faith groups

> . . . in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors, schools of theology, seminaries, and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curriculum for all student clergy, and all clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right . . .
>
> (*Call to Action #60*).

In *Quest for Respect*, over 40 authors from diverse backgrounds – Indigenous and Settler, Christian and Traditional – take up this call to respect Indigenous spirituality, exploring what it might mean to Christians across North America and what it entails for relationships with host peoples and host lands.

With a firm hold on past and present colonialism, the contributors tackle key questions that the TRC's call raises: What is Indigenous spirituality, and why is it critical for Settler Christians to learn about it? What is the history of Indigenous–Christian encounter? How does spiritual abuse and violence continue today? How might we repair the damage done? And what does genuine respect really look like?

QUEST FOR RESPECT

THE CHURCH AND INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY

DIGITAL EDITION - 2023

Editor - JEFF FRIESEN & STEVE HEINRICHS
Design & Layout - MATT VEITH
Copy Editor (2016) - TIM RUNTZ
Copy Editor (2023) - ANASARA ROJAS / COMMONWORD

Cover Art:
Three Indigenous spiritual leaders – Richard Twiss, Black Elk, and Kateri Tekakwitha – are pictured surrounding a women's drum group at the Manitoba Legislature. Settlers are present, showing solidarity. A church ascends to join the conversation in respect.
IMAGES: DAN DYCK / MOSES FALCO /
MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA / PUBLIC DOMAIN

Quest for Respect was originally published in summer 2017 as a special edition of *Intotemak*, a quarterly magazine published by Mennonite Church Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations department.

Two other special editions--*Wrongs to Rights* and *Yours, Mine, Ours*--were published in 2016. With the release of *Quest for Respect*, the three special editions came to be known as and referred to as the TRC Trilogy.

In 2018, *Intotemak* was discontinued. Past issues of Intotemak are available at CommonWord. Mennonite Church Canada's Indigenous-Settler Relations office has continued to produce publications in its place, beginning with the title *Unsettling the Word* in 2018 and continuing with *Be It Resolved* in 2020.

In 2021 it became clear strong demand continued for the TRC Trilogy. Faced with the challenge and cost of managing 3 separate large order reprints, the decision was made to create digital editions for each of the 3 books. This trilogy is available from CommonWord.

Mennonite Church Canada

Indigenous-Settler Relations
c/o Mennonite Church Canada
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4
Treaty 1 Territory and Homeland of the Métis Nation
Canada

204.888.6781
1.866.888.6785

PHOTO: IRINA KLYUEV / UNSPLASH

"Painting Of Red Jacket" By Thomas Hicks (C. 1868)
IMAGE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his mind, and, if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right and we are lost. How do we know this to be true?

Brother; The Great Spirit has made us all… He has given us different complexions and different customs… why may we not conclude that He has given us a different religion according to our understanding?

SAGOYEWATHA (RED JACKET)
TO MISSIONARY REV. JACOB CRAM (c. 1805).

"Interchange" / PHOTO: DAXIS / FLICKR

The Indigenous peoples of this continent tried to teach us the value of the land, but unfortunately we could not understand them, blinded as we were by our dream of manifest destiny. Instead we were scandalized, because they insisted on living simply rather than working industriously. We desired to teach them our ways, never thinking that they could teach us theirs. Although we constantly depended on the peoples living here to guide us in establishing our settlements, we never saw ourselves as entering into a sacred land, a sacred space. We never experienced this land as they did, as a living presence not primarily to be used but to be revered and communed with.

THOMAS BERRY
1914-2009
Catholic priest, cultural historian, and eco-theologian

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This document is interactive.

Home PART 1

The **Home** button will bring you back to this Table of Contents page.

Article titles in this table of contents can be tapped/clicked to jump straight to the corresponding article.

SECTION 2: (Dis)Honouring: Stories Past And Present

SECTION 3: Re-membering Paths

SECTION 4: Return, Repair, Rebuild

EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

Editorial

Pulling the Threads of Discovery

JEFF FRIESEN is associate pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation. The chair of Friends of Shoal Lake 40, Jeff is a mobilizer–activist Settler who loves listening to jazz while hanging out with his partner Jess and son Felix.

STEVE HEINRICHS is a Settler living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation, with his partner Ann and their three children, Abby, Aiden, and Izzy. The director of Indigenous Relations for Mennonite Church Canada, Steve is keen to dialogue with congregations about decolonization and the good life it can bring.

JEFF: In June of 2015, Steve and I participated in a small delegation to Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in Treaty 3 territory (Northwestern Ontario). We had been invited to gather with residents of the First Nation as they hosted representatives from the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba, and the City of Winnipeg. Our role there was simple. We were to stand with the people of Shoal Lake as they sought to secure public funding for an all-weather road promised to them by the three levels of government; funding that wasn't to come that day.

The gathering began with ceremony. Having participated in such events in the past, beginning with an honour song, smudging, and a water ceremony was not surprising. What *was* surprising was the inclusion of a time of prayer led by a local Indigenous evangelical pastor. This added a texture to the ceremony I had not expected and, to be honest,

PHOTO: GUY MAYER / FLICKR COMMONS

I found myself in a place of discomfort. I knew how to respond to the honour song and the smudge. I had anticipated such during the 2.5-hour drive to the First Nation. Yet I had no idea how to become open to the charismatic words of the pastor. His inclusion cut across my expectations of what the day was to look like. With the smell of sage and sweetgrass swirling in my nostrils, with the taste of wild blueberries resting on my tongue, my ears were filled with praise to Jesus. I was left speechless and unsettled.

STEVE: I remember standing alongside a friend that day. Unlike you, Jeff, he was relieved to hear that Jesus prayer. It resonated deeply with his spirituality. It was the smudge and the water ceremony that made him uncomfortable. When that sage bowl and copper cup went by, you could tell he wanted to be respectful of the gifts that were being offered. There was a part of him that even longed to participate. But he just couldn't do it. You could see it on his face. There were theological concerns from his Christian tradition roiling in his heart. He needed to work through some stuff before he could participate in good conscience.

And there I am, next to him, probably a lot like other Settlers. For good or ill, I'm not trying to figure out all these big theoretical questions. I just think it's so wonderful that this Indigenous community is comfortable lifting up both Indigenous and Christian traditions, side by side. I marvel at the inclusivity and the seeming ease by which it's done. Their hospitality models something for me.

JEFF: It was right around this time that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools (TRC) released its 94 *Calls to Action*. Among the *Calls*, is a specific summons for the Church to grow in its awareness of Indigenous spirituality, to respect it, and to understand the historical and ongoing legacies of non-respect and spiritual abuse (*Call to Action #60*).

Slowly, many in our churches are coming to understand that the violence of the residential school system was not only physical, emotional, and cultural. It was also profoundly spiritual. Our presence as Settler Christians on this land has come hand in hand with a settler colonial project that sought the erasure of Indigenous spirituality and the triumph of Christianity. The TRC is asking Christians to reflect on this, to grapple with what has taken place, to contemplate how those same devastating logics may be at work today, and to find ways to repair the damage.

STEVE: This special issue of *Intotemak* seeks to open a wide-ranging conversation that can help Christians grapple with this call to "respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right." I think it's an exciting and hopeful conversation to be a part of. It's certainly not a new one. Small circles of traditional and Christian Indigenous peoples have been working at this for generations and longer, but it is a relatively fresh conversation for the majority of non-Indigenous peoples in the Church.

There's a lot that we have to learn and unlearn. The voices gathered here, from a variety of places and perspectives, offer a rich diversity of gifts that can inform, open up new ways of relating between communities, and, at the same time, affirm and celebrate the best in the traditions we carry.

JEFF: But let's make no mistake. This is also a difficult and complex conversation. We are diving into areas of uncertainty where firm understandings of what constitutes good spirituality and good practice are wrestled with and questioned. Moreover, in these exchanges, Christian Settlers will come face to face with the victims of violence perpetrated in the name of Christ. Their stories of abuse are intimately connected to some of our most cherished spiritual traditions. Is our faith strong enough to stick with the conversation when the going gets tough? Can the Church hold up to the scrutiny it may face? Are we Christians able to resist defensiveness and consider the changes that we're being asked to make?

STEVE: This is good work, but it's not easy. So Jeff and I encourage you to engage this resource with a few solid friends and neighbours in your community. This magazine is intended to assist the Church in its ongoing, collective homework of decolonizing. What follows is not an "answer" to *Call to Action #60*. It's not a firm blueprint for how to proceed. Rather, it is an attempt at faithful listening; listening to multiple perspectives on where we've come from, where we're currently at, and where we might go.

JEFF: We have divided the magazine into four sections. Feel free to engage this in a way that makes most sense to you and your circle. Some of you will

want to read it straight through. Others will need to hop around. Just note that there's a study guide at the end of the book (see pgs. 176-178) that could nurture fruitful discussion.

SECTION 1 explores what Indigenous spirituality is, its diversity and commonalities, providing us with some of the basic understandings, tools, and definitions that are needed to do this work.

SECTION 2 is more historical in scope, looking at stories from the past and present so that we can be attentive to the mixed record of Church–Indigenous encounter.

SECTION 3 consists of reflections on Indigenous spirituality *and* Settler Christianity – the "gaze" must go both ways – that are more explicitly biblical and theological. We also take time here to explore the possibilities that come with inter-religious learning.

SECTION 4 brings us home by showing us paths to common spaces, offering a few practical examples in which these conversations are being received, held, and performed in good, albeit initial, ways.

As you work through this material, Steve and I pray for you, as we pray for ourselves:

May the Spirit tend to you as words and images offered

rest on tongue, fill searching eyes, and sit with open soul.

Then let us go from there.

Angie Belzevick holds an eagle feather and burning sweet grass during a prayer circle outside the court house where convicted murderer Robert Pickton was to be sentenced in New Westminster, British Columbia (December 11, 2008).

PHOTO: ANDY CLARK / REUTERS

SECTION 1:
Indigenous Spiritualities 101

Ceremony and activism held together. Art Shegonee participates in an anti-Columbus Day rally.
PHOTO: MARIE TEETERS / MADISON ARCHIVES – S00437

Indigenous Spirituality

RARIHOKWATS is a citizen of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne, and a member of the Bear Clan. Since 1965, Rarihokwats has been working for the well-being of Indigenous peoples, advocating for justice around ongoing social, land, and treaty issues. He is the founder of *Akwesasne Notes* – at that time the largest native newspaper in the world – which he published and edited for nine years in the 1970s. Rarihokwats taught as a visiting professor at the University of Ottawa, offering courses in Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous peoples, settler colonization, decolonization, and healing reconstruction.

In the beginning, the entire universe of universes was Spirit.

Gitchemanitou. From which all Spirit comes. The Great Spirit. *Anishinabek*.

Sankoiatison. That which created everything. *Kanienkahake*.

And then Spirit took on matter. Matter created by the Great Spirit. By that which created everything.

"Everything" has spirit.

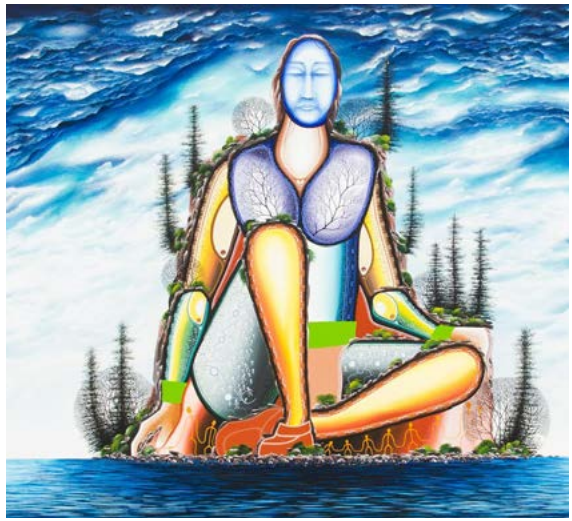
Each human being has spirit.

❁

The elders speak of the "Seventh Generation" of the seven generations of Spirit coming towards us, the ones who will ask about us, wanting to know what we did to prepare the world in which they were to arrive and live.

It is when they are conceived as human beings that the spirit takes on matter, flesh, and blood. Ahhh! That gives the spirit the opportunity to become stronger throughout that lifetime, returning later to the universe of the Spirit an improved, stronger spirit.

And that is the beginning of the struggle that confronts us throughout our lives – should we obey our material needs, or strengthen our spirit? Failure to strengthen our spirit results in a materialistic society.



"Thunder Mountain"
JAMES MISHIBINIJIMA, WIKWEMIKONG FIRST NATION
MISHMOUNTAINS.BLOGSPOT.COM

Strengthening our spirit results in a sustainable society, a world better than we found.

When that life is over, the spirit returns to the spirit world to merge into that Great Spirit, making it stronger and better than when it left. What was "me" no longer exists. I have become a memory, a spirit.

And what's it like in that "spirit world"? Who knows? No one has come back to tell us.

That is what the elders say.

❁

Indigenous spirituality is a necessary exercise that we must engage in order to have a stronger sense of our own spirit.

Many find ourselves weak. Should we fast or eat? Do the right thing or the easy thing? Get engaged in correcting injustice or go to a movie?

To strengthen our spirit, and to keep it strong, we engage in exercise. Spiritual exercise – depriving ourselves of food for a set period to strengthen our self-discipline through fasting or enduring the intense heat of the sweat lodge to gain additional knowledge.

❁

Indigenous spirituality does not attempt to define intangibles.

"What is the Creator?" Whatever made that tree, created that mountain, gave life to that bee.

"What does the Creator look like?" The elders say, "We are not capable of defining that. We can only make foolish mistakes by trying."

❁

Indigenous spirituality is tied to creation.

We were all born as Indigenous babies.

But for many, for most, the moment we were born or even before, we began to be subjected to treatment and processes which were intended to de-Indigenize us. We were trained, disciplined, developed.

For most, we grew up in environments called "cities" where almost all creatures of the natural world had been removed, destroyed, covered over, and replaced by another un-natural environment.

❁

Indigenous spirituality is not a religion.

It is a way of being. It is a way of understanding the natural world which gives us life. It is a way that guides our conduct.

It is understood differently by each living creature. Some human beings may not understand it at all. Developing that understanding is a task that is before us all and continues from birth, and maybe before death, and maybe after.

It cannot be taught. But it can be learned.

Each of us has our own obligation, if we wish to accept it. If we wish to be open to finding it.

This quest is what makes life a journey, not a destination.

❁

Indigenous spirituality is not human-centric.

In the natural world, human beings are likely the most useless of all creatures, self-centered and inconsiderate of the needs of others, obstructing natural processes, destroying natural wealth, consuming without returning.

Each creature has the task of finding its own reason for existence, finding where it fits.

That's why we keep answering the questions of others, "It's up to you." "That's a question each of us has to answer," we reply.

That's why we keep asking, "What is it that I am supposed to be doing here? What are my original instructions that I must fulfil to be a true human being?

❁

Indigenous spirituality permeates all of life.

As each creature was created, it was given an original instruction imbedded into its being – how it was to act, what its purpose was, how it was to look. The maple tree was told how to produce its sweet sap in the spring, how its leaves were to be shaped, the colours they would acquire in the autumn, how to make its seeds. The squirrel was taught how to eat its special food, how it would survive winters, how it would communicate with others. Human beings were instructed by the Creator how they were to conduct themselves in exchange for being given life. That is our first treaty.

If we honour that treaty, each of us must spend our lives trying to understand those instructions and to fulfil them. That is our original instruction.

❁

Indigenous spirituality is practiced in a variety of ways.

And because each of us is free to find our own answer, it consists of great diversity. Indigenous spirituality appreciates and encourages diversity.

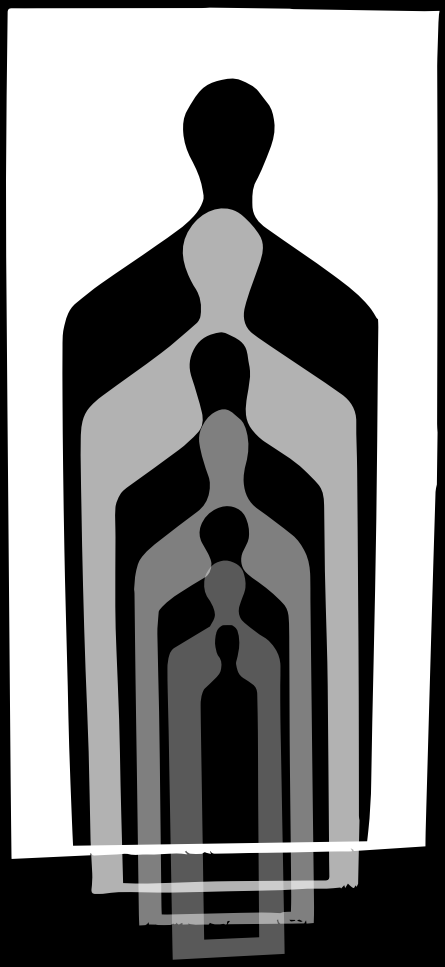
There are many discussions, and we share many ideas, but they always end with, "I really don't know . . ."

Those seeking Indigenous spirituality are both accepting of diversity and strong in rejecting any effort to impose it.

Argument is rare. In seeing or hearing of a different view or way, the normal reply is, "Isn't that interesting!" rather than, "You're wrong."

Persons asking for advice on spiritual matters, on life's decisions, are usually told only, "It's up to you."

The Navajo have a corn dance. So do the Hopi. So do the Mohawks, who do not tell the Navajo, "You're doing it wrong," but rather, "Isn't that interesting the way you do your beautiful corn dance." And the Navajo replies, "Tell me about your corn dance," and later, "Isn't that interesting!"



"Seven Generations"
ORIGINAL ART: FREDERICK FRANC
PHOTO: ELLSA / FLICKR COMMONS
REINTERPRETATION: MATT VEITH

❁

Indigenous spirituality is relational.

It is called *"kahriwiio"* by Mohawks, the "good way," while "religion" is "*kahriwiosta*" – "man-made" or artificial *kahriwiio.* Children are allowed to develop naturally, to discover *kahriwiio* by themselves. No teachers are needed. Religion, however, must be taught to each person, to every generation. *Kahriwiio* proves itself, verifies itself continuously. There is no argument. Religion must be defended and promoted.

❁

Indigenous spirituality is all about relationships, family relationships.

We become members of our family the universe: our eldest brother, the Sun. Our grandmother the Moon, the most powerful of female forces. Our cousins, the forests and lakes. Those about which we are uncertain and have to ask ourselves, "How are you related to me? How are we related to each other?"

We are born alone, we die alone, and we spend the time in between forming and maintaining relationships. For those involved in Indigenous spirituality, that includes forming relationships with trees, animals, birds, winds, sky, water, medicine plants, ants, and other bugs.

❁

Indigenous spirituality understands, is involved in, accepts, and respects the dualities of the universe.

There is life and death, day and night, hot and cold, rain and drought, male and female, happiness and sorrow, sickness and health. Matter and spirit – that is the duality within us. Understanding, accepting, and relating to the full range of all dualities is a part of our spiritual journey.

❁

Indigenous spirituality requires that we look inside ourselves to find our obligations of reciprocity.

We cannot expect others to respond to us as we would wish unless we are willing to respond to others in the same way. We appreciate those who provide us with respect, understanding, love, care, gratefulness. This means we must offer respect, understanding, love, care, and gratefulness to all our relations – human and otherwise.

This energy of relationships is governed by protocols that we learn from the world in which we live. We learn them by observing. These are protocols of respect, gratefulness, humility, and reciprocity. Picking medicine is much more than filling a bag with leaves and roots. It invokes protocols of asking for permission to enter a space which is not ours, of greeting all our relatives in that space, of informing them why we are there. We explain to a plant that we ask for its help to restore health to particular persons. We are humble, and with humility we explain to the plant that we do not have the powers that the plant has. We offer the plant a gift and a thanksgiving. We offer to protect the plant and its relatives. And we explain all this to the person who will use the medicine.

Is this playing games with our imaginations? Try it for yourself, and answer your own question.

As our children watch us in our relationships, they learn to be adults who are respectful, grateful, cooperating, caring, humble contributors, always seeking to strengthen their relationships, always fulfilling their responsibilities to be loving protectors of the natural world, which gives us life. We can be confident they will not attempt to destroy the earth and each other.

❀

Indigenous spirituality leads human beings to practice great humility, realizing that we are the most useless creatures of the creation.

Wherever we go, there are signs of destruction. We cannot grow and create food as does the corn – we can only plant the corn's seed. Instead of permitting the natural world to meet its own needs, we convert it into meeting our needs. We convert clean water into polluted water. We cannot manage our own waste.

Indigenous spirituality nurtures humility. It teaches us to be grateful for all the other creatures that contribute to our well-being, receiving precious little in return. It teaches us great thankfulness – if we can do nothing in return, at least we can be thankful. "Thank you, water, for quenching our thirst." "Thank you, plants, for providing us with the food that gives us life." "Thank you, air, for continuing to let us breathe." "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you."

If we lived in a world that still practiced Indigenous spirituality, there would be no climate change crisis. Climate change is evidence of a spiritual crisis. It is caused by a spiritual crisis.

There would be no wars based on religion.

The advances in technology would be devoted to improving life, strengthening spirit, not controlling or destroying each other.

We could drink the water in the lakes and rivers.

We would not become confused, misnaming destruction as "progress."

We have confused ourselves and our spirit with our technology, and convinced ourselves we have progressed.

❀

Indigenous spirituality. Is it anti-Christian?
Pagan? Devil-worship.
Yes, that is what some people say.
That's their view, and they are entitled to it.

But that raises questions. Doesn't scripture say that the human body is a temple of the spirit? Didn't Moses spend forty days fasting to understand the Ten Commandments? Didn't Jesus instruct his disciples to condemn the superficiality of materialism and to not worry about material needs, but to seek God's kingdom first?

Didn't "God so love the earth" – the mountains, the trees, the birds, and the insects – that he sent his only son to live here?

Didn't St. Francis of Assisi give praise to all his relatives of the earth? For "Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light"; for "Sister Moon and the stars in the heavens, You have made them bright, precious and fair"; for "Brothers Wind and Air . . . we cherish all that You have made." "Praise be You my Lord," said Francis, "through our Mother Earth who sustains and governs us." Those are words of a Christian saint who understood and practiced Indigenous spirituality.

Francis honoured "all my relations."

And there are others in the Christian tradition who also have done so.

It was through Indigenous spirituality that Moses and Joshua learned to speak to rocks (Numbers 20:8; Joshua 24:27), where "the mountains and hills burst into song before you" (Isaiah 55:12).

Indigenous spirituality knows well and knows why not a sparrow falls without the Creator knowing (Matthew 10:29).

Indigenous spirituality also appreciates the Psalms, which speak of places where "the rivers clap their hands" and "the mountains sing together" (Psalm 98:7-9) A world where humans can be taught by the birds of the air, the plants of the earth, and the fish of the sea (Psalm 148).

Isn't that interesting!

Indigenous spirituality.
These are words our ancestors understood to the very core of their Indigenous souls, the kind of world our ancestors lived in.

I would like to believe that this is the kind of world we can restore to health for the sake of our future generations, that seventh generation whose spirits are coming towards us.

If you are interested in learning more about Indigenous spirituality, look within yourself.

You will find all the answers.

St.Francis and stories from his life.

ART: GUIDO DI GRAZIANO (C. 1270) / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Respecting What We Do Not Know

DANIEL R. WILDCAT is a Yuchi member of the Muscogee Nation. He is director of the Haskell Environmental Research Studies (HERS) Center and professor of Indigenous and American Indian Studies at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us their children. We worship that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favours we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion.

- Red Jacket, Seneca chief
(c. 1750–1830)

Differences Are Important

Some years ago, I was asked to submit a chapter on American Indian religious traditions for a book about how to be a "perfect stranger" at unfamiliar religious services one might visit. The assignment was impossible for many reasons, not the least being that even an encyclopedia could not do justice to the rich variety of our First Nations "religious" traditions. The book's intentions were noble enough; the goal was to discuss etiquette. Yet the assignment, as I tried to explain to the editor, was misguided when applied to the First Peoples of this land on several fronts.

Primarily, to my way of thinking and within my own Yuchi ceremonial traditions, it would be unlikely that one would ever attend Yuchi ceremonies or a good number of other First Nation Peoples' "religious" traditions as a stranger. Such events are typically not broadcast or advertised for folks to casually drop-in and attend. Strangers would seldom be welcome or in attendance because if one were invited to attend a tribal "religious" ceremony, they would most certainly be brought by a tribal community member who knew them and with certain unique protocols and or permissions worked out in advance of a guest's attendance. In short, one would not attend a tribal ceremony as a stranger.

No doubt many world religions welcome strangers as visitors and an etiquette guide might be useful for one planning to attend a church, temple, shrine, or mosque. However, as I have learned from many of the different tribal peoples I have worked with in my 31 years at Haskell Indian Nations University – the de facto, national or, more accurately, international tribal university in North America – folks who would choose to drop in, as it were, uninvited, would in many cases be viewed as rude intruders and unwelcome strangers, regardless of their good intentions.

Of course, this flies in the face of the ecumenical character and spirit fostered within Christianity and many other world traditions. I respect those efforts and can see many positive outcomes from the promotion of such sharing. My point is that many of

The Power Place. Navajo Nation, Arizona (c. 2016). PHOTO: DANIEL JODER / USED WITH PERMISSION

the First Nations or First Peoples of this land were and are different. The differences are important and the differences speak to the heart of what respect for Indigenous "religious" traditions might actually entail.

One makes generalizations about respect and Indigenous traditions with great peril, especially traditions identified as "religious" in the Settler's language and worldview. Such generalizations must be accepted as merely that, for the defining features of what some might call "religion," when applied to First Peoples' ceremonial and customary practices of participation with/in the Sacred, are nothing if not diverse. Such generalizations have little value unless useful in producing understanding for those who are ignorant of the cultural and "religious" traditions of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, the following generalizations are offered as a way to promote understanding for those Settlers excited to learn something about respect and what that means when approaching Indigenous "religions" or spiritual practices as an outsider.

A Way of Life

Respect may not be what one thinks it is, when applied to Indigenous "religious" practices. My goal is to disabuse enthusiastic Settlers of easy assumptions they might make about what respect looks like when it comes to learning about Indigenous "religions." Even the word "religion" is problematic when applied to Indigenous traditions where we explicitly mark our participation with/in (sometimes one or the other – often both) the Sacred. Numerous scholars have puzzled over the problematic equivocation that occurs in discussions about religion between Christian Settlers and the First Peoples of this land.

Sam Deloria enjoys telling a story about taking tribal elders to testify before the US Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs for passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978). Several days were spent preparing elders to testify before the committee. Significant time was spent addressing the challenges of translation, Deloria explained, because many elders – the custodians of ceremonies, songs, prayers, and customs marking and acknowledging their participation in the Sacred – did not think of what they did as "religion." The elders understood the Settler's religion as something that came from a book whereas what they practiced was a way of life.

Of course, a US Senate hearing in Washington, DC, was a strange setting for many of the elders.

Deloria laughed as he explained what happened at the hearing. After some drawn out introductory remarks, a senator asked the first elder a simple question, "Sir, could you tell us about your religion?" After a hesitant pause the elder responded, "We don't have one," at which point Deloria said the team escorting the elders asked for a moment to clarify the question with the elder.

Deloria laughed telling the story and so did the American Indian audience at Haskell Indian Nations University. We all knew what had happened; in the nervousness of the situation, the elder forgot everything that had been explained to him the days before. He answered honestly – what he knew: his people did not have a religion like the Settlers.

Vine Deloria, Jr.
PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Power and Place produces Personality

One challenge Settlers must understand is that whereas most Christians take it as an important part of their religion to spread their religious teachings and proselytize, no such tradition exists amongst Indigenous peoples. I suspect this feature is easy for most people to respect.

Settlers must also appreciate that the degree of sharing Indigenous peoples practice varies widely when discussing their "religions" (i.e., ceremonial and customary practices of engagement and participation with what I have called the Sacred). It is perfectly reasonable in our minds that different peoples should have and likely do have different religious traditions. However, it often remains unclear to many Indigenous persons why other peoples, with their own religions, are so interested in ours. And here is where respect may get more difficult for the Settlers.

Some peoples are very open about what they do and some are very private. Why? A host of reasons, many quite complex, can explain the hesitancy to share. The easiest to address, based on past history, would be fear of misappropriation, exploitation, and misinterpretation. Little needs to be said to understand these, sadly still relevant, reasons for hesitancy. However, I am suggesting a more fundamental reason for hesitancy. Vine Deloria Jr.'s formula for American Indian ways of knowing – *power plus place equals personality* – illustrates the implicit acceptance of religious pluralism, the non-proselytizing character of Indigenous belief systems, and our Native confusion and wariness when those so intent on making us like them now say they want to understand and respect our sacred traditions (for more on this, see *Power and Place: Indian Education in America* by Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat).

Applying the logic of what I call Deloria's 3P principle – power plus place equals (produces) personality – one can begin to appreciate the bewilderment Indigenous people experienced when strangers approached them with the message that there was only one true way to pray, only one true way to relate to the Sacred. Who were these strange people who came to tell the First Peoples of this land we had it all wrong and, as Red Jacket observed two centuries earlier, wanted to quarrel about religion?

Not one of us, nor the peoples or nations we became in the symbiotic relationship of people and place, relate to power – "the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe" – in the same way. In short, the power that pervades and permeates the universe is manifested in different relationships that define our place on this planet, therefore producing our unique individual personalities and our collective cultures – especially our "religions" if understood as suggested above.

Many of us acknowledge a Creator, but the Creator and/or Creators seldom take an anthropomorphic form. Indeed, a common denominator in our Creator/creation references in our own languages is that the power(s) that made the world are decidedly non-anthropomorphic. Also, our Creator never

put us in charge of the balance of creation. We are certainly given what some call "original instructions," but the instructions often consist of responsibilities we humans must take up, including a call to honour and respect the other-than-human life with whom we share our unique place on the planet.

Creation, the gift we received, lacks an anthropocentric logic for it needs none. Indeed, our unique tribal homelands – places – in the landscapes and seascapes of this beautiful blue-green planet are the sites where our unique personalities and, most importantly, our religion emerged. In *God Is Red*, Vine Deloria, Jr. concluded,

> Tribal religions are actually complexes of attitudes, beliefs, and practices fine-tuned to harmonize with the lands on which the People live.

Consequently, our unique sacred traditions express not universal abstract messages for all of humankind to follow, but something much more modest: instructions on how to live respectfully and responsibly with relatives, human and non-human, with whom we share our homelands.

Given the diversity of our human experience in the world, Indigenous peoples who understand their religion as fundamentally experiential in character find the idea that there would be one "religion" that everyone should follow and practice, nonsense. As a generalization, I would defend the proposition that most Indigenous peoples in North America embrace a principle of religious pluralism. Different peoples should be expected to have different religions. The respect Settlers often have difficulty giving to Indigenous "religious" traditions resides in the claim many Indigenous peoples make that certain sacred practices and teaching were given specifically to us to use, and for our use only.

The point I wish to emphasize is that in order to respect First Peoples' religious traditions the Settlers/colonizers must accept the fact that *respect-as-understanding* for some First Peoples is acknowledging that for many of us there are things of a ceremonial nature that will not and cannot be shared with just anyone or everyone. One cannot respect something one does not know. One can respect that there are many things they do not know; that is widely seen as a mark of wisdom.

But can Settlers respect the right of the First Peoples of this land to keep something to themselves, even if what we keep are practices and teachings, given specifically for us, to be used for the benefit of all creation? I hope the answer is "yes," because demonstrated respect promotes trust. And as trust increases, we can have the difficult discussions – not arguments – about the power and beauty of the Sacred that surrounds all of us.

Métis Spirituality

CHANTAL FIOLA is Red River Métis and lives in Winnipeg, which is Manitoba Act (1870) and Treaty 1 (1871) territory – the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Nêhiyaw, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation. Chantal is an assistant professor in the Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies at the University of Winnipeg. Her book, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality* (University of Manitoba Press, 2015) won the Beatrice Mosionier Award for Aboriginal Writer of the Year (2016). Chantal is Midewiwin, has begun her journey as a Sundancer, and is currently leading a research study exploring Métis relationships with ceremony in Manitoba Métis communities.

"Remembering Batoche"
CHRISTI BELCOURT
(C. 2011) USED WITH PERMISSION

Boozhoo nindinawemagunidoog! Zaagaate Kwe nindizhinikaaz; biizhew nidoodem. Bezhig mide. Métis ndaaw; Chigaasinipii ndoonjibaa. Greetings relatives! I am called Rays Appearing Woman; I belong to the lynx clan. I am first degree *Midewiwin* (Grand Medicine Society). I am Red River Métis from the birthplace of the Métis Nation (southern Manitoba, especially St. Laurent). On my mom's side, we have Métis-Métis ancestry for seven generations; my dad's side is French Canadian.

I am humbled to have been asked to share my thoughts on Métis spirituality. I have learned from my Michif (Métis) family, my *Midewiwin* (Three Fires, Minwaywaygaan, Shoal Lake) and Sundance (Spruce Woods) families, from books and articles, and my own research. My experiences, knowledge, and stories reflect this.

To understand where we are, we must understand where we've been. Much is written about Métis relationships with Christianity (especially Roman Catholicism); almost nothing is written about traditional Indigenous Métis spirituality. While the Métis were historically an oral people, many of our stories were not passed down because of colonization. However, traditional Métis spirituality is now coming back into focus.

In their article "Métis Spiritualism" (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003), Darren Préfontaine, Todd Paquin, and Patrick Young say it is impossible to identify a common Métis religion or spirituality. Instead, Métis spirituality exists on a continuum from Indigenous spirituality (especially an extension of Nêhiyaw [Cree] and Anishinaabe [Saulteaux, Ojibwe] spirituality) to Christianity. Between these two poles are blends combining Indigenous and Christian spirituality to varying degrees (syncretism). To understand this continuum, let me share a bit about who we – the Métis – are as a people, our history, and how colonization impacted our spirituality.

The Métis: A People, A Nation

The Métis are a post-contact Indigenous people; we were born after white people came to the lands of our First Nations ancestors. Our family lines are mainly Nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe with French (Michif/Métis) or with English/Scottish/Icelandic ("half breeds," as they were called). Yet we are more than our ancestry; we are a distinct Indigenous people with

- a unique culture (historically, semi-nomadic bison plains),
- Indigenous languages (Michif, Bungi),
- a shared history with key events that solidified our nationhood (1816 Battle of Seven Oaks, Sayer Trial, 1869–1870 Red River Resistance, 1885 Northwest Resistance), and
- a homeland (prairie provinces and beyond).

Métis already lived where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers converge ("the Forks" in Winnipeg) when the Selkirk Settlers arrived in 1812. Here – where our Nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe relatives had been living long before us – the Métis Nation emerged.

My ancestor Bostonnais Pangman Jr. was one of two renowned bison hunters who shared bison meat with the Selkirk Settlers so they wouldn't starve during their first winter in Red River. Two years later, they arrested him for trading bison without Governor Macdonell's permission – a Settler "law" called the *Pemmican Proclamation* (1814). In 1816, tensions between Macdonell and his Hudson's Bay Company men, and the Métis erupted in the Battle of Seven Oaks – a Métis victory. Bostonnais and his wife, Marie Wewejikabawik, were one of four families that founded the Métis community of St. Laurent, Manitoba.

Foreign rule would threaten Métis livelihood again during the Red River Resistance (1869–70) when Canada sent surveyors to divide up Métis land without consulting us. Louis Riel and others stopped the surveyors, formed a government, drafted a Bill of Rights, and negotiated with Ottawa. The result was the *Manitoba Act* (1870), adopted by the Parliament of Canada. Section 31 of the *Act* set aside 1.4 million acres of land for the Métis. Before looking at other threats to Métis culture and spirituality, let's consider Métis spirituality historically.

Historic Métis Spirituality

The continuum of Métis spirituality applies historically. Factors influencing whether Métis families would follow Indigenous spirituality, Christianity, or a blend included the presence or absence of a Euro-Canadian father, location, cultural transmission during childrearing, and proximity to a white settlement, reserve, or mission.

On one end, Métis spirituality was an extension of Nêhiyaw and Anishinaabe spirituality couched in the unique Métis culture. These cultures shared similar beliefs, values, practices, and languages (Michif is composed from Nêhiyaw, Saulteaux, and French). Shared values included consensus, interconnection, reciprocity, and respect for Elders. Shared traditional practices included harvesting medicines, gift-giving, feasts, song, and dance. Shared ceremonies included sweat lodge, naming, marriage, participation in spiritual societies (*Midewiwin*, Sundance), and the clan system. The *waabizhayshii* (marten) clan adopted children born of French men and Indigenous women – among the *Anishinaabe*, the clan is passed through the father, but white people had forgotten their clan systems.

On the other end, Métis people adopted European languages, beliefs, values, and practices. Roman Catholicism arrived permanently in Red River with Fathers Joseph Provencher and Sévère Dumoulin in 1818. A priest would accompany us on our bison hunts and preach to our men, women, and children. These were known as "mobile missions." Protestantism arrived permanently in Red River with Reverend John West in 1820. Around 1821, James Evans of the Wesleyan mission developed Nêhiyaw syllabics to translate the Bible and increase conversion rates. Indigenous converts like Benjamin Sinclair, Henry Steinhauer, and William and Sophia Mason helped him. In her book, *To Evangelize the Nations* (Manitoba Culture Heritage, 1990), Martha McCarthy explains that Métis in Red River preferred mass in Saulteaux over French. Many Métis would become devout Catholics; some became priests or nuns and taught religious education to children.

Indigenous beliefs and practices were often maintained alongside Christian ones, each side influencing the other. Diane Payment explains in *The Free People* (University of Calgary Press, 2009) that the Métis often combined elements from both parent cultures' spiritualities into their own blend and had no difficulty believing in both God and the Great Spirit, miracles and divine intervention, spirit helpers and foretelling. Préfontaine, Paquin, and Young identify a number of parallels between Christianity and Indigenous spirituality including belief in God and Creator, evil and *windigo*, spiritual and physical realms, the importance of charity and working for the greater good, feasting, and being prayerful.

However, priests expected complete conversion and labelled customs like polygamy, rituals, and medicine work as "savage" or "pagan." Journals kept by Fathers Simonet, Belcourt, and Camper in Red River, for example, lamented that despite converting to Christianity, many Métis would go to church one day and *La Grande Medicine* (the *Midewiwin* lodge) the next.

Métis Spiritual Dispossession

The more European Settlers established themselves in our lands, the greater the pressures to assimilate became. Priests began forbidding Indigenous spirituality. The government encouraged such assimilation through the residential school system, which began in 1879, with the last school closing in 1996. Children were beaten for trying to hold on to their culture. Métis were admitted into these boarding schools based on a class system – the closer administrators thought you were to "Indians," the more likely you got in.

More often, Métis children attended day schools run by the same priests and nuns and suffered the same abuses and intergenerational impacts, including loss of identity, culture, language, and spirituality. My relatives went to the St. Laurent day school. My left-handed uncle's arm was tied behind his back to try to make him right-handed; he was only untied at recess and lunch. Every morning, in front of the other children, the priest blessed him and asked that the devil be removed from him. He was six years old. They were made to feel ashamed for bringing bannock and bologna sandwiches, and were taught that Michif is bastardized French. My relatives internalized this shame and passed it on; my mother stopped speaking Michif to me when I started kindergarten because she wanted me to learn "proper" French. I still feel insecure about my French.

The Sixties Scoop took over where the residential schools left off: thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families by child welfare agencies and placed in white homes where they were forced into Christianity and often abused; the intergenerational effects are similar to those from residential schools.

"The Forgotten Years" after the Northwest Resistance in Saskatchewan brought about another dark period of repression for Métis people. The *Manitoba Act* had promised 1.4 million acres of land to the Métis, but we were cheated out of this through a corrupt land allotment system known as "scrip." Many were pushed out of Manitoba and tried to create a new homeland in Saskatchewan. When our lands were threatened again, we tried to protect them in the Northwest Resistance of 1885, and the government punished us. They hung our leader, Louis Riel, and labelled us as rebels and traitors. No one hired us due to racism, and we lived in poverty along lands set aside for future roads (hence the term "Road Allowance People"). Amendments to the *Indian Act* made Indigenous ceremonies illegal from 1885 to 1951. We internalized the churches' teachings that ceremony was devil's work. Many still believe this. Some Métis pretended we were French Canadian to escape oppression. After generations, we lost much of our language, culture, spirituality, and identity.

Métis Spirituality Today

Métis people are healing from our losses, reconnecting with our culture, going back to ceremonies, and mending our relationships with our First Nations relatives. Indigenous resistance and political organizing in the early twentieth century, along with the civil rights movement, led to a rebirth of Indigenous pride and a renewal of our cultures and spiritualities.

Since 1982, the government has recognized the Métis as one of three groups of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (alongside First Nations and Inuit) with Aboriginal title and rights in section 35 of the

Constitution. The Supreme Court of Canada declared that the federal government failed when distributing the 1.4 million acres promised to the Métis (*MMF v. Canad*a, 2013) and that the federal government has jurisdiction over Métis and non-status Indians, not just status Indians (*Daniels v. Canada*, 2016). The doors are open for Métis land claims and rights like those of status Indians; similarly, we demand that our culture and spirituality be respected.[1]

While practicing ceremony is not common among Métis today, syncretism can still be seen among Métis families who honour Indigenous values, harvest and use medicines, and speak Michif. In my family, my sisters and I are the first generation who cannot speak Michif (some of my cousins can), and the third generation who cannot speak Anishinaabemowin or Nehiyâwiwin. We don't know how long we've been disconnected from ceremonies, but when I initiated as *Midewiwin*, I reconnected my family line.

The hard work of our ancestors to retain our identity, language, culture, and spirituality means that we don't have to start from scratch. We build upon their work and add our own efforts. Métis spirituality still exists on a continuum. Many of us are Christian. Some are learning to resolve the tension around following a religion brought by colonizers. Many continue to practice a blend of Christian and Indigenous spirituality. Still other Métis are finding our way back to sweat lodges, *Midewiwin*, and Sundance lodges.

1 Some people who are not descendants of the Métis Nation are claiming they are Métis to access rights; acceptance by recognized Métis Nation communities protects our identity/nation and exposes such opportunists.

Recovering Ancient Spiritual Paths

BLAIR STONECHILD is Cree-Saulteaux from the Muscowpetung First Nation in Saskatchewan. He is a residential school survivor, a long-time faculty member of First Nations University of Canada in Regina, Saskatchewan, Treaty 4 territory, and the author of many books, including *The Knowledge Seeker: Embracing Indigenous Spirituality* (University of Regina Press, 2016).

As a survivor who attended the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School for nine years, I vividly recall the endless rounds of prayer that pupils were subjected to. It started with a morning prayer upon rising, then grace before and after meals, to prayers before and after classes, rosary in the evening, and mass and confession on Sunday. At no point were any mention of elders or Indigenous spiritual beliefs or practices allowed. In fact, that was actively discouraged. I recall a large poster (called Lacombe's Ladder) in our classroom that vividly portrayed two paths: Christian converts on the road to heaven, and on the other, traditionally dressed Indians marching on the path toward eternal hellfire and suffering. One of the principle objectives of residential schools was to eradicate any understanding of traditional Indigenous beliefs and replace it with Christianity. This phenomenon is termed "spiritual abuse" by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Father Lacombe's Ladder was displayed at a number of Catholic residential schools. It showed two paths where Indigenous peoples who converted to Christ went to heaven, and those who retained their traditions went to hell.

PHOTO: MUSÉE HÉRITAGE MUSEUM / USED WITH PERMISSION

Colonization Is Suppression

As a student at McGill University, I became aware of Indigenous elders such as Ernie Benedict who had a "travelling college" trying to preserve cultural teachings. I found a non-judgmental culture and a joyful celebration of life and the gifts of the Creator. After graduating I became a professor at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (now First Nations University of Canada) and had many opportunities to listen to elders and to study more about the history of the suppression of Indigenous spirituality.

I found that the process of undermining Indigenous spirituality began well before residential schools. The conflict of spiritual beliefs, or spiritual ideologies as I prefer to describe them, already existed at the time of contact with European explorers. Initially, the Vatican – to which many European kings bowed – believed

that Indigenous peoples of the Americas were less than human and were under the influence of Satan. The first action taken by European "discoverers" who arrived on the shores of Turtle Island was the planting of a cross, the central symbol of Christian tradition. Through this action they laid claim and assumed ownership over the entirety of the land's inhabitants, animals, plants, and all other resources, the vast majority of which they had not even seen. This made sense in terms of the dominant European spiritual ideology, which believed that man was the central focus of creation and could take dominion of everything else.

These actions, however, were anathema to the Indigenous peoples, and still are. The Creator's message, as revealed through dreams, visions and sacred stories, is that all created things, even rocks, have spirit and exist for a purpose. They are therefore to be valued for their worth. These beings are gifts from the Creator to be respected as part of the web of life. When elders acknowledge "all our relations" during prayer, they speak about our kinship not only with other humans, but also with animals and plants. In addition, we humans are seen as part of creation, rather than above everything else. In fact, humans are the most dependent creature, dependent on everything else. Therefore we are to constantly thank the Creator whenever the gifts of animal or plant food are used. Because of this attitude and approach, Indigenous peoples had and continue to have intimate spiritual relationships with the land. The proof of the success of that approach is measured not in terms of the fruits of resource exploitation, but rather in the fact that animal, plant, and other resources flourish and are generally readily available.

Indigenous peoples represented the majority of the world's population up until the 1820s. Likewise, the spirituality they practiced was the most prevalent around the globe. So what happened? In North America and elsewhere, "discovery" and colonization went hand in hand. Rampant exploitation of resources was not compatible with Indigenous ideology and thus Indigenous peoples simply came to be seen as obstacles to achieving European economic, political, and military goals. The dominance of Settler society over Indigenous peoples, due more to epidemics than military conflict, led the newcomers to believe that

A major difference between Indigenous and Abrahamic spiritual traditions is the primacy of text in the latter.

PHOTO: ROBERT C / PIXABAY

"God" was on their side.

It is not difficult to see the bias against Indigenous cultures that has accompanied the development of what is often termed "civilization." The inconvenient truth, from an Indigenous perspective, is that the majority of non-Indigenous people today have a non-spiritual relationship with the land and its resources. The respectful spiritual balance that had been achieved between humans and the rest of nature was irrevocably impacted by settler colonialism. Elders believe that Indigenous spirituality is a valuable human heritage that has been almost totally lost. They feel it has ever more relevance in the modern world with its profound problems of environmental degradation, climate change, and social inequality. As part of the Truth and Reconciliation journey, Settler society's views on Indigenous spirituality need to be decolonized. This means recognition that it is a valid and viable belief system and that it deserves to flourish as much as any other belief system. Here are some reasons why.

A Holistic Belief System

In my book *The Knowledge Seeker* (University of Regina Press, 2016), I sum up basic notions of Indigenous spirituality as explained by elders. The most fundamental principle is that humans are spirit beings who have entered temporary physical existence in order to learn. On entering physical existence, the price paid is the experience of separation in space and time. This leads to the "Great Law": that humans seek appropriate and healthy relationships not only among humankind, but with all created things.

Since Indigenous spirituality recognizes the value of all creation, respect is owed to plants, animals, rocks, and the rest of the natural world. Elders teach that humans, despite thinking that we are so knowledgeable and powerful, are in fact the most vulnerable of creatures and the most reliant on all others. As such, Indigenous spirituality does not condone disrespectful exploitation of resources for profit, and does not lend itself to creating societies with glaring social inequality. This is not to say Indigenous societies were perfect utopias. Some betrayed core teachings and values. Yet most lived in relative balance.

One could regard spirituality as a higher form of intelligence. The reason why so much time was spent on prayers and ceremonies in Indigenous societies is because of the need to recognize that "spirit" is real. Amongst the four aspects of being – physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual – the latter was considered the most important. Indigenous societies not only promoted respectful relationships, they also maintained a central focus on the healing of relationships through prayer, virtuous action, and ceremonies. But history would witness the undermining of this approach.

A Practical System

This brings me to fundamental issues of dissimilarity between Indigenous spirituality and other belief systems such as Christianity. In doing so it is necessary to understand that, over time, varying civilizations have developed spiritual ideologies that differ significantly from the Indigenous approaches that were originally widespread. One of the most dramatic differences with the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – is that their belief systems have all developed around the centrality of man and the mediation of spirituality through human institutions. I recognize that discussing differences in spiritual beliefs can be a sensitive and difficult task. Yet discussing it in the spirit of dialogue and for the sake of mutual healing and reconciliation makes it easier.

Unlike the Abrahamic religions, one does not require majestic structures or an army of clergy trained in seminaries to have a well-functioning Indigenous spiritual community. A ceremony can be held in any space that is considered sacred – and these were numerous in the natural world. The elders as spiritual mentors gained their knowledge through a lifetime of prayer, fasting, and sacrifice, and earned their status by recognition of how they lived.

Elders explain that all four aspects of being must be in balance. To illustrate the importance of practicing spirituality, I often ask my students how much time they spend developing their physical skills. Certainly those pursuing athletics will spend countless hours on that endeavour. For our emotional life, we are constantly seeking contact and relationships with those who are significant in our lives. With social

media many are glued to their Facebook and Twitter accounts. In terms of intellectual development, we have spent years in school. Efforts increase exponentially for scholars who spend even more hours reading, researching, writing, and teaching. Then finally I ask my students how much time they spend on their spiritual development? In doing this I also point out that activities like attending church do not always qualify in terms of the Indigenous concept of spirituality. Indigenous spirituality is a direct interface with the Spirit through fasting, prayer, ceremonies, dreams, and visions. It is not mediated by priests, rabbis, or imams or interpreted through fixed scriptures.

What We Need Today

The many obligations of modern materialistic society present significant distractions from the nurturing of our spiritual lives. Elders maintain that the spiritual is the most important part, but it's also the most neglected in our contemporary secular society. There are great social and economic forces invested in maintaining the status quo – forces that encourage worldly goals of education, employment, wealth, and a good retirement. I've suggested that the phenomenon of European success in colonizing the Indigenous world has led to the flawed conclusion that the natural world can be dominated and exploited without consequence. Another false conclusion that settler colonialism has spread is the idea that if one has power and money, one can solve the world's problems. This leaves little room for considerations about the importance of spirituality in the lives of individuals and communities. There is increasing awareness and growing consensus, however, that humanity's current trajectory is not sustainable. The elders warn of a reckoning unless there is a change of thinking and acting. This is where the lessons of Indigenous spirituality can once again prove their value. Can we find the collective humility to learn from such ancient spiritual paths? I encourage you and your circles to try.

Together Made Whole

LYLA JUNE JOHNSTON was raised in Taos, New Mexico, and is a descaendent of Diné (Navajo), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), and European lineages. A poet, musician, educator, anthropologist and community servant, Lyla sees each poem as a prayer for all of humanity. She holds a degree in Environmental Anthropology with honors from Stanford University.

The sweat lodge door closes and the drum kicks up.
The spirits are flooding in as the water splashes the red hot rocks.
My grandmother tells me when the door closes and the womb is dark, there is no race.
We are all children of the mystery.
Red People.
Black People.
White People.
Yellow People.
All have come to dance in the sacred arbor.
When each hoop is represented, my grandmother says it is an auspicious time.
My grandmother says we all have the same colour of palm.
The colour of flesh and blood and bone.
Together we are made whole.
We look to the skies and see the many different kinds of birds roosting in the trees.

I am so glad Creator gave us so many feathers to admire.
What would the Eagle be without all the other bird sisters to take care of?
What would the world be with only pigeons?
Each colour of skin is sacred and beautiful.
Europeans: you are held to this.
Each colour of skin is sacred and beautiful.
Turtle Islanders: you are held to this.
I have been slighted by my brothers and sisters for taking a paleface into my home and feeding them.
Turtle Islanders:
your painful past does not permit you to throw the same poison back across the ocean.
Each is held to this truth.

Not Spirituality: Native Christian Theology

STEVEN CHARLESTON is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He is the former Episcopal bishop of Alaska and the author of several books, including *The Four Vision Quests of Jesus* (Morehouse, 2015).

ELAINE A. ROBINSON is professor of Christian theology and Methodist studies at Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University. She is the author and editor of several books, including *Godbearing: Evangelism Reconceived* (Pilgrim, 2006).

In 2015, Fortress Press published Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology. *This book featured chapters by a number of Indigenous scholars and community leaders. It was created by the partnership of two academic colleagues, Dr. Elaine Robinson, who is from a Settler heritage, and Bishop Steven Charleston, who is from a First Nations community. This article is their story told in their own words about why they felt it was important to work together on this project and what they believe are its most important contributions.*

Settlers Can 'Get It': Steven's Story

As a First Nations person who has been around for quite a while now, I have often heard other Indigenous people say the same thing about the Settler community: "They just don't get it."

What our people are referring to is the inability of many Settler people to grasp a deeper understanding of First Nations culture. Even though we have lived alongside one another for generations, Settlers still have trouble appreciating the values, customs, and priorities of our culture. They make assumptions about us based on their own way of doing things; they assume all people think and act alike, which basically means like them.

Given this common complaint, you can imagine how exciting it is when a First Nations person meets

'Native Colour' graffiti celebrates Indigenous tradition and beauty. STREET ART: @MEENR_ONE / PHOTO: ELLIOT BLACKBURN / FLICKR COMMONS

a Settler person and discovers to their joy: this person does get it!

That's what I felt like when I met and worked with Elaine Robinson. I am not saying that she understood absolutely everything about our culture or history. But she was open, curious, respectful, and appreciative of all that she did know, and even more importantly, she was eager to learn more.

Elaine and I met when she hired me to teach classes on Native American/First Nations Christian theology at the seminary where she was the dean. As we worked together, we came to see that we shared an interest in how Christian thought could be expressed in a positive way as it complemented and was shaped by the ancient traditions of North America's Indigenous people. We decided to create a resource that would be a constructive approach to the dialogue between the two traditions.

Elaine and I sought out Native scholars and elders from many different First Nations communities. We had men and women authors, elders and younger writers, and people from different Christian denominations and Native traditions. Together, we produced a book that is helping raise the level of awareness of Indigenous theology and Christian theology. It is called *Coming Full Circle* (Fortress Press, 2015).

The experience Elaine and I have had in putting this book together is living proof that people from Settler and First Nations communities can "get it" when it comes to learning about, respecting, and enriching one another's cultures. People from a Settler background can step beyond their assumptions and stereotypes about Native people; they can encounter a deeper appreciation for the great contribution Native scholars and community members make to Christian thought and practice; and they can learn new ways to work alongside their First Nations colleagues as the Christian faith continues to become even more multicultural.

One critical step in this learning journey is helping Settler Christians come to realize that the traditions of Native American/First Nations people in North America are not just spirituality, but theology. There is a difference. Understanding that difference is the moment when most people "get it." Transitioning intellectually from a Native spirituality to a Native theology is the paradigm shift we must encourage Settler scholars and church leaders to adopt.

To understand this difference, take a look at popular views of religion in Canada and the United States. Recent polls show that more and more people from the Settler tradition identify themselves as being "spiritual" but not "religious." In other words, they prefer the more casual nature of spirituality to the more formal nature of religion. A big part of this preference is the freedom they see in spirituality to make up their own definitions for religion. They do not have to accept any creed or bible or worship practice; they can wing it and do what they like.

This choice also explains why an increasing number of Settler people say that they like Native American spirituality. In creating their own religious definitions and practices, they often incorporate things they borrow from First Nations cultures. They look to "shamans" as their spiritual teachers; they form groups to drum together; they claim to have power animals that guide them; they create sweat lodges and vision quests for themselves.

But is this spirituality authentic? Does it really express the ancient intention of Native culture or is it simply a piece of Native culture being taken out of context and made to fit a Settler's personal need? Does this kind of cobbled-together spirituality really help Settler people to "get it" when it comes to Native people? Or is it just another instance of the stereotyping, appropriating, and demeaning of Indigenous culture?

Elaine and I created our book because we have a clear opinion to offer: the religious wisdom of North America's Indigenous people ought to be respected as a theology, not a spirituality. Or to put it another way, the ancient religious heritage of the First Nations is a heritage worthy of being honoured as North America's original covenant with God. Therefore, like the Hebrew covenant, it is a profound resource for the development of Christian theology when used in the context of true cross-cultural learning. The religious wisdom of Native people is not up for grabs as a "spirituality" that can be decontextualized and reinterpreted by any other culture or individual. It is a theology: a comprehensive, integrated, and multilayered system for expressing a knowledge of God.

Helping people "get" the difference between spirituality and theology is critical if we are to turn a corner in the religious relationship between Settler and First Nations communities. Perhaps a very rough analogy will make the distinction for us: we can say that spirituality is how we feel about God, where theology is how we think about God. Both are needed. Both are important. But as we repair the relationship between Settler and First Nations communities, we need to be careful about how we approach one another with intellectual integrity, how we share and exchange our ideas about religion, and how we become partners in developing a truly multicultural Christian theology.

In this generation, we need to be clear that Native traditions are not a quaint collection of exotic customs where Settler people can rummage around to find the bits and pieces of their own subjective spiritualties. The combined ancient wisdom of the Indigenous cultures of North America form a theological perspective that is of immense value. Native people not only help "Christianity" feel, we help it think. The intellectual contribution of Indigenous thought to the global enterprise of Christian theology is second to none. It is a treasure of theological insight to be learned, taught, and esteemed. We need to help one another see that and get it. We need to come full circle in our shared journey from spirituality to theology.

Discovering Another Testament: Elaine's Story

It's been a long journey, but I have developed a deep appreciation for the theology of First Nations peoples, in great measure thanks to the work of Steven Charleston.

I first met Steven through his essay, "The Old Testament of Native America," published in the volume, *Lift Every Voice* (Orbis, 1998). He argued that First Peoples also had an "Old Testament" given to them by God, much like the people of Israel received a First Testament that we Christians now consider our Old Testament. I wasn't sure I agreed with Steven's viewpoint. How could the traditional ways of Indigenous peoples be a Christian Testament alongside the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament? Like so many Settlers, I was shaped by harmful, Hollywood-infused views of Native peoples. They seemed almost like mythical creatures. Though we might read about them in history books and see them portrayed (unrealistically) in movies and television shows, how do they really exist today in any significant sense?

Some 10 years later, after moving to Oklahoma, I met Steven and through the movement of the Spirit, he came to teach for two years at the seminary where I served as dean. Then I began to learn from him and from the communities of Native peoples populating the state of Oklahoma. Living among them, I began to deeply appreciate the theological viewpoint Steven and others expressed.

Like Steven, I am also convinced that limiting the contributions of First Nations peoples to "spirituality" places the Settlers in a position to minimize the Native understanding of God and the human relationship to the ultimate reality. Over the centuries, from the earliest arrival of Settlers in North America, we have tried to annihilate, assimilate, or appropriate the giftedness of Native communities. When decimating the tribes failed, we created boarding schools and religious requirements that would "kill the Indian and save the man," that is, to eliminate their cultural characteristics and absorb them into the majority white culture. In recent years, following the American Indian Movement and the re-emergence of Native voices in the social, political, and religious context, many Settlers have sought to appropriate Native ways, commodifying and commercializing their spiritual practices by offering for sale sweat lodge experiences, dream catchers, drumming, and the burning of sage. Ultimately, appropriation fails miserably, as a practice is meaningless without understanding the theology from which it springs. Just as the Eucharist is largely meaningless without understanding what we believe is taking place in this ritual, so too the sweat lodge becomes little more than a sauna for individualism to seep out.

As a Christian theologian, I have come to view the theological understandings and ceremonial practices of Native peoples as a gift to Christian theology, a gift that can help us deepen our faith in God and hone our discipleship. Here I can only offer a few ways we might learn from Native Christian theology.

As Christian communities struggle today against the heights of the modern mindset, Native theology provides us with a way to be faithful to God and the life of faith by disrupting deeply held cultural realities.

- **Reality and faith are not primarily individualistic, but communal.**

  Perhaps the most difficult characteristic of Christian life today is the predisposition of church members toward society's embrace of individualism. We see the journey of faith as one in which I am saved, I become holy, I am a Christian. The emphasis is on my personal faith and salvation. But of course, the Gospel never teaches this form of individualism; Christian faith is about becoming one body and one spirit through one baptism into the one God in Jesus Christ. This is a thoroughly and inescapably communal reality, but one that is almost impossible for many Christians to grasp in a world that promotes individual gain. Native Christian theology offers us a different approach by claiming that we are inextricably connected to one another and the whole of creation from the moment our lives begin. Sin isn't viewed as an individual moral failure, but as a decision to live apart and turn away from the community. In a sense, individualism itself is sin. Were Christians to more fully embrace the community of faith, the body of Christ, as the primary reality rather than "me," our faithfulness would flourish.

- **Life cannot be possessed; it is mysterious.**

  A second characteristic of modernity infecting the Christian community is the importance placed on science, technology, reason, and evidence in order to create the good society and the good life. Yet with each scientific advance, new problems arise that need to be solved. Yes, infant mortality is greatly reduced from a century or two ago, but we also face the highest rates of childhood obesity ever known. We are able to communicate in real time to virtually every corner of the globe, but we can also deliver some of the most destructive weaponry ever to those same corners. Science and technology are always a mixed bag of good and evil. Indeed, faith is not and cannot be about scientific evidence.

  Moreover, science and technology can't keep us from our endless quest for things, to possess more and more of the earth, whether resources, land, or objects. The church is continually threatened by the human desire to possess more. Consumerism, the desire to make possessions our god, is a disease that leads even Christian theology to preach a popular "prosperity gospel." Yet science cannot save us from our insatiable desires; it cannot fully account for the endless mysteries of what constitutes a fully human, abundant life. Each birth is a miracle; each death is a mystery that does not represent the end but a new beginning. True contentment comes from relationships, not possessions. Native theology teaches us to embrace such mysteries. Life is fundamentally mysterious. We can see the presence of the divine in every living thing, including the rocks and water and the oil that sleeps under the cover of earth. In our embrace of the mysteries of God's good creation, we can learn to respect all things, to be in right relationship with them, and to see the folly of our quest to possess.

There is much more that contemporary Christians can learn from Native communities to deepen and enrich our faith in Jesus Christ. But to do so, we'll need to consciously turn away from the paths taken by our ancestors who ignored, minimized, or sought to control the Indigenous teachings that surrounded them. If we choose to learn, we will discover incredible gifts; even a First Testament to the ways of God among us.

■

Gaagii-izhi-minigowiziyang: We Were Gifted by the Creator

DARREN H. COURCHENE is a citizen of the Sagkeeng First Nation who lives and works in Winnipeg. He is currently completing a PhD in Native studies at the University of Manitoba and serves as a lecturer in Indigenous Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

Gichitwaawendaagozi Weyoosimind, gaye Wegosimind, gaye Wenizhishid-Manidoo

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is a saying adopted by Indigenous peoples of the world about the first meeting between Indigenous and non-Indigenous spiritual leaders, and it goes like this:

> When the missionaries arrived, Indigenous peoples had the land and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible.

I laughed when I first heard this and understood a truth hidden within – the history between Indigenous peoples of the world and Christianity has not always been a good one. To say otherwise is to quiet discordant voices, and that is not what I consider reconciliation.

I was raised in a Roman Catholic family and we attended mass, observed Lent, and followed meal prohibitions on holy days. My family also followed Anishinaabe-Ojibwe teachings, engaged in ceremony, and retained traditional medicinal knowledge. Now there was a time when the Roman Catholic teachings were paramount, but that has begun to change where Anishinaabe-Ojibwe teachings have become the norm. But we never forget that we have obligations to both.

Many Indigenous peoples would say, "Why follow the religion that has tried to destroy our way of life, the religion of colonization?" I admit I struggled with this very question to the point of wanting to walk away from all aspects of Christianity, questioning my long-held and family and community–instilled faith. But as you know, life happens. I entered university and enrolled in courses to satiate my curiosity of religion, and so I studied: The Bible; Biblical Myth, Legends and Folktales; and Religion and Popular Culture. In tandem I explored Indigenous spiritualities with courses such as Aboriginal and Christian Encounters; Aboriginal Sacred Narratives; and Myth, Magic, and Shamanism. "I was blind but now I see," is an apt adage for my new understanding of religion/spirituality and its role in my life.

As I understand it, Anishinaabe-Ojibwe law prohibits the sharing of stories not from the self, family, clan, community, or nation, and you must be given sanction to do so. What follows is my story of how Indigenous spirituality has engaged Christianity within my family.

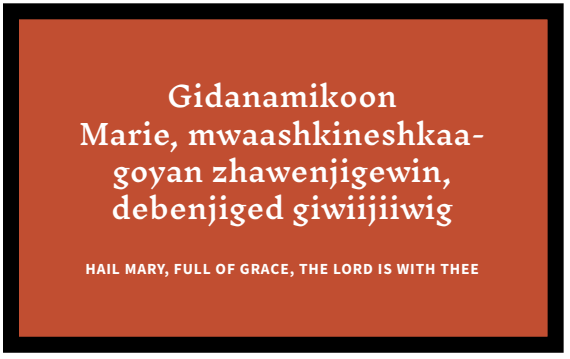
My favourite line in the Bible comes from the first chapter and verse of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." I have always

wondered, since reading it during catechism in preparation for the rite of communion, which came first – the word or the thought behind the word? I must have frustrated Sister Spence during our long summer time together with questions like this. I never did get an answer from catechism, but I did find out during Anishinaabe-Ojibwe ceremony. As I remember the teaching from ceremony: creation began with *inendamowin* (a thought), and that thought led to *mikawiwin* (awareness), which became *gikenindam* (awareness of being), and finally *ojichaagomaa* (a spirit) emerged.

Now you might think that there is some competition going on to say who knows more about the time of creation, but that is not true. In Anishinaabe-Ojibwe philosophy all creation stories are true. In response to this teaching I would think aloud many times with something like, "Isn't there one right way? Whose is right?" Like all Anishinaabe-Ojibwe teachings it takes a very long time to come to understanding. I understand "all creation stories are true" as *Gizhe-Manidoo*'s (Loving Spirit) way of gifting every people of the world a distinct way of communicating with her in other words: *gaagii-izhi-minigowiziyang* (we were gifted by the Creator).

Every summer since I was three years old until I was ten, my great-uncle Peter Guimond would share *Nanabozho* (the trickster hero of Ojibwe culture) stories with me. Stories of great deeds, mishaps, long journeys, and great change filled my mind and created a sense of wonder and awe. I listened to these stories intently and would imagine myself in *Nanabozho's* shoes. I can still hear my great-uncle's voice – the cadence, the pauses, the joy, and the urgency. The stories of *Nanabozho* were the bond we shared, and it has taken me a great deal of time to understand the aesthetic, philosophic, instructive, spiritual, and transformative nature of them.

The *gichi-mooshka'an aadizookaan* (great flood sacred narrative) is told by all peoples of the earth. The Anishinaabe story of the flood is similar to those you find in ancient Babylonian, Egyptian, or Sumerian texts and in contemporary Christian, Judaic, or Islamic scriptures. The *gichi-mooshka'an* was in response to the Anishinaabeg not following the original instructions given to them by *Gizhe-Manidoo*.



The *gichi-mooshka'an aadizookaan* has many sacred beings within. Everyone tends to view *Nanabozho* as the important character in the narrative, however I believe the one which is the most important is *Aki* (land). *Aki* hides herself and remains elusive throughout the narrative. One of the smallest and most humble of creation, *Wazhashk* (muskrat), who has survived the *gichi-mooshka'an* gives his life, and *Aki* agrees to share a part of herself to allow life to flourish again. When *Aki* accepted the gift of the *bimaadizi-bagidanaamowin* (breath of life) from *Nanabozho* she once again became an *inawemaagan*

HACHIVI EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS
2015

(relative) to *gakina-awiyaa* (everyone) and recreated a reciprocal relationship between herself and *gakina-bimaadiziwin* (all life).

The *gichi-mooshka'an aadizookaan* can be told in many situations and holds many interpretations. For example, children may hear a story about the re-creation of the world and come to understand that even with the smallest morsel of *Aki* a greater whole can be created. Adults may hear a story about the nature of *Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin* (Ojibwe knowledge) and come to understand that no matter how destructive *gigagwedibenimigonaanig* (colonialism) has been on *Anishinaabe-gikendaasowin*, it is resilient just like *Aki*. *Aki* in both of these *wiidamaagewinan* (tellings of a story) is shown to be *gaagige-bimaadiziwan* (life sustaining) and *miziwe-bimaadiziwin* (life permeating).

It has taken me many years, but I have come to understand that embedded within these *Nanabozho* stories are the principles of *nindinawemaaginidog* (relationality), *enawendiwin* (connectivity), and *waawiyewaag* (circularity). The *gichi-mooshka'an aadizookaan* is told differently in the Bible, however the teachings that flow from that rendition are much the same.

Throughout this article there have been snippets of Christian prayers in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language). My family, as I've said before, accepted responsibility for both Christian and Anishinaabe-Ojibwe teachings. My mother told me stories of her childhood and how a fear of being caught speaking Anishinaabemowin was so great that they would lock the doors at night to say the rosary in Anishinaabemowin. But this small act of fear was actually a great story of survival and resistance or *bizaanigo-bimaajiwowin* (survivance). By translating the prayers from English to Anishinaabemowin, my great-grandparents were instilling the importance of Anishinaabemowin in their children and grandchildren as well as hiding complex Anishinaabemowin terminology and Anishinaabe-Ojibwe teachings within the prayers themselves. Terms such as *debwetamowin* (belief), *gichitwaa* (sacred), and *zhawenjigewin* (grace) were hidden in plain sight for future generations to find and utilize at the right time as well as unpack the teachings held within each term.

The story of Indigenous spiritualities and Christianity is not always a pretty one. But I choose to embrace the teaching of *bizaanigo-bimaajiwowin*, which was instilled by my great-grandparents. I will "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," but I will choose in which language and spirituality to do so based on the teaching *gaagii-izhi-minigowiziyang*.

A Spirituality that Stabs Salmon

CARMEN LANSDOWNE, *Kwisa'lakw* (Woman who travels far) is a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation and an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada. A theologian and a poet, Carmen serves with First United Church Community Ministry Society in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, Coast Salish territory.

When I think about why the majority of non-Indigenous Canadians don't see or understand Indigenous spiritualities, I feel very sad. There are, I believe, a number of reasons for this situation.

- First, the history of the Canadian education system, where the colonization of this land is considered normal, unquestionable, and a point of pride, is a barrier that prevents most from seeing the spiritual impact of the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples, even before residential schools.
- Second, the majority of non-Indigenous people do not truly grasp the diversity of spiritual and cultural traditions in our country.
- Third, there is a difference between the ways in which Indigenous and Settler peoples "know," a difference that persists, despite centuries of colonization. Indigenous peoples have distinct boundaries around knowledge, inquiry, and what can and should be known as a part of spirituality.

But first, a poem.

Crafted some years ago, these words reflect my personal experience, theology, and Heiltsuk identity. They also speak to the failure of Settler peoples to appreciate living Indigenous spirituality.

Heiltsuk Tribal Canoe Journey during the Qatuwas Festival (c. 2014)
PHOTO: KRIS KRUG / FLICKR COMMONS

Bleeding The Dogs

Memories pop up in the oddest places:
Laundromat. Oakland, California.
I am reading Tink Tinker's latest
book American Indian Liberation:
A Theology of Sovereignty.
I am grateful to those who have
walked this path before me –
whose chorus of voices I join.
He is writing about how cultural
anthropology dismisses many
of our First Nations practices as
animism and he says,
"but Indian people know (this is
not a mere "belief" among us) that
everything around us in the created
world has its own life and thus is
marked by a particular spirit."

Flashback to Summer 2004:
I'm finished my first year of
theological training.
I'm working as a cook and running
the hydraulic winch on my
parents' 75-foot purse seiner.
We are fishing salmon.
Salmon are the food of my people.
We are in the traditional Heiltsuk territory.
Even though I'm on this big wooden
diesel-powered boat with two bathrooms
and a satellite phone,
I'm doing what my people have
done for the at least 10,000 years
we can prove we've been here.
I am bleeding dogs.
What does this have to do with fishing,
you ask?
Let me tell you, greenhorn.
On the Pacific Coast we have five
species of salmon.
Sockeye or Red – "moneyfish."
Pink/humpy/humpback silver.
King. Tyee. Spring. Smiley.
Coho – the sportsfishing prize fighter.
And Chum. Dog Salmon.
Dogs are used for the smoked
salmon that line the tourist shops
of Robson Street – gleaming plastic
vacuum sealed packets of
BC goodness.
They are also used for their roe –
Ikura in Japanese.
They are strong, big fish,
but beautifully fragile in
ways I care not to express here –
but let me just say to you, Department
of Fisheries and Oceans, you break
my heart when you force me to
treat them like coho and throw
them back and I watch them sink
to the bottom of the ocean,
wasted deaths.
Anyways, greenhorn – did you
know that salmon bruise?
Well they do.
And this doesn't make for very
pretty packaged take home goodies
for visitors to British Columbia –
Gordon Campbell's "Best Place on Earth."
So what we do is stab them through
the gills, causing them to bleed
to death, but lessening the
bruising that happens when they
are transported and processed
wholesale.
Savage, I know.
So back to my memory:
I'm kneeling on the deck of our boat.
Sharp knife in hand.
Covered in fish slime and hot,
stinging jellyfish.
Blood spatters on my face and arms.
I stab each one before I push it
down the hatch.
I giggle, in the messiness of this
hard physical labour,
remembering the comment of
my adopted brother Rick who has
worked for my parents my whole
life – "What if they could all scream?"
The noise the knife makes as
I push through the gill cover
sounds almost like pushing
a knife through cardboard.
This sound becomes a ritual.

And I begin to pray.
I am transformed, transported,
held by the spirits of the old
ones who went here before me.
Full of gratitude for this life
on the water, I thank each
one of these big, beautiful
Silver Brights.
I thank them for my food.
I thank them for giving their lives to us.
I thank them for the jobs they provide.
I thank them for my education –
for a livelihood that means I
haven't had student loans (yet).
And I know I join the chorus
of Indigenous angels when I do this.
Those who judge the commercial
fishing industry may not understand,
but I loved and appreciated the
life of every salmon I took that
summer. They are part of who
I am.
Can you, vegetarian feminist
scholar, say that about the
parsnips you'll eat this fall?
You may argue for food
security, food sustainability,
for local farmers' rights . . .
But can you say you loved
your food from the earth to
your place as you claim to
identify with how romanticized
Indians "care for the environment?"
I somehow cannot imagine it.
And so I am grateful for who
God made me. For how
God made me. For the
hymns or sacred stories of
how our people came to exist.
And I am grateful for bleeding
the dogs.

Differences Among Us

I feel like this poem expresses so much of what grieves me about the impact of European settlement on our lands. It's as if that one brief moment out on the ocean in my parent's seiner – a spiritual experience – linked me to the past practices of our people in a way I could never have intended, but really did make me have my Simba-like "circle of life" moment. For whatever reason, in that brief, fleeting instant, God saw fit for me to truly experience the interconnectedness that was such an entrenched part of our traditional spiritualities. Yet you can't force those moments. And you can't expect that Indigenous peoples, who have faced assaults on every aspect of our ways of life for five hundred years, would be able to hold on to that in a way that is tangible to us, let alone perceptible to you. (But I believe it is this experience of interconnectedness that lies behind our fights for sovereignty).

There is enough science to prove that trauma and memory can be passed on through generations. We tend to see that most clearly in the descendants of residential school survivors and the '60s Scoop. But I believe that we also have moments of grace where those connections to our old ways are remembered in our bodies and spirits, even though we may not anticipate or understand it. And sometimes those moments pass us by and we miss them and still cannot explain how we are different or what our spirituality really means in practice. Which brings me to my next point.

It has been my experience that those non-Indigenous folks who are interested in "Indigenous spirituality" have a preconceived idea of what that means. Anything that doesn't fit into that preconceived idea becomes harder to see. It is like Western folks who truly believe (they are out there – I've met them) that Buddhism is the only global religion that has not perpetuated violence in its own name. But you only need to visit Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) to know that Buddhism is co-opted for violence there just as Christianity is here or Islam is in the Middle East. It's hard to see it when you have already made up your mind about what it looks like (or doesn't look like).

I imagine that folks who are interested in Indigenous spirituality have visions of medicine wheels and tobacco and abalone shells and eagle feathers and fire and strawberries, masks and drums and songs and dance. Yes, those things are vitally important to strong and thriving Indigenous cultures. But it is also the deep connection to our lands that keeps us on reserve when economically it might make sense to go get a job elsewhere. Or conversely, it's the sense of despair and longing that sets in from choosing economic well-being over living on reserve and then having to be Indigenous in a place that is not actually home to your indigeneity.

Another difference that creates a barrier for Settler appreciation of Indigenous spiritualities has to do with the ethics of knowledge keeping and knowledge sharing. Many Indigenous cultures had or have strict protocols around who holds knowledge and how it is to be used. In my home community, for example, it is not unusual for elders who are knowledge keepers to withhold powerful spiritual knowledge or practices from folks who may not be stable enough – spiritually, emotionally, mentally, or physically – to be responsible users of that knowledge.

Furthermore, Indigenous peoples would never "proclaim" their spiritual beliefs, as do those Settlers who find their spirituality through organized religions. Those coming from western European heritages often view questions regarding spirituality and faith as culturally appropriate if approached in a polite and civil fashion. In part, this is due to the compartmentalization of "faith" and "religion" into their own discrete topics of conversation. For Indigenous peoples, that way of viewing things doesn't make much sense, for we believe, even after generations of brokenness and dysfunction, in the interconnectedness of all parts of life. So it becomes very difficult to talk about spirituality as separate from land claims or environmental protection or the economy. One Settler comment along the lines of "But I'm not asking about that" (for example, land claims) can shut down a conversation – often in ways that are imperceptible to the person seeking answers about who we are and what we believe as Indigenous people.

I am a part of the church and I long for my community to come to that place where it can truly "respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right" (*Call to Action #60*). Yet until the wider Church is ready to really sit and listen to our whole stories, our whole selves, and until the purpose of that listening is truly listening (as opposed to fixing our situations or problems) the world of Indigenous spirituality will never be fully accessible. If my sisters and brothers cannot understand the spiritual experience of what it meant for me to earn my living on the ocean and the act of stabbing salmon through the gills, they may not be in a place where they can really hear what I have to say about God, spirituality, the Church, or Canadian history. But if they can understand that, even in part, there is hope.

Ways of Knowing and Being: The Imperative of Understanding Indigenous Ontologies

ADAM J. BARKER and **EMMA BATTELL LOWMAN** are Settler Canadians from the borderlands of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe territories in southern Ontario. They currently live in Leicester, UK, where Adam is lecturer in human geography and Emma is lecturer in the history of the Americas, both at the University of Hertfordshire. They are the authors of *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada* (Fernwood, 2015).

The commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission defined "reconciliation" as "an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships." To begin or continue this process, it is vitally important that Settler Canadians take up the responsibility of learning about Indigenous ontologies.[1] What we mean by this is that Settler people need to learn about Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing and understanding the world. Indigenous ontologies, or ways of knowing and being, are diverse and unique to each people or nation. They encompass whole systems of cosmologies and metaphysics, philosophies, and practices of being and making meaning in the world. Settler people have our own ontologies, which are in many senses defined by experiences and histories of colonization and ways of knowing and being inherited from our colonial past and present. As Settlers, we must challenge our own ontological expectations that, for instance, construct Indigenous community dysfunction as "normal" or "inevitable" or state violence against Indigenous peoples as "neutral." We must also begin actively working to centre the struggles and needs of Indigenous communities in our own lives as individuals, families, and communities. That means we need to understand the root ontological causes of our fractured relationships with Indigenous people. Doing so has important implications for pushing back against contemporary settler colonialism and supporting the development

1 Ontology is a term that refers to the 'worldview' or ways of knowing about reality unique to every group of people. Ontologies are composed of many different facets, including cultures, spiritualities, and identities. Among Indigenous peoples, their ontologies frequently centralize the role of a sacred or spiritual connection to the land, water, and other living creatures as essential to understanding one's place in society. In this way, Indigenous ontologies are premised on learning from personal relationships with creation, generating worldviews that have spirituality at the core but are also very flexible, dynamic, and constantly evolving. Because of this, many Indigenous scholars and writers, as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, use spirituality interchangeably with ontology when referring to Indigenous people.

of respectful Indigenous–Settler relationships.

Although Canada is a diverse nation, the nation's ontological basis is rooted in its Christian past, which gave rise to political and legal systems that reflect Christian cosmology. That cosmology is important, in part, because it justifies claiming dominion over the Earth – something Settler Canada does in a variety of ways at the expense of Indigenous people. This is the philosophical basis of national identity and Canadian sovereignty. Since the consolidation of Settler society in the places we call home on Turtle Island, the assumption that Euro-American ways of understanding the world are objectively "correct" has been embedded and woven through many social and bureaucratic structures including education, governance, and religion. These ways of understanding have been – and are – promoted, privileged, and protected by Settler society, often at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Science, now the backbone of "objective" Settler ontologies as much as Christianity ever was, has frequently portrayed Indigenous people as inferior, genetically backward, and flawed, and more recently as the potential source of some special knowledge useful to mainstream society – but only as accidental caretakers waiting to hand over their knowledge to the world. But Indigenous peoples have refused to follow this narrative of dehumanization and erasure. Today, Indigenous people in communities, the academy, the press, and beyond are demanding that Settler people work to understand Indigenous peoples – and themselves – differently.

Accepting the Challenge

Working to comprehend a worldview that is fundamentally opposed to our own deeply (and perhaps unconsciously) held understandings may challenge our intellectual or emotional capacity. Further, it is common for Settler people to struggle to understand the complex relationships with land and place that are fundamental to Indigenous ontologies and embodied in Indigenous cultural expressions, technologies, social practices, and languages. This means engagement with different Indigenous ontologies is never simple. Too often, Settlers think mouthing phrases like "we are all one" or including pre-event territorial acknowledgements are sufficient

"No Trespassing Indian" (Painted in the Mission District of San Francisco around 2010.)

ART BY BANKSY
PHOTO: THOMAS HAWK / FLICKR COMMONS

engagement with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. However, the ideas that give rise to these phrases and the reasons why land and territory are so important are neither obvious nor simple. Indigenous ontologies are rooted in concepts of intense and interconnected relationality – everything is *actually* one – which has far-reaching implications. There is an enormous network of relationships

envisioned through any Indigenous ontology, and each Indigenous ontology is unique, making for a vast complex of interdependence that, quite frankly, defies description within Settler knowledge systems. Indigenous ontologies may never be fully understood by Settler people. Deep, intense, long-term learning may lead to some partial level of comprehension, but not belonging or, more problematically, ownership. As such, Settler people must always begin from, and return to, a position of respect, remembering that even with our best efforts our knowledge is still likely to be partial – in both senses of the word.

So why engage in this challenging endeavour? The obvious, and in many ways correct answer is that we are obliged to do so. If we are concerned about the ways in which Canada and Canadians relate to Indigenous people, and we are aware of the colonial crimes of the past, we must act to make positive change in the present. Canadian settler colonialism works to distance Settler people from Indigenous ways of knowing and being by isolating and dispossessing Indigenous people and by normalizing and promoting disregard for Indigenous practices of knowledge creation, politics, economics, and spirituality. Engaging with Indigenous ontologies pushes back against that erasure. Further, as Canadians we have been called on to take positive collective action through the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Final Report* (2015). We have been called on to acknowledge that the relationship between Indigenous and Settler peoples is broken and to engage in transformative action to build a new and different relationship based on respect and mutual aid. Despite these and so many other reports, Canada still does not relate to Indigenous people properly – that is, respectfully, nation to nation, and with a spirit of reciprocity. To do so, we need to imagine a different way of relating – one that does not begin with established, and failed, notions of what it means to "incorporate" Indigenous people in Settler society. Indigenous ontologies, rooted in place-based relationships, should be the starting point for this.

The Process of Relating

Respectful learning is embedded in a process of relationality. Learning about Indigenous ontologies, then, requires active, ongoing relationships between Settler people, Indigenous knowledge keepers, and the land. Instead of unnecessarily burdening Indigenous folks with our educational needs, we can begin or improve our understandings with the many books, poems, videos, songs, and works of art created by Indigenous people. Thanks to the work of Indigenous experts and educators across the continent in combination with the ability to access and share materials online, there are no real barriers to getting started. Reading literature or engaging with art by Indigenous authors, artists, and other creators is an appropriate and accessible way to begin to see, hear, feel, and witness Indigenous ontologies in action. This engagement can help prepare us to relate to people and communities by bringing us closer to understanding the needs and desires of Indigenous peoples from their own perspectives rather than through our Settler points of view.

The disruption of Indigenous ways of knowing and being is a key strategy used by Settler governments and other collectives for securing Indigenous lands. So one of the first responsibilities of Settler people is to challenge this and other destructive processes of settler colonialism. We constantly hear calls to see and respect Indigenous peoples as vibrant and present – what better way is there to pursue that end than to work to understand Indigenous ontologies as both currently being lived and practiced and also with contemporary relevance for all of us living on Turtle Island? When we centre Indigenous ontologies as real, living, and important, we push back against the processes of intentional erasure and ignorance that make dispossession of and violence towards Indigenous peoples seem acceptable or normal. We also begin to arm ourselves with intellectual tools to avoid the ever-present risk of renewed complicity with settler colonialism. As noted scholar of anticolonial education Celia Haig-Brown has argued, one of the most challenging things about settler colonial ignorance is the way that even a small amount of information can be made to stand in for a whole worldview. Settlers sometimes learn a little wisdom or a few practices from Indigenous traditions

and jump to anointing ourselves as experts. If we surrender the fantasy of mastery over Indigenous knowledges, and instead situate them properly as part of larger, dynamic, relational ontologies, we open ourselves up to a much better possibility – ongoing learning, relationships, and a future based in cooperation rather than struggle.

This requires rethinking how we defend against the insidious and ever-shifting spectre of colonialism. Too many efforts at reconciliation stop short of taking action to confront the systems of appropriation of land and destruction of culture and identity that continue to assault Indigenous communities. In fact, when opportunities do arise to make actual, material changes – such as returning control of land – Settler people tend to object based on the argument that their rights are being violated. Eva Mackey's *Unsettled Expectations* (Fernwood Press, 2016) masterfully explains how concepts such as *terra nullius* and individual property rights are not just legal concepts but core to the everyday expectations of Canadians. Yet as welcome as the protections of individual rights are, as Mackey discusses, both the legal concept and the cultural discourse of rights in Canada remains rooted in Enlightenment thought and European traditions. That is, rights remain reflective of non-Indigenous ontologies. This has created a rights discourse in which "protections" for individual Settlers are used as a battering ram or a bulwark against Indigenous assertions of sovereignty. These arguments were used by the white counter-protestors who harassed the Six Nations reclamation site (Kanonhstaton). They are used against locating and funding friendship centres or Indigenous-centred shelters or treatment facilities in Settler spaces. And they are used against the very idea that Indigenous people have special considerations under the law. This simplistic narrative, coming from Enlightenment universalism in which a small number of elite, mostly white men presumed to determine the needs and appropriate protections of all people of all cultures, is powerful in Canada. Understanding Indigenous ontologies can help to expose the Euro-American assumptions at the core of our rights discourses.

Finally, Settlers must understand that Indigenous people do not have the option of not learning settler colonial ontologies. That knowledge is essential to surviving and navigating the hostile colonial reality of Canada. The phrase "walking in both worlds," though somewhat dated, is still in use and still accurately describes the balancing act that confronts many Indigenous people today – of having to maintain an ontological double vision. When we talk about reconciliation and building relationships, how can we expect to meet each other on common ground when we live only partly in the same world? We must understand Indigenous ontologies to understand the perspectives that inform Indigenous peoples' beliefs and needs in a world that may yet reach a point where colonialism is not the assumed common ground.

RICK PELLETIER
QU'APPELLE INDIAN
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
1965-1966

SECTION 2:

(Dis)Honouring: Stories Past And Present

"My parents came to visit and I told them I was being beaten. My teachers said that I had an active imagination, so they didn't believe me at first. But after summer break they tried to take me back, and I cried and cried and cried. I ran away the first night, and when my grandparents went to take me back, I told them I'd keep running away, that I'd walk back to Regina if I had to. They believed me then."

PHOTO: DANIELLA ZALCMAN / SIGNS OF YOUR IDENTITY (2016) / USED WITH PERMISSION

As We Forgive Those Who Trespass

VIVIAN KETCHUM is Anishinaabe, born and raised in Kenora, Ontario. In the 1970s, Viv attended the Cecilia Jeffery Indian Residential School, which was run by the Presbyterian Church. Currently living in Winnipeg, Treaty 1, Viv is a freelance writer who serves as a board member for Winnipeg Inner City Missions. She's also a proud social activist working for change through word and action.

"Our Father who art in heaven . . ."

I heard those words daily before bedtime in residential school.

Nightly prayers to be said before bedtime. Words that bring bad memories of my childhood.

I can't recall anything remotely related to my Indigenous culture while I was in residential school.

Not even hearing my own language spoken. No smudging. No traditional ceremonies that I can recall while I was there.

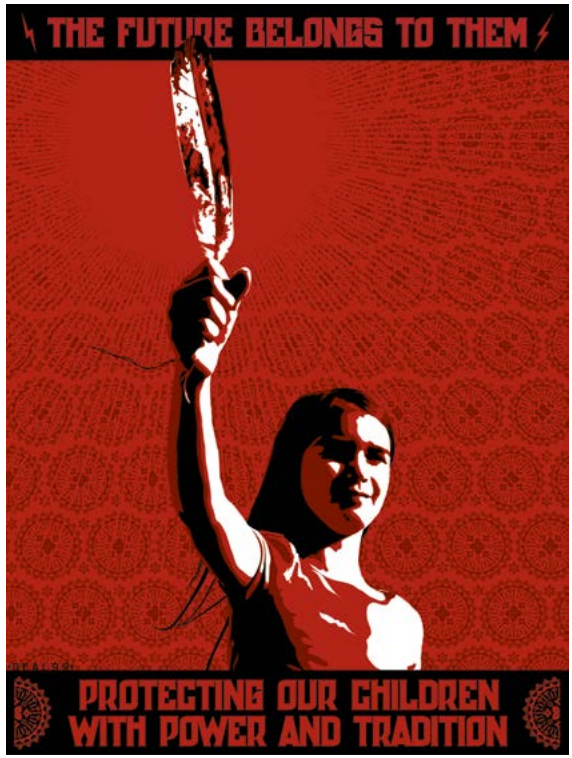
It was all about preparing for the weekly church service that one had to attend.

Shining Sunday school shoes in the playroom. Rubbing the brown polish until the shoes shine. (The smell of shoe polish to this day makes me gag). Getting my white Sunday leotards on just right. House mother helps me with my tights. Pinching me as she tugs the tights smooth. Hard leather shoes that pinched my feet. Hair brushed until not a strand was out of place.

Wearing clothes that felt uncomfortable and unnatural against my brown skin.

Sitting on hard wooden pews in church. Always that musty smell once you entered the church. It was there to greet you. Pictures of an angry white man with flowing brown hair or looking up, up somewhere. A man on a wooden cross.

All the religious icons seem unforgiving or angry in appearance. Even the hard wooden pews were unyielding against my back.



"The Future Belongs to them"
GREGG DEAL, PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE

This church world was frightening to my young eyes. That world didn't suit me just like the itchy clothes I wore. The only thing I liked about the church ritual was the white-circle-object we would line up to eat.

The church tried its best to take the badness out of me as a child with its singing of hymns and regular church service. The staff people added to this ritual with their rigid discipline. The making of beds, the corners that had to be right. Constant lineups for the bathroom and for the meals.

Children doing laundry at the Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School (c. 1951). / PHOTO: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA ARCHIVES – G-5475-FC-26

One lined up in the play room to be counted. One lined up for meds before bed time. Day in and day out, one had to line up for something. It became robotic. And eventually the daily routine emptied any resistance one had.

I need to share a small part of my past for people to understand my future. What residential school did was instill in me a fear of the church. The hands that touched me as a child taught me hate. The strap that beat me taught me to numb myself against any pain. Eventually I taught myself not to feel anything. Tears that were shed gave way to dry eyes. I had to stash what little piece of me was left deep inside to survive.

As a young teenager and a young adult, I was one angry woman. Lashing out at the world. Losing myself inside the bottle to try to cope. I was but an empty shell. I became a young mother in my early twenties, but that didn't change my lifestyle. I was doomed to repeat the cycle of how I grew up. But then one incident reached through those walls I had put up to protect myself.

My son was about two years old and was being fussy. The constant crying was getting to me. I did something that I am still ashamed of today. I threw a box of cereal at my son and it hit him in the head. My baby screamed in fear and his cries got louder. In that moment, I saw myself as a young child in residential school. The beatings. The fear. A moment of clarity reached through the foggy haze of booze that I was in. I did not want that for my son. I grabbed my son and cried with him. I wanted to change, but didn't know how to change my life.

The answer came a couple of days later through the back door of my apartment. An Indigenous woman came to talk to me. She was a counsellor at a nearby treatment centre. I'm not even sure how she came to be standing in my kitchen. It was her demeanour that had me listening to what she was telling me. The woman didn't cringe or show any disgust at being in my dirty home. She shared her healing journey with me. I ended up at the treatment centre and began the long road to healing.

At the treatment centre there was smudging and ribbon dresses for ceremonies. It was my first time becoming acquainted with my culture. At first, I refused the smudge bowl when it was offered to me. Echoes of residential school was why I refused it. The counsellors at the treatment centre healed

my brokenness with love and understanding. I even received gentle rebukes when I needed it. Then one day I was offered to smudge. As the scent of sage rose up to me, I bent my head down and waved the smudge over my head and body. A simple act to reclaim what was once lost.

It has been years since that day, and I'm still working on overcoming the fears of residential school and habits wrought by forced religion. I became comfortable with smudging. I even helped with a sweat for women. My internal fears held me back from attending, but I was able to see how impactful attending the sweat was for the women. It was a growing and changing moment for them. I envied the women for being able to go inside the tent and partake of the ceremony. Still, I was there, sitting outside. A small step. A healing step.

As the years have passed, I have grown more comfortable with my Indigenous spirituality. I've learned it is alright to walk in two worlds. I can smudge and pray with both hands. Part of that healing includes walking with my church brothers and sisters – people who I once hated and blamed for all my past hurts. Now I find myself sitting with them in a sharing circle as we offer words of healing. I witness tears of true reconciliation as I walk with the church.

I have shared my experiences of residential school with the church on many different levels. Each time I do, there is healing that happens for both me and the church. Healing for the broken child that was in me. Healing for the church person who hears my story. Separate paths brought us to this one place. And we leave walking side by side.

A Mixed Record: Indigenous-Christian Encounters in Canada

J. R. MILLER is professor emeritus of history at the University of Saskatchewan, located in Treaty 6 territory. Jim was awarded the Officer of the Order of Canada in 2014 and is the author of many books, including *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (University of Toronto Press, 1996) and *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2009).

Historical Overview

Interaction between Indigenous peoples and representatives of the Christian churches has been a part of Canadian history since settlement began in the early 17th century. During the French regime that lasted until 1763, carrying the Christian message to the Indigenous peoples of the northern part of North America was a high priority of the state. When British rule replaced French in the 1760s, missionizing remained a strong emphasis of the new power, although now the work was done by voluntary missionary organizations rather than state-nominated bodies. This pattern continued through the 1800s as settlement rolled westward through the central regions of what was then known as British North America to the Pacific Ocean in the west and the Arctic Ocean in the north.

Only in the 20th century did the Settlers' insistence on carrying on missionary work among the Indigenous peoples slowly subside. By the latter part of the twentieth century the Christian churches increasingly sought to work with Indigenous peoples to advance the latter's goals rather than working on them to claim their souls for their Christian god. Since the 1990s, the Indigenous–Christian encounter has undergone another shift as the churches have been forced to face up to and deal with the consequences of what their activities and settler colonialism more broadly have done to Indigenous peoples. Now, in the early 21st century, Canadians are attempting to reach reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and forge a better future together.

A Closer Look

When European colonization of the eastern portion of what became Canada took place in the 17th century, France was in the grip of a religious reawakening. As a result, the state became an active promoter of Christianity on the North American continent. The fur-trading companies, which were the representatives of the French state until a royal colony was created in 1663, were obligated by the Crown to promote the evangelization of Native peoples in return for their monopoly of the trade. The

1600s were a time when religious organizations, both male (such as the Jesuits) and female (such as the Ursulines), were the instruments used to carry out social policy. It was the priests, sisters, and brothers of these bodies who taught the young, cared for the ill and abandoned, and delivered charity to the destitute while providing religious services to both Natives and the small numbers of European newcomers who had established themselves. While the Roman Catholic missionaries enjoyed some success in these early decades, their impact was limited as far as Indigenous peoples were concerned.

Following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, when the British acquired France's claim to territories in North America, state promotion of missionizing disappeared while private, voluntary efforts thrived. Since Great Britain was officially Protestant and anti-Catholic until the 1830s, most of the new evangelical organizations were Protestant. A prime example of the new approach was the New England Company, a nondenominational Protestant missionizing organization that began its work in New Brunswick in the 1780s and spread to southern Ontario in the early 1800s. Significantly, the New England Company experimented with residential schooling for Indigenous children in both New Brunswick and Ontario, in both cases with mixed results. Problems of neglect and abuse emerged in these pioneer institutions, as they would in those that followed them. Both the churches and state learned little from these early failures.

With the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, Christian evangelism of Native peoples developed a new wrinkle. As Canada spread west and consolidated the new nation, its churches increasingly promoted a nationalistic version of the Christian message to both Indigenous and immigrant peoples they encountered. Among Protestants in the West, for example, there was a strong drive to create "His dominion" (see Psalm 72:8) – a godly, Christian society in Canada. This motivation fueled the churches' work among both First Nations and Métis on the one hand, and with immigrants from foreign lands on the other. In time, the Roman Catholics, too, came to embrace this nationalistic approach to evangelization and service.

In the 20th century, especially after mid-century, the zealousness of Canadian Christians declined somewhat and support for evangelization diminished. The churches now increasingly focussed inward on both the personal salvation of their members and on social service to others. Simultaneously, especially from the 1960s onward, many of the Christian churches began to shift their understanding of and approach to Native peoples. Now the churches were less likely to emphasize the need to change Indigenous peoples to be more like Euro-Canadians, and more inclined to try to find ways to support them in defence of their lands and in pursuit of better treatment by the state. Interdenominational movements such as Project North and the Aboriginal Rights Coalition were the manifestations of this reorientation of the Christian churches from the 1960s until the end of the 20th century. Working in solidarity with Indigenous people rather than trying to transform them became the order of the day.

Diverse Responses

What of the Indigenous peoples who were the targets of these forms of attention from Christian Europeans from the 1600s onward? How did they react to attempts to convert them religiously and sometimes to transform their culture and identity as well? Of course there were as many reactions as there were Indigenous cultures, and a wide variety of interactions between Indigenous and immigrant peoples ensued. But amid the diverse responses, some patterns were visible.

First, unlike the European newcomers, Indigenous peoples were extremely open-minded and accepting of other peoples' views and values. Throughout most Indigenous cultures, especially the First Nations, there was a strong commitment to non-interference. It was considered antisocial to try to impose one's views on other people. At the same time, there was both curiosity and openness to other ways of seeing the world and humans' place in it. Many First Nations engaged with the missionaries energetically, some even vigorously debating missionaries such as the Jesuits in New France about the validity of what these "Black Robes" were preaching. Others appeared to accept the soundness of what the strangers had to say, even becoming, as they proclaimed, Christians.

Reverend Peter Jones, Kahkewaquonaby (1802-1856), in traditional regalia, with ceremonial pipe. Jones was a Methodist minister and a political leader.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

It was always an interesting question, however, what conversion meant and how deep it went. For many Indigenous people, acceptance of Christianity simply involved incorporating Christian rituals into an array of continuing Indigenous beliefs and practices. Christian "converts," for example would be unlikely to feel any discomfort or inconsistency in attending church and participating in the Christian sacraments while continuing to go to traditional spiritual ceremonies such as the sun dance on the plains or the potlatch on the Pacific coast.

Second, Indigenous people sometimes took what might be termed an instrumental approach to Christian preachers and their religious message. In other words, they responded positively or negatively towards the missionaries according to whether or not what the messengers said and did advanced their secular interests. So, for example, in the 1840s, many chiefs in the future Ontario agreed to support "manual labour schools," an early type of residential school, with a portion of the annual payments they received from the government. In the early 1870s in Saskatchewan, the Plains Cree leader Ahtahkakoop (Star Blanket) accepted an Anglican missionary into his community because he thought the Reverend John Hines could help his community learn to support themselves by farming at a time when the bison were visibly declining in numbers. On the west coast, some Tsimshian accepted Methodist Thomas Crosby and his message in expectation that he would help them deal with the government. Equally revealing was how First Nations behaved when the missionaries they welcomed did not work out as they hoped. For example, when manual labour schools turned out to be oppressive and abusive, southern Ontario communities stopped supporting the schools and attempted to withhold their children from them. On the west coast, when Crosby was successful in advancing the Tsimshian cause, he enjoyed support; when his effort flagged, Indigenous support declined.

In some places, First Nations leaders even became leaders of the newly arrived Christian churches. In southern Ontario, a number of Mississauga leaders such as Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby, Sacred Feathers), John Sunday, and George Copway became strong advocates for Methodism, while maintaining their leadership roles in their communities. Jones, for example, was an ordained Methodist minister, an advocate of residential schooling, and the chief of his band. Later, in the West, the Stoney leader John Snow was a United Church minister and chief. Ahab Spence and Edward Ahenakew were educators as well as Anglican clerics. Stan Cuthand was also an ordained Anglican cleric and a prominent educator. Peter Kelly in British Columbia was a United Church minister and political leader of the west coast peoples.

Discerning Results

What have been the results of these encounters in their various forms and guises? Although recent commentators have concentrated on the negative impact of Christian evangelization on Indigenous peoples – not without reason – the record in fact is mixed. While missionaries often were disruptive forces among Indigenous peoples, they were also, at times, champions of First Nations causes. Methodist John McDougall defended prairie ceremonies, such as the sun dance, and decried attempts by government to suppress the rituals. On the west coast, A.E. O'Meara, son of an Anglican clergyman, devoted himself and his skills as a lawyer to trying, in concert with Protestant missionary Charles M. Tate, to advance the efforts of the Nisga'a to have their Aboriginal title to the Nass Valley recognized. As far as the much-maligned Christian workers in the residential schools are concerned, many of them were dedicated and did no harm. As more than one former residential school student has said, some at least cared sufficiently enough about Indigenous people to volunteer to teach and provide child care in the schools. Most Canadians did not; they refrained from getting involved or even finding out what transpired at those schools.

Since the 1980s, the Christian churches have been at the forefront of what is now being recognized as a movement to achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and Settler peoples. Between 1986 and 1998, the churches that had operated residential schools took the lead in apologizing for their roles and for the damage that residential schooling caused. They loyally supported the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission between 2009 and 2015 even though their efforts were seldom acknowledged. Today, it is adherents of the Christian churches, both

Native and non-Native, who are most prominent among those who are working quietly and tirelessly to move reconciliation forward.

The record of Indigenous–Christian encounter in Canada has been a mixed one, although an observer would not know that from contemporary commentary on the Church's role in missions and schools. That mixed record of bad and good places the churches and their missions squarely in the mainstream: their interactions with Indigenous peoples were like most human endeavours.

Heart Experiencing Loss: Residential Schools and Canada's Spiritual Violence

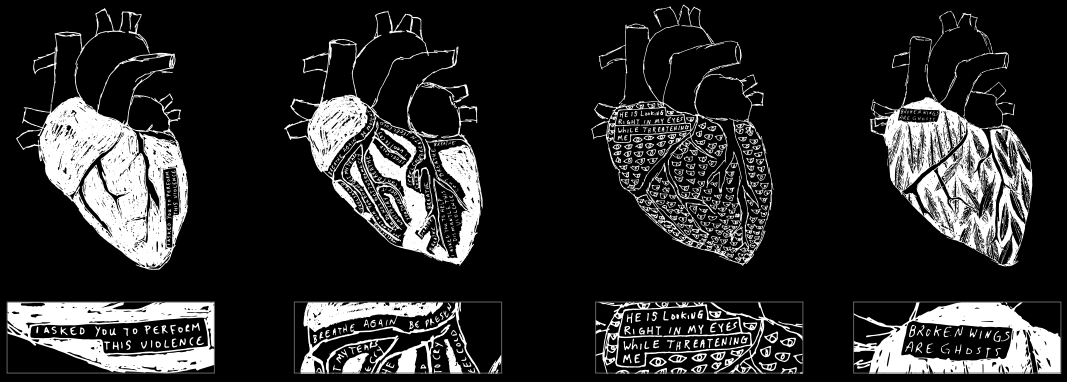
PETER MORIN is a Tahltan Nation artist, writer, and curator. Peter's visual work concerns itself with understanding the complex relationships between land, spirit, and difficult political histories. Morin joined the Visual and Aboriginal Art Department at Brandon University in 2014.

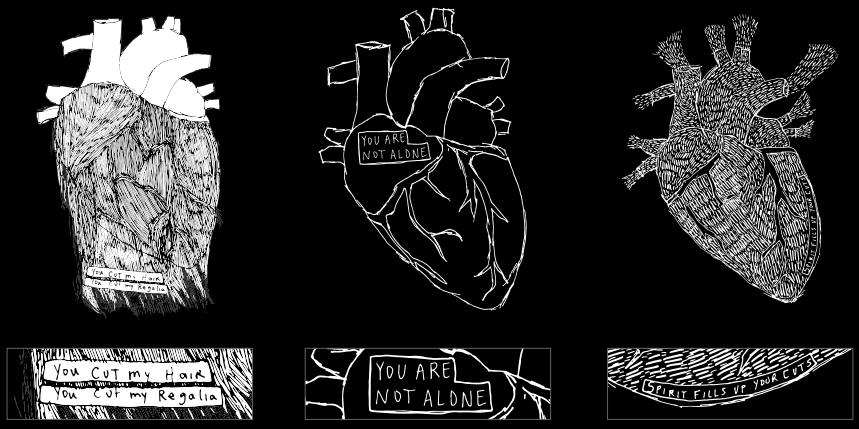
Trying to come up with ideas for this piece, I was thinking, and rethinking, what ceremony is and does and how to put words to that act. Ceremony changes you. Performance art changes you. Ceremony is the matrix that develops your mental, spiritual, and emotional intelligence.

In 2013, I contributed a new performance called *This is not a simple movement* to the "Witnessing Exhibition" at the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery in Vancouver. In the performance, influenced and inspired by Yoko Ono's "Cut Piece," I made a button blanket covered with human hair, and I asked the audience/co-authors to cut the regalia off of me. One of the main challenges was how to articulate this violence and how this violence enacts itself. Ceremony as a structure made a space for us. Ceremony is a structure that develops knowledge. These ways of knowing have been identified as important by Indigenous Nations both recently and in the distant past. This practice of ceremony was interrupted on purpose by Canada.

I decided that I didn't want to use images of the performance as my primary contribution to this magazine. I didn't want to do this because the images don't express what happened to me – what was happening inside of me during the performance. What's presented in the following pages are drawings of my heart at key moments during the performance. These heart portraits are the true document of the ceremony.

PHOTO PROVIDED


TASKED You TO PERFORM THIS VIOLENCE
BREATHE AGAIN BE FREE
HE IS LOOKING RIGHT IN MY EYES WHILE THREATENING ME
BROKEN WINGS ARE GHOSTS


You Cut my Hair
You Cut my Regalia
YOU ARE NOT ALONE
YOU ARE NOT ALONE
SPIRIT FILLS UP YOUR CUTS

Land and Community: Indigenous–Christian Encounters in the United States

JENNIFER GRABER is associate professor of religious studies at the University of Texas at Austin, located on traditional Tonkawa territory. She is the author of *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011) and the forthcoming book, *The Gods of Indian Country* (Oxford University Press, 2018). Jennifer is a member of Austin Mennonite Church.

The first time I visited a Kiowa (Native American tribe) church in Oklahoma, I fell into conversation with an older man who served the congregation as both a deacon and a janitor. We talked for a long time. He told me about the church's history going back to the 1890s. He talked about his ancestors who had attended the church for decades. But attendance had faltered in recent years, the elder admitted. It was difficult for older folks to drive from their homesteads scattered across the region. Some younger folks had left southwest Oklahoma for economic opportunities elsewhere. But others had stayed. They continued to care for their ancestors buried in the nearby cemetery. And they struggled to protect places that Kiowa considered special, if not sacred. The deacon told me about recent work to maintain access to a mountain where Kiowas had long gathered cedar for ceremonial use. Ownership of the mountain had recently changed hands. It was unclear whether Kiowas would retain permission to visit and care for this favoured place.

Several aspects of my conversation with the Kiowa deacon resonate with the long history of interaction between Anglo-American Christians and Indigenous peoples in the United States. To be sure, prior to the 1770s, the lands that would become the United States hosted British, Dutch, Spanish, and French colonizers. Each empire engaged in particular forms of expansion into Indigenous lands and strategies to dominate Indigenous populations. The Anglo-Americans who established the United States relied on British practices of colonial rule, especially in their assumption that Indigenous people required a complete transformation of culture and religion. Missionaries played key roles in the effort to initiate this transformation within Indigenous nations across the continent. The Kiowa church I visited had been founded by Protestant missionaries who not only evangelized Indigenous people, but also advocated changes in housing, dress, eating, work, child rearing, and land occupation.

The Kiowa deacon's stories signaled how Indigenous people have experienced these mission efforts, and the church itself reflected this colonial legacy. The deacon recounted the missionaries' arrival, but he emphasized accounts of prominent

Following America's "Apache War", General Miles sent captured Chiricahua Apache children to Carlisle Indian Industrial Boarding School in Pennsylvania (c. 1886). The photo on the right shows the children 4 months after entering the school.

LEFT PHOTO: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN – P06848 / OPPOSITE PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Kiowa people who had shaped the congregation over many decades. He proudly narrated stories about his family and ancestors. Our conversation about family often intersected with statements about the land. Like so many places designated as reservations prior to dissolution by the US government, the region was beloved by Kiowas, but lacked economic opportunities for their prosperity. Young people left for education and work. And even those who stayed confronted difficulty as more and more land left Indigenous hands to be held by those who did not share their outlook upon it.

Of course, it's difficult to generalize the experiences of hundreds of Indigenous nations and their interactions with numerous Christian mission societies and denominations from America's founding to the present. But my time studying Kiowa history and interacting with Kiowa people has taught me to focus on two issues: land and community. In this article, I hope to trace out the contours of Settler–

Indigenous interactions with a focus on these two themes. I intend, specifically, to highlight the way representatives from Christian denominations and mission societies played a part in these interactions and how Indigenous people have responded to their activities.

Remove and Transform

As Anglo-Americans moved westward out of the original 13 colonies and across the Appalachian Mountains, they confronted Indigenous nations who had long occupied these lands. The US government acknowledged Indigenous peoples' rights of occupation and initiated a process of making treaties with these nations. Seeking land for Settler homesteaders, federal officials paid Indigenous people to give up some lands and "remove" onto smaller landholdings. Often, Protestant missionaries relocated to live among removed nations. Quakers, for instance, lived with New York's Seneca people. Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists worked among Cherokees in the American Southeast. In this period, missionaries and federal officials shared a vision in which Indigenous people would slowly transition to settled living on small plots of land. They considered Cherokees, who sent their children to school, published a newspaper, created a constitution, and attended church, as proof that such transformation was possible.

To be sure, some Cherokees and other Indigenous people engaged in cultural practices associated with Anglo-Americans. East of the Mississippi River, a variety of Indigenous nations included members who experimented with Settler farming techniques, wore forms of American dress, learned to read English, and attended Christian worship. Missionaries promoted these examples and called for more federal resources dedicated to transforming Indigenous societies. Money from a newly established "Civilization Fund" (1819) sponsored missionaries' efforts to promote farming, schooling, and settled living. Even as Americans clamored for more and more Indigenous land, missionaries defended Indigenous people who had experimented with farming. They argued that those nations exhibiting sufficient cultural progress should not be further removed.

But the missionaries' focus on Indigenous transformation often kept them from seeing how Indigenous people made decisions about Anglo-American cultural practices, including Christian affiliation. They assumed that participation in schooling, farming, or church entailed a desire to assimilate into Settler American life. They often overlooked the ways Indigenous people considered their connections to land and community as they made decisions about new things. Among the Cherokee, for instance, some sent their children to school because they hoped it would secure their future in a rapidly changing world. Others sought out missionaries with the hope of healing illness. And despite the many changes Cherokees embraced, they contested others. When Settlers sought their permanent removal from Georgia, Cherokees took a case to the Supreme Court. They argued that their ancestors were buried in these lands. Their livelihoods, whether by hunting or farming, were in these lands. The area was populated by figures, including animals, humans, and supernatural beings, with whom they had relations. Many Cherokees left only under threat of violence. And many who experienced forced removal died during their journey westward. By the end of the 1840s, the Cherokees were among hundreds of thousands of Indigenous people removed west of the Mississippi River.

Separate and Transform

Anglo-American migration certainly didn't stop at the Mississippi River. As Settlers moved further west, they confronted not only the Indigenous nations removed from the East, but also Indigenous people who had long lived in the American plains, California, and the Pacific Northwest. In response to bloody conflicts between Indigenous peoples and Settlers migrating westward, federal officials and many missionaries advocated the creation of Indian reservations. They intended these spaces to contain and settle Indigenous nations, as well as exclude Settlers travelling through or settling in the region.

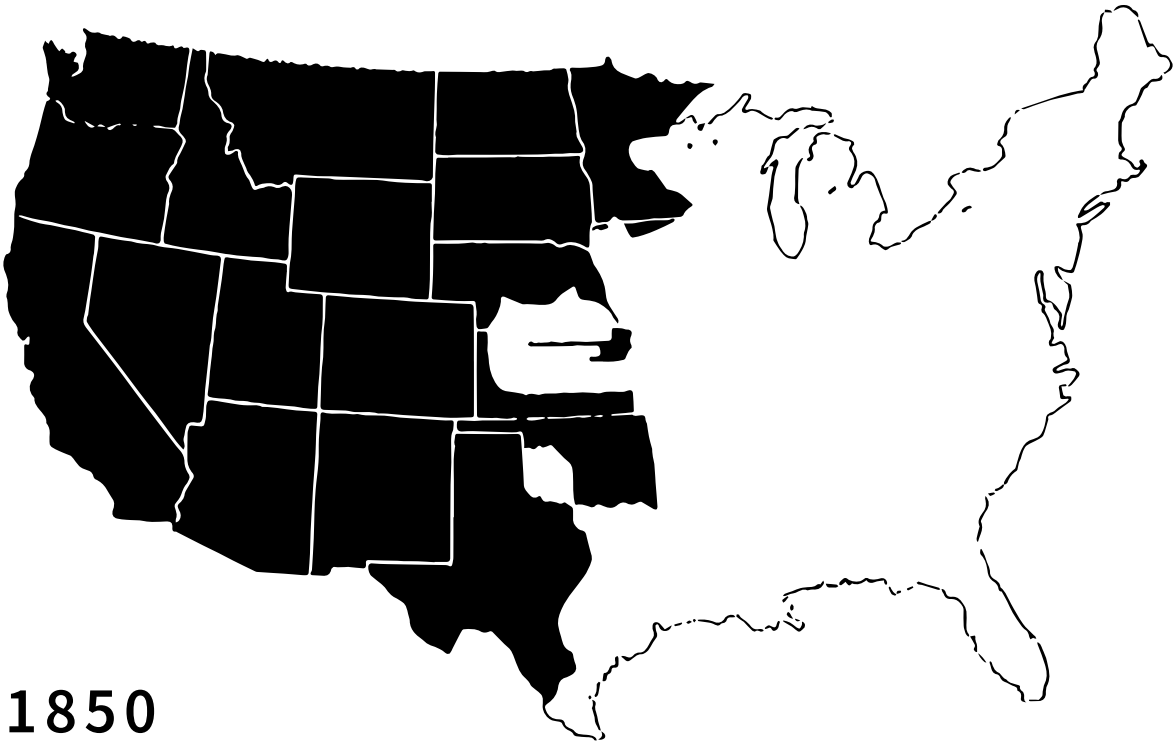
Missionaries prized the opportunity to continue their programs of cultural transformation within newly organized reservations. Catholic and Protestant missionaries fanned out across the American West with the hope that an initial period of evangelistic labour would be followed by Indigenous people's

assimilation into American culture. They envisioned a time in the near future when Indigenous people would farm, go to school, and live in permanent homes. They intended reservations to become obsolete. As one Quaker newspaper writer argued, the effort to transform Indigenous people would require time and diligence. But he had no doubt they would someday be "settled cultivators of the soil."

As in the earlier period, Indigenous people had a variety of reactions to reservation policies and missionaries' efforts to enforce cultural change. Again, these responses evidenced concerns about land and community. Sometimes, Indigenous people claimed their communal autonomy and fought to drive Settlers out of their lands. Historians sometimes describe this period as an era of Indian wars. But even Indigenous people who chose farming, schooling, and church attendance found in these new practices a way to preserve land and community. Among the Kiowa, for instance, some built a church with the hope it would deter white squatters from illegally taking their land.

Dissolve and Assimilate

By the 1880s, federal officials and many Christian leaders expressed frustration that reservations had not prompted Indigenous people's cultural transformation and assimilation into American life. They responded by advocating for the dissolution of reservations. The process not only broke down tribal ties reinforced by communal landholding, but also



■ — Lands held by [Indigenous peoples] or returned to [Indigenous peoples].

DATA: INVASIONOFAMERICA.EHISTORY.ORG

forced individual Indigenous landholders to farm or find employment in order to avoid starvation. In a process known as allotment, the federal government assigned plots of land to individual Indigenous people and made the "excess" available to Settlers. The process transferred millions of acres of land out of Indigenous hands.

During the allotment process, Protestant and Catholic missionaries continued their evangelistic and educational efforts among Indigenous people. Protestants, especially, advocated off-reservation boarding schools to teach manual labour skills to Indigenous children. These institutions paralleled those established to educate formerly enslaved people across the American South. Missionaries also supported federal officials' suppression of what` they considered "traditional" Indigenous religious life, including many communal rituals and healing practices. They also worked to undermine new religious movements, including rites organized around peyote ingestion and prophetic movements such as the "Ghost Dance." Despite this repression, Indigenous people continued to engage in various religious activities, often going underground to maintain their ways.

Preserve and Forget

With reservations dissolved and individual landholdings precarious, Indigenous people faced difficult economic realities in the decades prior to

■ — Federal and State Indian Reserves.

DATA: INVASIONOFAMERICA.EHISTORY.ORG

For a comprehensive, interactive, year by year breakdown of the appropriation of Indigenous Lands over the past 150+ years, view "The Invasion of America" online: https://www.commonword.ca/go/3368.

the Great Depression. As with Settler communities across the country, Indigenous people suffered greatly during the economic catastrophe of the 1930s. Their situation prompted a government response that some scholars have called the "Indian New Deal." With it, federal officials not only attempted economic revitalization, but also featured some new measure of respect for Indigenous autonomy and cultural practices. This altered approach, however, did not necessarily reflect widespread American attitudes about Indigenous people. Many citizens imagined Indians as doomed to extinction and missionaries continued their efforts to transform Indigenous cultural practices. In response to this era of challenge, Indigenous Americans struggled in churches, political organizations, and an emerging powwow culture to assert their place and their rights in American life.

Perhaps to Remember

The end of the depression brought the end of the "Indian New Deal." Soon, federal officials began a policy of "termination" in which the government no longer acknowledged any special relationship with Indigenous tribes. In many respects, Indigenous people slipped off the radar of many Americans' concerns. But the nation's Indigenous people were busy participating in a growing number of advocacy organizations that served as the backbone for the Native rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This movement involved, at least for some Indigenous people, an effort to reclaim spiritual traditions considered lost as a result of Christian evangelization.

Over time, non-Indigenous Christians began to respond to concerns that were being raised by Indigenous people. Indeed, some initiated a process of critically examining their churches' connections to missionary and colonial pasts. For example, the 1992 quincentennial celebration of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas prompted some religious groups to re-evaluate the "discovery" of the "New World." Since then, other groups have taken up questions related to colonial legacies of land appropriation and boarding schools. Some have offered formal apologies for churches' roles in efforts aimed at the destruction of Indigenous cultures.

Our Future

It remains to be seen whether Settler Americans will continue toward a fuller recognition of the nation's painful colonial history. Current discussions about the Doctrine of Discovery offer one hopeful prospect. Listening to Indigenous people protesting oil pipelines provides another important opportunity to note the longstanding connection between Indigenous land, community, and spirituality. Indigenous Americans' opposition to pipelines makes a particular claim. They call the land sacred. By protecting it, they protect each other. This dual concern for land and community has a long history among Indigenous people in the United States. I have confronted it when studying the Kiowa past. And I see it when I visit Kiowa churches in the present.

Integrating the Teachings

PATRICIA VICKERS is from the Ts'msyen Nation of the Eagle Tribe, Village of Gitxaala. A mother of four and grandmother of five, Patricia is an artist, writer, teacher, and student of life who enjoys singing and dancing. She is currently the director of mental wellness at the First Nations Health Authority located in Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver, BC.

Conditioning Dispelled

My mother's parents immigrated to Canada separately from England, met, and married. Born the third of eight girls, she was one of four who went for missionary training with a desire to follow her older sister to Asia. But in the late 1930s, she was not able to go to China, so instead she travelled throughout the province of British Columbia teaching daily vacation Bible school until she was asked to teach in the village of Gitxaala, a Ts'msyen village on the northwest coast. The bishop of the Anglican diocese at the time told her she was to participate in the Anglican parish and not introduce any other denomination. My mother – whose name was Grace Freeman – agreed. She was a teacher of the federal day school, a Sunday school teacher, and a field matron.

As a Christian Canadian, my mother was conditioned to believe that Indigenous people were inferior. As a Methodist, she believed that Anglicans were more social than spiritual. She would later tell me that, when she arrived in the village of Gitxaala, village members had already translated the Book of Common Prayer to Sm'algyax (Ts'msyen language). Many of the hymns were also translated. Contrary to what she had been taught, she was surprised at the discipline and fervency of the people. Today, in the villages throughout the Bulkley and Skeena Valleys and in the Ts'msyen villages on the coast, it is not unusual to see clergy wearing Indigenous regalia as their ceremonial robes and using traditionally carved implements for ritual purposes.

Christ and *Ayaawx*

There are many Christians today who are of the mind that Christ's teachings and traditional Indigenous teachings are incompatible. Yet when I look closely at Christ and the *Ayaawx* (ancestral law) of my community, I see profound similarities, particularly addressing *suwilsgüütk* (methods for increasing power through cleansing).

Ts'msyen society is one that is in need of healing, especially as it concerns the death rate of our young people. Until now, the teaching of *suwilsgüütk* has been private and kept within the family and *Waap* (house system). Change is needed to meet our present need – to learn how to acquire power that will honour our past, present, and future, integrating the good, and transforming the destructive. Such integration can be done in a way that respects those who dedicated their lives to translating Christ's teachings (because they believed in their goodness) despite the violence that church-run residential schools brought to them and their families.

Our task in transforming suffering involves identifying the *Ayaawx* teachings that will assist us in putting to rest the anguish of the past. Many of our leaders have stated publicly that the *Ayaawx* was given to us by *Sm'ooygidm Laxa* (the Supreme God). For example, the late Nisga'a elder Bert McKay rejected the view that Ts'msyen spirituality represented "dark superstition" when he wrote that it was the "Supreme God" who created us and "gave us our place in the world."

Some Christian leaders maintain the colonial belief that the cleansing ways of our ancestors, rooted in an intimate relationship with the land, are not acceptable

"Good Use for Wood"
ARLEA ASHCROFT

A half-breed from Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation, Arlea has sustained herself in Manitoba's visual arts scene for over 20 years. "These pieces are in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #60 – Churches 'respecting Indigenous spirituality in its own right.' My thought behind these works is simple – to respect is to embrace, adopt, implement, and hold in the highest esteem the symbols of Indigenous communities. I focused on what that would look like visually. What would be a first step? Would it be Métis beadwork on the Pope's mitre? Would it be replacing steeples with Totem poles? Would it be finding a new use for the cross?"

in Christian life today. Yet a closer look at the life of Christ encourages us to press on – he was strongly connected to the earth. If, as Indigenous Christians, we were to practice our traditional cleansing ways, I believe we would be following the leadership of one who looked to the land as a source of renewal and strength. Consider the following Scriptures:

> Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tested (Luke 4:1–2).
>
> But Jesus himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray (Luke 5:16).
>
> Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37).
>
> He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives
> (Luke 22:39).

Jesus went to the land, the desert, the mountain, and the garden to pray. It was out on the land and the water – the natural environment – that he was restored and found strength and power to fulfill his life's purpose.

The *Ayaawx* teaches us that *łoomsk* (respect for the land) is the most important aspect of ancestral law. In Christianity, the two most important laws identified by Christ are to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbour as yourself. According to Genesis, Chapter 1, God spoke the world into being. The land then is a concrete reminder of the voice of God, and the power of that voice is represented in the intricate way in which the ecosystem functions. If, as a Christian, you believe in the power of God to speak the world into being, then His voice, His presence, exists in all of nature. What then is the significant difference in the belief of the Ts'msyen people before and after the coming of Christ's teachings?

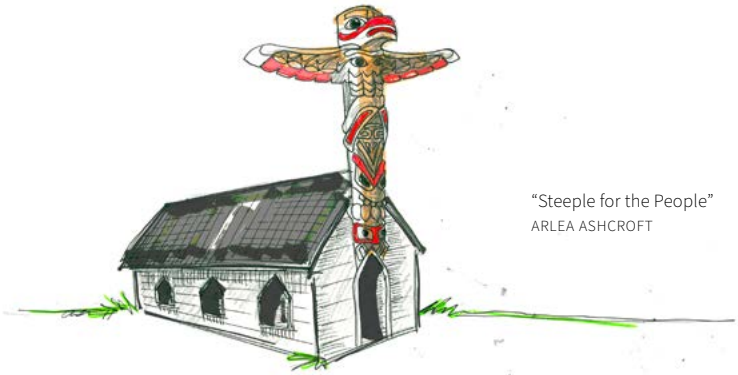
"Ceremonial Headdress"
ARLEA ASHCROFT

The central message of Christ is to unite humanity and the rest of creation with God. In Christianity, the belief is that humans were separated from God in the Garden of Eden by an act of desire to become as God (Genesis 3:4). The act of disrespect toward the command of God not to eat the fruit of knowledge caused human beings, as they were in the Garden of Eden, to die, and the birth of a new human being emerged. The end result was a new human being that knew both good and evil; the human being that God created in the Garden no longer existed. The Genesis text about the eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil is similar to the *Adaawx* (oral history) of *Txamsem* (raven).

Txamsem transformed himself into a pine needle, floated on the water, and when the princess drank the water, she became pregnant from the pine needle. The knowledge of evil, according to a Ts'msyen *Adaawx*, is an ingestion and permeation. Evil, or wrongdoing, becomes a knowledge that is in the cells of our body, mind, and heart. Prior to the ingestion of the fruit, human beings only knew good; they only knew God. Following the succession of events in Genesis, it becomes obvious that a change happened following the ingestion of the fruit. Adam and Eve then attempted to cover their nakedness and hide from God. Following their transformation to knowing evil they were banished from the Garden and the unhindered presence of God.

In both Christian and Ts'msyen teachings, the mind is not to be trusted and must be trained to focus with sharp intention on whatever task is presented to an individual or group of people. Harnessing the mind requires spiritual discipline through the practice of ritual. The Ts'msyen words that discuss the mind also include the word *goot* (heart). For example, *sigootk* (to start thinking about something), *hawgoot* (to consider or decide), and *hawmgoot* (to like something or someone). The intimate connection between the mind, heart, and action is summarized by Christ when he explained to his disciples,

> But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander (Matthew 15:18–19).



"Steeple for the People"
ARLEA ASHCROFT

Practicing Integration and Reconciliation

The ancestral practice of physical cleansing does not contradict the teachings of Christ; *suwilsgüütk* strengthens an individual to complete their intention to love. In Kenneth Campbell's *Persistence and Change: A History of the Ts'msyen Nation* (Prince Rupert, 2005), the basic rites of *suwilsgüütk* are outlined (albeit oversimplified):

- ***Wooms* (devil's club) is made into a tea for internal purification or used externally as a medicine.**
- **Bathing is practiced either in privacy by an individual or in a group in fresh or salt water.**

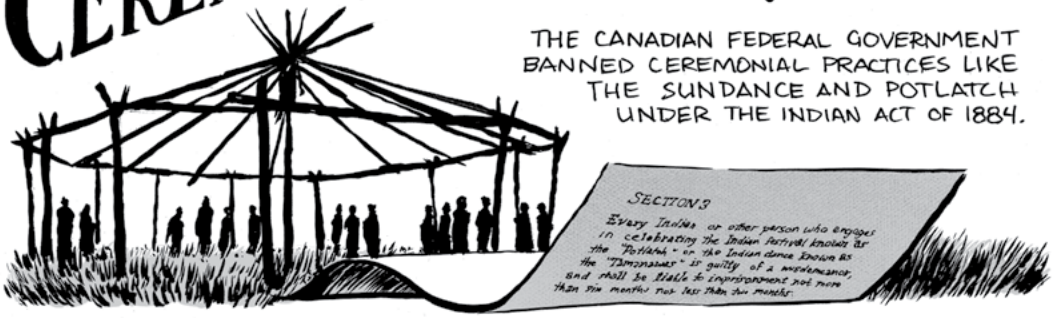
These rites of purification unite the heart, mind, and body, enabling the seeker to focus, and in doing so gaining greater strength and power to accomplish their mission. It is important to note that the power of the unity of the heart and mind goes beyond intention. The act is literally complete first in the spiritual world and then in the physical world. The importance of such respectful thought and action is illustrated by a conversation that I had with Frank Calder, ranked chief of chiefs by the Nisga'a nation. Chief Calder stated to me that if a person was at a feast and spilled food on one of the guests, the required action to restore balance could be as great as an apology feast. Mind and action need to be united in a posture of respect.

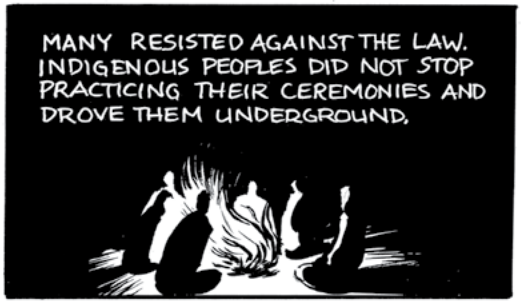
As we contemplate ways for Christian churches to reconcile with Indigenous communities, we must not limit restitution to public apologies and financial support for the Indian Residential School survivors. True acts of reconciliation must approach the offended by respecting their ancestral teachings. For example, what if the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and United Church clergy in Ts'msyen territory made personal statements of wrongdoings, supported by their congregation, through the traditional feast system? Hosting a cleansing feast as a non-Ts'msyen to ask for forgiveness from wrongdoings of the past would not only demonstrate the will to change the direction of oppressive pathways, but by practicing Ts'msyen ancestral law, it would also show great respect to Ts'msyen people, past and present. When the intention of the heart rests in respect, we are taught that the pathway will be clear and that the necessary support will be there when needed. Action toward reconciling the history of injustices and violence committed by the Church needs to be founded on a relationship with Indigenous communities that honours who we are as peoples.

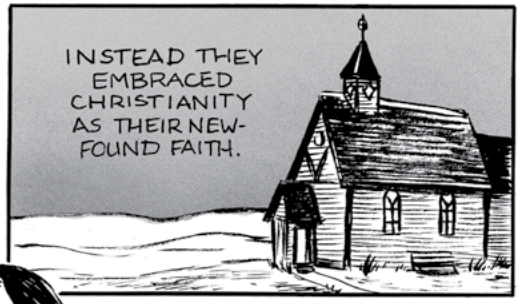
Our thoughts and intentions are like a rock tossed into the water, creating ripples on the surface that extend outward, impacting other living beings. To have intentions and thoughts that extend toward spiritual balance and peace can be transformative. The acquisition of power through *suwilsgüütk* can be used today to heal the suffering that is evident in our individual and collective lives.

CEREMONY IS LIFE

BY MIRIAM SAINNAWAP & JONATHAN DYCK








LAST SUMMER I OFFERED TOBACCO TO MY FRIEND'S PARTNER TO REQUEST A PIPE MADE ON MY BEHALF.
A COUPLE OF MONTHS LATER I RECEIVED MY PIPE. THE PIPE IS ALWAYS TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND CARE.
IT IS ONLY TO BE USED IN A SACRED MANNER
THE PIPE IS LOADED WITH TOBACCO. THE SMOKE COMING FROM THE MOUTH PRESENTS TRUTH AND SAYS A PRAYER TO CONNECT TO THE CREATOR AND THE LAND FOR HEALING.
THE PIPE CARRIER CARRIES A RESPONSIBILITY OF
MINO BIMAADIZIWAN
TO EMBODY THE PRACTICE OF THE
SEVEN TEACHINGS
IT TAKES COURAGE TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR VALUES.
TOBACCO SYMBOLIZES PEACE. I HONOUR MY PIPE IN GRATITUDE AND LOVE THROUGH THE GUIDANCE OF THE GREAT SPIRIT.
MEEGWITCH
KITCHI-MANITOU

I Want to Turn My Face

JOSIE WINTERFELD is currently the missions, peace & justice, and outreach worker at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario. She lives on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples, on the Haldimand Tract given to the Six Nations of the Grand River in 1784. Josie, her partner Will, and their three grown sons try to live gently on the land and build vibrant community with those around them.

I want to turn my face from it.
I want to turn the other way.
I don't want to think about the tremendous harm
caused by the Church I love;
this Church into which I was born, from which
I journeyed away and then returned,
this faith which has shaped me,
this tradition which has given me identity,
this body of teachings and wisdom for which I
have such profound love!
How could this Church I love
have been the source of so much pain
to so many of the Original Peoples of this land
and their descendants?

I want to turn my face from it.
I want to turn the other way.
But history tells us that it is so . . . or at least it does when it speaks truth.
History tells us a story
of colonization and domination
often in the Name of God.
A story of plunder,
of taking what was not ours to take,
often justified with Christian theology.
A story of complicity with promises made and broken;
of covenants agreed upon,
then forgotten, denied, and abandoned.
But perhaps the worst of what we did as a Church
was the spiritual abuse inflicted upon generations.

Breaking their spirit by
taking away their identity and language,
taking away the embrace of family and community,
taking away the stories, teachings, and wisdom,
taking away the beloved ceremonies,
songs, and prayers.
Perhaps out of the best of intentions, but with horrific consequences,
we tried to shape them in our own image,
we did not recognize God's unique incarnation in this land and in these people,
we did not acknowledge the identity and gifts which the Creator had given them.
We took all of this away and replaced it with
structure, rules, punishment, shame, and abuse.
The abuse . . . oh my God, the abuse!
What did this festering sickness have to do with the Gospel of love?!

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

I want to turn my face from it.
I want to turn the other way.
But I don't.
I don't, because I love the Church.
I don't, because I believe there is a great, big, gaping wound in our midst
and we can't allow it to fester any longer!
I don't, because I believe in a God of healing and transformation,
who constantly calls us to look at our lives, and invites us
to metanoia
to a turning
to a change of heart
to conversion.
Is God calling the Church to such a conversion?
If so, will we attend to the call?

What if . . .
What if right now we are at a critical point in history?
What if God is opening a door for us?
What if Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is our reconciliation?
What if their Calls to Action are God's invitation to the Church?
What if we as a Church are being called to spiritual transformation?
hat if we are being given another chance?
A chance to repent
a chance to make amends
a chance to live into the Spirit of reconciliation in this place and this time.
What if we don't turn away?
What if we take the time to do our own work
and tend to the festering wound?
What if we don't wallow in a place of shame or guilt,
but instead move with humility
towards a new way of being in relationship with our Indigenous hosts?

Grand River in Paris, ON.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A new way
but an old way
the way of the Two Row Wampum
a covenant of mutual respect
in which we share the river of life
bound by peace, friendship, and respect.
What if we respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right?
What if we come alongside our Indigenous kin, as invited,
and support them in the effort
to return to their identity and language,
to return to the stories, teachings, and wisdom,
to return to the beloved ceremonies, songs, and prayers?
What if this coming alongside
could lead to a mutual sharing of gifts
each from our own spiritual traditions?
What if those gifts call us back to the very roots of our own tradition?
What if this leads to a removal
of the clouded colonial lenses
through which we have so long read the Gospel?
What if Indigenous relationship to land
calls us back to our own traditions and teachings of kinship with land?
What if the earth itself is calling out to us for this relationship of mutual respect?
What if she too is calling us to conversion?

What if we turn our faces
toward her and toward each other
and actually attend to the call?

Posture, Privilege, and Place: Mennonite Settlers and Métis in Manitoba

JOSEPH R. WIEBE is assistant professor of religion and ecology at the University of Alberta, Augustana, located in Treaty 6 territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Blackfoot, Nakoda, Tsuu T'ina, Chipewyan, and Métis peoples.

Defensive Postures

I remember the days leading up to the completion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada when stories of unspeakable injustice emerged and it felt like, all of a sudden, old white men thought that it was the perfect time to speak out for themselves. Rod Clifton wrote in the *National Post* to say, okay, perhaps it wasn't so great that the goal of residential schools was to "take the Indian out of the child," but compulsory state education has compromised all cultures. Schools equally tried to take the "Swede" or "Ukrainian" out of the child in the name of formal education, which is a good thing, so wasn't it worth it? Then there was the indefatigable Rex Murphy, vociferously arguing (also in the *National Post*) about a supposedly made up academic term: "white privilege." After all, he shrieked, "WHITE PEOPLE SUFFER TOO!"

Perhaps it is a truism to say that all education is enculturation and all people suffer, but when old white men say it in response to Indigenous suffering, it becomes a lie. It's the same prevarication of #AllLivesMatter as a response to #BlackLivesMatter. The falsification happens in the statements' function, which is to downplay the significance of Indigenous or African-American claims, to not take them so seriously. When I talk to cultural Mennonites – again, usually old white men – about my research into Russian Mennonite participation in colonialism,

Métis traders in southern Manitoba (c. 1872).
PHOTO: MANITOBA ARCHIVES – N11932

I frequently get the reply:

> Well, Mennonites worked hard to settle. They suffered.
> They persevered.
> It wasn't easy.

Shouldn't all this be taken into consideration when reflecting on Mennonite dependency on colonialism?

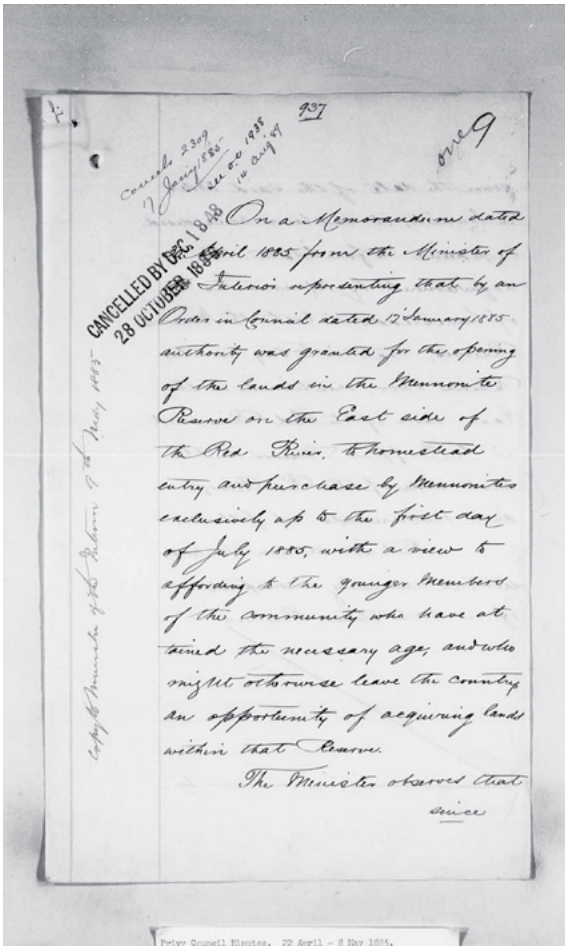
In short, "No, it shouldn't." It's not that I'm callous toward Settlers' suffering. It's that the line of questioning hardens self-protection rather than building respect. Consider my family history.

Privileged for Land, Market, and Law

My great-great-grandfather Heinrich Wiebe came to Manitoba from the Molotschna colony in the Soviet Union on the SS Moravian. He arrived in Quebec on July 1, 1875, and settled in the East Reserve in southeastern Manitoba. Grasshoppers and cold winters made the first few years of settlement notoriously difficult for Mennonites. Crops failed while more Mennonites arrived. In Heinrich's second Manitoban winter, he went out with the other farmers in his village to collect firewood. On their way back, the group was overcome by a snowstorm from the northwest. Ten teams of oxen and sleighs struggled through the cold and snow, trying to stay together. Heinrich, 25 years old with a wife and child, was separated from the group and froze to death 12 days before Christmas 1876.

Heinrich's son, Peter H. Wiebe, my great-grandfather, survived to farm in Greenland, Manitoba, where my grandfather Joseph was born. The Greenland settlement began in the 1890s when Mennonites from the East Reserve expanded their farming operations northward. Farmers from Blumenort – where Heinrich and his family first settled – moved from the East Reserve onto the *Brittensteppe* land, i.e., "land of the half breeds." This land was part of the land grant promised to Métis families in the Manitoba Act. In the 1870s, the area was mostly inundated wet prairie, but in the next decade it became luxuriant farmland. John B. Toews, the one who recorded Heinrich's death outlined above, named the place "Greenland" because of its fertile transformation. My family settled on land promised to Métis families, and it was good land.

This acquisition wasn't from fortune or savvy entrepreneurship, though it was legal. Land titles that used to be held by names such as Baptiste and Delorme became Toews and Wiebe because of John A. MacDonald's plan for the Canadian prairies, namely, to "unlock the country" to "real Settlers." Despite their persistent settlement in the Red River Valley throughout the 19th century, Métis were not considered "real Settlers" compared to the "desirable" Mennonites – those frugal, hard-working, virtuous farmers from Europe. The reason why there were almost no Métis families farming in Greenland when my family bought land there was no



The Minister of the Interior's Order-in-Council opens up more lands for homesteading by Mennonites (c.1885).

PHOTO: COLLECTIONS CANADA / PUBLIC DOMAIN

accident. Amendments to the Manitoba Act made it difficult for Métis families to obtain and keep land. Speculators deceived and exploited the sale process with impunity. MacDonald's government delayed land distribution whenever possible. By 1890, the vast majority of Métis families had to leave Manitoba to try to secure their future elsewhere. Yes, my family worked hard. Yes, my family suffered. But neither of those experiences has anything to do with why such good, fertile land nearby was so easy for them to acquire.

Not only was the land more available, so too was the agricultural market. Another aspect of the "my ancestors worked hard and suffered too" defensive

posture is the lie that Indigenous people weren't any good at farming. I've heard too many times from Settlers that Indigenous people in general and Métis people in particular were "tragically" yoked to the bison economy that disappeared by the late 19th century. Bison didn't just "disappear" like a magician's rabbit.

Originally, fur trade exchanges between newcomers and Cree and Assiniboine peoples in Manitoba were driven by traditions of food sharing more than market. It was not a bartering, tit-for-tat, exchange system but part of a cycle of gift and counter-gift that included social expectations. As the commercial market exploded, Indigenous traditions didn't match with demand. Traditional bison hunting practices focussed on group reward sharing, which didn't fit with market exchanges. European Settlers couldn't understand why Indigenous people wouldn't maximize profits by bringing everything they had to sale according to market demand. Instead of organizing their commercial enterprises by supply and demand, Indigenous peoples were motivated by exchange traditions. Nevertheless, production increase transformed Indigenous labour. It alienated Indigenous women's means of production and inverted the logic of food systems that was all about gift and redistribution, not hoarding in trade posts. The European market demand for fur, as well as the food factory regime fueling the trade, was already putting Indigenous peoples' primary resource, the bison, at risk. Market and environmental conditions throughout the 19th century exacerbated this risk. By the end of the century, bison herds dwindled. Because of the government's delays and speculator's obstructions, some Métis left Manitoba to find what bison remained elsewhere. But it's important to remember that they didn't leave because they couldn't farm. They had been farming long before Mennonites arrived and were good at it. They supplemented their bison economy with subsistence agriculture. They had livestock, grew gardens, and practiced crop rotation. They used the river-lot system and kept common areas for haying and timber. But the government began implementing township surveys in order to replace river lots. Instead of long, narrow lots that would support both the social and economic aspects of Métis land use practices, Canada wanted to chop the prairies into squares using a grid system that did not take landscape or Indigenous traditions into consideration. Métis farming practices did not fit within the new system because they were based on traditional seasonal cycles and so refused to conform. The government responded by saying that if anyone didn't use the land as intended – namely, individual homesteading – they couldn't legally keep the land. So even as Métis families attempted to secure their future in a post-bison era by adapting to a grain economy, the government said their traditional relation to land "didn't count" as displaying legitimate ownership.

But wait, Mennonites weren't individual homesteaders, were they? Nope – at least not originally. Mennonites, like Métis communities, organized their land-use practices according to their tradition and social customs. They didn't want to settle on individual homesteads either but rather in communal villages. Mennonites petitioned the government when they found out that their settlement practices wouldn't "count" as legitimate ownership of some land. Though Canada ignored Métis petitions for communal land and legal protections, the government made it so the Mennonite village system counted as legitimate land use. At the end of the 19th century, Métis and Mennonite Settler communities in Manitoba were both struggling to secure a future in a difficult and uncertain time. Mennonites were successful not because they worked harder or were rewarded for their suffering but because they received everything that was denied Métis: land, market access, and legal accommodations. These benefits were unearned, bestowed upon them because they were white. Mennonite settlement in Manitoba is a case study in white privilege.

A Shared Love of Space

What does this mean for respecting Indigenous spirituality? In my research and conversations with Métis scholars, I've rarely heard much resentment toward the Mennonites. The concern at the time and the criticism now is that Mennonite Settlers were treated better for no good reason – and that's on the government. So why are Mennonites so defensive? Why do we cling to our narratives of suffering and hard work? Consciously or not, we feel guilty about

our unearned privilege and don't know what to do or how absolve our conscience. Guilt, however, is an inadequate motive. Guilt does not lead to respect.

Respect for Indigenous spirituality begins with a respect for land. I'll end with a story from the prolific Métis writer Maria Campbell. Recently, Campbell spoke at an event meant to help build capacity for reconciliation. She told many stories that were poignant, funny, and heartbreaking. She said she didn't want us Settlers to feel guilty. She didn't want us to ask her what we could do. She didn't want us to tell her we're sorry. Instead, she told us this story:

Campbell grew up in Saskatchewan on land that became a national park. The inhabitants were told to move to areas populated by other displaced people, which were later opened up to homesteaders, including Mennonite Settlers. Campbell's grandmother became close friends with a Mennonite midwife. They spent a lot of time together exchanging medicinal recipes, collecting plants and herbs, cooking, baking, and delivering babies. And yet the women spoke different languages: Cree and Low German. Campbell said they never learned the Mennonite woman's name; they just called her "the Mrs." because that's what the woman's husband always called her. Just as Métis place-names were lost to the creation of a national park, so too the old Mennonite's name was forgotten. Despite the lack of shared language, Campbell recalls a distinctly mutual understanding. This understanding was made possible by a Cree term that means language of the heart. According to Campbell, the women both loved the land. They knew it, they learned from it, and spent their days working on it. Out of this love of land, through the practices and bodily movements that embodied this love, came respect, laughter, and friendship.

In these days when we hear that black lives matter and Indigenous people are idle no more, when we hear calls for justice and stories of violence, it is not the time for Settlers of various ilk to stomp their feet with arms akimbo saying "everyone suffers." White privilege is more than a legacy, it's a relentless force to be reckoned with. It is not something that can be disavowed or invalidated with a laundry list of our woes. Campbell, like many Indigenous peoples, talks about the healing that comes from the land. How that will happen for Indigenous communities is not for me to say, but we've seen what's at stake and how dire the situation is in places like Standing Rock (North Dakota), Grassy Narrows (Ontario), and Shoal Lake 40 (Manitoba/Ontario), to name a few. Settler churches, such as Mennonite ones, interested in reconciling with Indigenous peoples, in decolonization, and in respecting Indigenous spirituality don't need to talk nearly as much as they need to know, learn from, and spend time working in the land. What this looks like exactly will need to be discovered for each community and institution. But for each it will not begin by asserting a narrative of shared suffering but by practices that evoke a shared love of a place. Perhaps the best way to start is to walk your neighbourhoods to become familiar with who lives there, who doesn't anymore, and why.

PROTECTING SACRED SITES

BY GORD HILL • KWAKWAKA'WAKW • 2017 •

SACRED SITES ARE AREAS OF GREAT **SPIRITUAL** AND **HISTORIC** VALUE TO NATIVE PEOPLES. THEY MAY BE SITES WHERE A **FIRST ANCESTOR** APPEARED, WHERE **SPIRITS** DWELL, WHERE PEOPLE GO TO GAIN **SPIRITUAL INSIGHT** OR **HEALING**, OR THEY MAY BE **BURIAL GROUNDS.**

SACRED SITES ARE OFTEN DISTINCT GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS, SUCH AS THE **BLACK HILLS** IN S. DAKOTA.

SACRED SITES ARE OFTEN THE **FOCUS** OF NATIVE PEOPLE'S **OPPOSITION** TO **INDUSTRIAL** OR **COMMERCIAL** ACTIVITIES THAT **THREATEN** THE SITE.

FROM 1995-97, THE **NUXALK** ON B.C.'S WEST COAST **BLOCKADED LOGGING** WORK ON **KING ISLAND**, KNOWN AS **ISTA**, WHERE THE FIRST NUXALK **WOMAN** DESCENDED FROM THE **SKY WORLD**. EVENTUALLY THE ISLAND WAS LOGGED BY **INTERFOR**...

IN **TAHLTAN** TERRITORY IN NORTHERN B.C., THE **SACRED HEADWATERS**, A SOURCE FOR 3 **SALMON RIVERS** ~ THE SKEENA, NASS, & STIKINE ~ HAS BEEN THREATENED BY **COAL MINES** & **FRACKING**...

THE TAHLTAN HAVE **BLOCKADED** COMPANIES, AND IN **2012**, B.C. ANNOUNCED ALL **OIL** AND **GAS** ACTIVITY WOULD BE **BANNED** IN THE AREA (ALTHOUGH THE THREAT OF COAL MINING REMAINS...).


IN NORTH-CENTRAL ARIZONA, NATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAVE OPPOSED THE EXPANSION OF THE SNOWBOWL SKI RESORT IN THE SAN FRANCISCO PEAKS.
SAY NO TO SEWER SNOW
NO DESECRATION FOR RECREATION!
Save the Peaks!
THE PEAKS ARE A SACRED SITE TO 13 NATIVE TRIBES IN THE AREA. SINCE 2012, SNOWBOWL HAS USED RECLAIMED SEWER WATER TO MAKE SNOW FOR SKI RUNS...
IN S. DAKOTA, NATIVES HAVE OPPOSED OIL WELLS & THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LARGE BIKER BAR COMPLEX AT BEAR BUTTE.
BEAR BUTTE IS A SACRED SITE TO 30 NATIVE TRIBES IN THE AREA & AN IMPORTANT SITE FOR VISION QUESTS & PRAYER.
APACHES IN ARIZONA ARE CURRENTLY WORKING TO PROTECT OAK FLAT, A SACRED SITE NOW THREATENED BY THE RESOLUTION COPPER MINE.
THE MINE IS PLANNED BY RIO TINTO & BHP BILLITON.
SAVE OAK FLAT
THE APACHE HAVE HELD RALLIES, MARCHES & WALKS IN PROTEST. THEY ALSO SET UP A PROTECTION CAMP AT THE SITE, WHICH WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED IN 2014...
DESPITE ENDORSING THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, NEITHER CANADA OR THE U.S. HAVE ANY LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR SACRED SITES.
PROTECT SACRED SITES
DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS
ARTICLES 11 & 12 OF THE DECLARATION INCLUDE THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO PRACTICE & MAINTAIN THEIR CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND TO ACCESS & PROTECT SACRED SITES.
THERE ARE MANY WAYS COMMUNITY GROUPS~ SUCH AS CHURCHES & ENVIRONMENTALIST GROUPS~ CAN ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH NATIVE STRUGGLES TO PROTECT SACRED SITES...
THESE INCLUDE FUNDRAISING, PUBLIC EDUCATION, HOSTING & ORGANIZING SPEAKING TOURS, GETTING CAMP SUPPLIES, LOBBYING OFFICIALS, GATHERING PETITIONS, ETC.

The Repatriation of Knowledge in Central Australia: A Testimony to Indigenous Agency

JAMES COX is emeritus professor of religious studies in the School of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and adjunct professor in the Religion and Society Research Cluster at Western Sydney University, Australia. The author of many books, including *The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies* (Acumen, 2014), James is currently writing a text titled *Restoring the Chain of Memory: T.G.H. Strehlow and the Repatriation of Australian Indigenous Knowledge* (Equinox, 2017).

Repatriation is commonly associated with the return of objects, artifacts, or skeletal remains that were regarded as sacred or of important cultural value to their original Indigenous owners. During colonial times, such sacred objects or remains were stolen from Indigenous peoples and transported to museums or other sites, often located in major cities around the world. In Australia, where I have been researching the repatriation program now being conducted at the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, the Australian government has made strenuous efforts to recover objects that had been removed from Indigenous communities, and where possible, to return them to their rightful owners with the aim of promoting reconciliation.

The return of such tangible objects, however, is not that simple; it must be related more broadly to an intangible (or nonmaterial) cultural heritage. This view is supported by the United Nations' Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which includes, among other things,

- oral traditions and expressions,
- social practices,

Uluru, known to Settlers as Ayer's Rock, is a sacred place for many Indigenous peoples in Australia. PHOTO: CLAUDIO SILVANO / PIXABAYA

- rituals and festive events, and
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.

The UNESCO *Convention* draws attention to the fact that repatriation, properly understood, includes meanings attached to those secret-sacred objects, many of which are contained in the memories of communities through oral traditions, songs, and ritual performances. It is at this point that the current work at the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs is making a significant contribution to repatriating Indigenous knowledge by using the extensive collection of material acquired by T.G.H. Strehlow between 1932 and 1960.

In this magazine, we are exploring ways in which the Church can show respect and honour to Indigenous knowledges (or spiritualities). Although there are multiple ways to do so, my hope for this article is to speak to one way that is often neglected – the repatriation of sacred knowledges. The story of the Strehlow collection and the way it is now being used to empower the current generation of Indigenous elders in central Australia can illustrate helpfully why this work is so important and how it can be done well.

T.G.H. Strehlow and the Strehlow Collection

T.G.H. (Ted) Strehlow (1908–1978) was the son of Carl Strehlow, who from 1894 to 1922 was the missionary in charge of the Lutheran Hermannsburg mission among the Western Arrernte people, located approximately 130 kilometres west of Alice Springs. Ted Strehlow grew up on the mission as the only white child, where he learned to speak the Arrernte language, which he always regarded as one of his mother tongues. He was 14 years old when his father died at Horseshoe Bend on a treacherous journey from Hermannsburg to Oodnadatta in South Australia in search of medical treatment. Ted subsequently went with his mother to Adelaide, where he enrolled in the University of Adelaide, studying English Literature and Languages. After earning his degree, he returned to Central Australia to write an Arrernte grammar, building on his earlier knowledge and on his formal training in linguistics. He soon discovered that language and culture are intimately connected and began researching the customs, rituals, and religion of the central desert people among whom he had grown up.

Strehlow's first discussion of the overall Arrernte society was published in 1947 as *Aranda Traditions*. This book outlines in great detail the structure of the society, showing how totems[1] operate both socially and religiously. Strehlow returned to the central desert region on six occasions between 1947 and 1960 to conduct further research in support of an ambitious book he was writing that contained details of totemic ceremonial rituals, songs, and verses, which he was translating from Arrernte to English. That was finally published in 1971 as *Songs of Central Australia*. In a lecture delivered in Adelaide in 1962, he explained the extent of the research he had conducted between 1947 and 1960:

> During these six journeys, extensive tape recordings of myths and songs, thousands of feet of colour films of Aboriginal sacred ceremonies, and full genealogies containing many hundreds of names were added to my earlier collections. My notebooks now contain more than four thousand song couplets and over a hundred myths – all of them written down in native dialects and languages. I have photographs of more than 750 secret totem acts and several miles of colour films of the ceremonial cycles witnessed in recent years. In addition, there are almost 50 hours of tape recordings of aboriginal myths and songs.

Eventually, almost the entirety of what Strehlow acquired from Indigenous elders became housed in the Strehlow Research Centre (opened posthumously in 1991 through negotiations between Mrs. Strehlow and the Government of the Northern Territory), where it can be found today.

This far-reaching collection is now being used increasingly by Indigenous leaders not just to return secret-sacred objects to their legitimate owners, but as a source for restoring knowledge of Indigenous cultural traditions, ceremonies, stories, and social customs. In 2009, Adam Macfie was appointed as the repatriation anthropologist managing the Indigenous Repatriation Program for the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT). Macfie has consulted extensively with the Arrernte community in researching the sacred objects held in the Strehlow collection. In 2013, MAGNT employed two Arrernte researchers, Mark Inkamala and Shaun Angeles, to assist in the development of the Repatriation Project, the purpose of which, in Macfie's words "is to reconnect Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory with their ancestral remains and their secret-sacred objects held in the collections under the care of MAGNT."

Indigenous Agency

On September 28, 2016, I attended an event at the Strehlow Research Centre to commemorate its 25th anniversary. The ceremony honouring this important anniversary contained a welcome speech by the chairman of the board, Ken Lechleitner,

An example of repatriation: John Thiesen, right, from the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, hands a flash drive to Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, the Cultural Preservation officer for the Hopi tribe, at a meeting with the Hopi Tribal Council. On the flash drive are digitized film negatives and glass lantern slides, most of them taken by H.R. Voth, a General Conference Mennonite Church missionary to the Hopi in the late 1800s. Playing behind the two men are about 30 of the slides in a PowerPoint that Thiesen put together ahead of time.

PHOTO: LOUELLA NAHSONHOYA / THE HOPI TUTUVENI.

and an address by Shaun Angeles. In his opening remarks, Lechleitner highlighted an important aspect of repatriation discussions that has often been overlooked – that of Indigenous agency – which acknowledges that T.G.H. Strehlow was not in total control of his own data collection. Indigenous elders decided what to share with him, which secret-sacred objects to entrust to him, and which ceremonies he was allowed to film and record. Lechleitner suggested that the Strehlow collection was formed in a partnership between

> the real visionaries in this story – the elders who entrusted Theodore Strehlow with their cultural knowledge and Theodore himself who dedicated his life to collecting and preserving this knowledge.

In his address to the assembly, Shaun Angeles pursued the theme of Indigenous agency. He explained that since being appointed in 2013, he had

> worked intimately with the collection . . . analysing field diaries, editing the ceremonial film footage, working with individuals and families with the genealogies, digitizing the ceremonial song catalogue and travelling to museums within Australia searching for artifacts that left this landscape in some instances over a hundred years ago.

Throughout this process, Angeles emphasised how he had begun to feel as if he knew "these old men in . . . tracking their lives through four decades of work with T.G.H." After paying respect to Strehlow, Angeles then made a telling remark:

> I want to . . . elevate the story of the *Aknegerrapte* (senior cultural leaders) who . . . possessed the greatest agency in this story.

By agency, he explained, he was referring to the fact that "they chose what to show Strehlow" and they selected which information to withhold from him. Angeles argued that it was this choice which has preserved "the deepest aspects of Aboriginal men's culture in Central Australia for the benefit of their future generations."

Angeles then emphasised the fundamental role being played by the present generation of elders. He argued that the material housed at the Strehlow Research Centre cannot by itself restore the memory of traditional Arrernte ways of life, but requires consultation "with our present elders to realize the

collection's true potential." Angeles, who himself is in his 30s, contended that the elders are "the only ones . . . who understand its content and are able to enrich it and enrich the lives of our young men who are coming through the ranks." He added that the collection, which "for the past 25 years . . . has been like a sleeping giant" can achieve its true potential only by identifying "innovative cultural ways" whereby it can achieve its "power throughout Central Australia." Angeles concluded his speech by underscoring the fundamental importance of involving the current generation of Arrernte people in unlocking the potential of the Strehlow collection. He referred to the collection as "living" and "breathing" and insisted that as a dynamic source of information about Arrernte culture and religion, it "needs Aboriginal custodians interacting with it." The most important "stakeholders," he asserted, "are the Indigenous people" whom he called "the custodians and owners of the material."

The active role of the current generation of elders in using the Strehlow collection as a source of knowledge for contemporary Arrernte young people is demonstrated in a documentary film titled *Ntaria Heroes* (2016; see https://www.commonword.ca/go/3370). The film features the role of the Strehlow collection as a teaching tool for contemporary young Arrernte people. It begins by documenting a trip made in October 2014 by a group of young men and women from Ntaria School, who travelled from Ntaria (the Western Arrernte name for Hermannsburg) to the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs. They were shown genealogical records and old photographs by two key elders as a means for instructing them in their traditional ways of life, including kinship and marriage rules, conception sites and totemic ancestors. The young men were tutored by Mark Inkamala, one of the Indigenous researchers at the Strehlow Research Centre. The young women were taught by Mavis Malbunka, a woman elder and a traditional owner in Western Arrernte country.

In the film, Malbunka teaches the young women about how the family trees constructed by Strehlow indicate kinship relations and thus demonstrate proper marriage regulations according to traditional norms. She tells them that Strehlow's genealogical records show how the "old people" got married according to "the right marriage kinship." She says in an interview, "that is what young people should learn," adding that they "can't marry just whoever [because] their children will have wrong kinship." Inkamala is depicted in the film teaching the male youth about their totemic identities and showing them how the family trees confirm that they are part of a kinship group. In his interview on the film, Shaun Angeles states that for the young people, "looking at genealogies, looking at old photographs . . . has been powerful for them and even also for us." He adds that instructing the young people in the traditions of the people "needs to be done very soon because we are running out of elders quickly." He concludes:

> We need to do as much [as we can] with these young people while these elders are still alive.

Repairing and Renewing Relationships

From the above cases, it's clear that repatriation refers not only to the return of material artifacts and objects to Indigenous peoples, but perhaps more importantly to the recovery of knowledge associated with Indigenous cultures – knowledge that was often suppressed over many generations by missionaries and colonial agents. The interviews I have highlighted demonstrate that Indigenous elders in Central Australia are accessing T.G.H. Strehlow's notes and records to confirm their own kinship links and to establish their relationship to the land as traditional owners. We have also seen how this information is being used by current elders, both men and women, to instruct young people in traditional knowledge, without which they fear it will die out completely. With the active involvement of Arrernte researchers, the importance of transmitting knowledge of the traditions has been made evident to the present generation of elders. Strehlow's diverse collection of material is serving not only as a means of restoring to the current generation knowledge of songs, ceremonies, stories, and traditions that had been forgotten, but also as a living source for interpreting Indigenous ways of life that will enable future generations to engage with changing social circumstances creatively and with renewed cultural pride.

The Word Is Becoming Flesh: A Conversation with Indigenous Bishop Mark MacDonald

MARK MACDONALD became the Anglican Church of Canada's first national Indigenous Anglican bishop in 2007, after serving as bishop of the US Episcopal Diocese of Alaska for 10 years. Mark lives with his family in Toronto, Ontario, traditional lands of the Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nations, and the Métis Nation. *Coeditor Steve Heinrichs spoke with Mark over the phone about Call to Action #60 and what it means to the Church. The following is an excerpt of that conversation.*

STEVE: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has asked churches to understand the ways in which Christianity has been used to inflict violence upon Indigenous peoples. The language that is employed in the *Calls to Action* report is "spiritual abuse." In broad strokes, how do you understand the history of Indigenous encounters with Christianity in these lands that some call Canada?

MARK: There are two important stories. One is the story of the attempt to colonize Indigenous peoples. I would argue one of the most damaging forms this took was spiritual colonization. This was an attempt by the colonial institutions of Christian denominations to convert the minds and the hearts of Indigenous peoples. The second story, which I think is much

Leaders from various Christian denominations participate in a smudging ceremony (2014).

PHOTO: ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF EDMONTON

more hidden, is the response of Indigenous peoples to that colonization, but also to the gospel itself. One of the things we are learning is that there was an Indigenized response to the gospel that has its own kind of integrity, but had to be kept underground and hidden. This underground and hidden response to the gospel is something that we are rediscovering and learning from.

STEVE: I'm sure this question often comes your way. Settlers and fellow church members frequently ask me, "Given the devastating history of cultural genocide, why are so many Indigenous peoples Christian today?" How do you respond to that?

MARK: The answer has multiple aspects. The Church meant to use the gospel and story about Jesus as a way of oppressing people; yet that story had elements in it that were liberating and that confounded the evil plans of human beings and created its own kind of dynamic. I think there are many aspects of the gospel, which the institution attempted to use to colonize, that were well received and in concert with traditional and Indigenous disciplines and spirituality. In broad strokes, I think that there were aspects of the Gospel that were and are very attractive despite the abuse of a colonizing Church.

STEVE: Are you curious as to why we don't hear more Settlers inverting that question and asking themselves, "Why are so many of us non-Indigenous peoples still Christian, given the shadowy history of the Church in Canada?"

MARK: That's a very good question. The story of what the Church did to Indigenous peoples has had a negative effect upon the institutional involvement of non-Indigenous people, so I think that there are significant issues of shame at work . . . they want to distance themselves from these questions.

STEVE: Does it also speak to one of the dynamics in this relationship where the Settler "gaze" is continuously focused on Indigenous peoples – that it lacks critical self-reflection in these conversations?

MARK: I think that the Church as an institution is going through a gradual period of repentance, and there are layers of understanding the shock of realizing that your community has participated in a great evil. This is something that is difficult for people to deal with. But once you've had that shock, there are other layers of understanding. It's hard to realize that some of the basic aspects of your religious institution – its laws, customs, and traditions – have been distorted by colonization, and that has influenced not only how your institution interacted with Indigenous peoples, but it influenced the way that you as a people have developed. Therefore, I believe we are in a process of a gradual and deeper realization of what happened not just to Indigenous peoples, but to non-Indigenous peoples who were the institutional perpetrators of this seduction.

STEVE: The TRC calls all religious training centres to develop curriculum on the "need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right" (*Call to Action #60*). What's the state of the relationship between Christianity and traditional Indigenous spiritualities in the Anglican community?

MARK: That's a complex question and multifaceted. I think that in terms of the larger church, including non-Indigenous institutions, traditional Indigenous spirituality is something that is quite attractive. At least, it is in the Anglican Church. Smudging has become almost an everyday affair at consecrations, at ordinations, and other events. The acknowledgment of the land, the respect towards traditional territories, these things have become commonplace in the Anglican Church and in other churches. So we are seeing this gradual reversal, a kind of missions-in-reverse with Indigenous spirituality becoming quite attractive and to a certain extent being seen as something that is a part of what it means to be a Canadian Christian. This of course is a stunning reversal; one might call it a Gospel reversal of the way things have been.

On a day-to-day level in Indigenous communities, it's a little more complex. A lot of our reserves, especially in remote areas, live within an Indigenous cosmology. They are not likely to practice some of the more visible forms of Indigenous spirituality, like smudging or the drum or other things like that which have become somewhat commonplace in urban contexts. Even in the church, those practices aren't so common in remote reserves and situations. The paradox there is that the cosmology, or the worldview, of the people is thoroughly and completely Indigenous. It's there that we see a renaissance of

Indigenous customary law – the partnership of a biblical spirituality with a resurgence of Indigenous laws and customs. Whereas young people are more open to some of the visible artifacts of Indigenous spirituality, the elders are a little more reluctant to see those things come back. But it is interesting that it is the elders who are really the treasury of Indigenous spirituality and Indigenous custom and law; they are really the ones who are guiding us. It's a complex relationship and it has a number of aspects to it, but all in all it is very exciting.

STEVE: So on that trajectory of living into the call to respect Indigenous spiritualities, where are we and where would you like to see it go?

MARK: I think that where it's going is to a greater and greater integral relationship between Indigenous spirituality and the practice of Christian faith. I think you'll find that in all the sectors of church life – Indigenous, non-Indigenous, reserves, and urban. You'll see greater and greater integration between those expressions, and I think that you'll see more and more of the visual aspects of traditional spirituality become a part of Christian worship.

STEVE: Let's imagine a rural Anglican church, somewhere in the prairies or in Northwestern Ontario. And let's imagine that it's a predominantly Settler church of 30–40 people. What does it look like for that small community to respect Indigenous spiritualities? How do they embody respect for Indigenous spirituality?

MARK: I think that they're in a situation of ongoing conversion, meaning that they have learned, through the Truth and Reconciliation process, things about their institution and themselves. They are called to a new understanding of who they are and what they are – an understanding that has some negative aspects. At the same time, it also has some positive aspects that they have entertained with very low profile in the day-to-day operations of their church. They are awakening to a new way of being Christian people in Canada. And that new way of being Christian in Canada embodies not only a respect for Indigenous spiritualities and traditions, but to a certain extent, an openness to those things informing non-Indigenous Christians about what it means to be a Christian in Canada and a Christian on the land.

I've heard elders talk about how the land itself converts people. What we are seeing now is all of the non-Indigenous denominations spending more and more time in relationship with the land. The land itself has an impact on them. You can see this particularly in the young people. They grow more and more Indigenous as they become more and more a part of the land. The colonization project, the attempt to re-establish Europe "here," was doomed to fail from the very beginning in spite of all the havoc it created. The land itself has power. Mother Earth has a power to convert the minds and souls of its inhabitants. Suddenly, instead of seeing Christianity as a transplant from some other place, brought over as something entirely different, Christianity is becoming flesh in a Canadian context. I think that what we are seeing is a gradual – some would say too slow – conversion to the reality of the world in which Christianity finds itself today.

STEVE: Is it essential then for Canadian congregations to enter into a journey of learning local Indigenous knowledges?

MARK: I think so. In fact, I not only think so, I think they are. When I visit with non-Indigenous Christians, so many of them share with me – outside of the official context of the Church – the personal influence of Indigenous ways of thought, the impact of their interaction with Indigenous peoples who are local to that area. That doesn't mean that the effects of being a colonized and colonizing Church have been immediately or completely erased. It does mean there is a new respect for Indigenous thinking, and a lot of this has to do with a profound recognition of the kind of peril we are in in terms of climate change and our unsustainable ways of life. All of these things have an impact. I have yet to see it permeate all of the institutional aspects of a colonized and colonizing Christianity. But I do see it having a huge impact on the individuals who are involved. Someday, that has to bear fruit on the institutions as well.

STEVE: To help those who want to enter into this journey, what are some of the basic first steps?

MARK: The basic first step is relational. Indigenous spirituality is always relational. It's about getting to know people on a person-to-person basis. One of the things that I ask people to do is just become

aware of Indigenous peoples in the area where they live. All over Canada there are Indigenous peoples nearby, to the surprise of many. Indigenous peoples have all kinds of events that are designed specifically for interaction with other people such as powwows, gospel jamborees, and so on. These are ways in which Settler Christians can interact with Indigenous peoples in a setting that can build relationships. I think that learning what concerns local Indigenous peoples have is a significant part of building that relationship, and I think if a congregation simply opens its eyes to the world around them, they will profit greatly from those interactions. I've seen a number of congregations do this – attend to the concerns that local Indigenous neighbours are naming – and they find it transformative.

STEVE: That's quite helpful Mark. Thanks so much for this conversation. Before we close, can I ask, is there anything that you are personally puzzling through when you contemplate *Call to Action #60?*

MARK: No, I don't think there's anything I am personally puzzling through. But one matter that we are trying to work through is how the Indigenous Anglican church can become a self-determining Indigenous form of Christian faith within the larger context of the Anglican Church. Traditional ways and thought are authoritative for us. We are really trying hard to follow customary law. To a certain extent, you could say what we are attempting to do is make the word flesh in Indigenous life with respect and obedience to the traditions and customs of Indigenous peoples. I think it is important to recognize that there have always been a significant number of Indigenous Christians who have tried to do this. They have had to go underground, they have oftentimes been persecuted by the institutional church, but today we look at them as our trailblazers and our heroes. These are people who refused to allow the colonial-institutional church to pervert the truth that it nevertheless carried. We are trying hard to become something, but we do have people who have blazed the trail before us, often in hidden ways.

Street Ceremony and Activism: A North End Conversation

JENNA LICIOUS is an Anishinaabe Ikwe living on Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has been involved with Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO!) since 2010 as a youth empowerment facilitator, community helper, and megaphone girl at rallies and protests across the city. A published author and a former Status of Women Manitoba committee member, Jenna is an instrumental figure in Winnipeg's urban Indigenous village.

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE is a Cree man from Treaty 5 territory. He has spent nearly two decades working with youth in Winnipeg's North End. As the founder of AYO!, Michael is heavily involved in a wide variety of community initiatives including Meet Me at the Bell Tower (MM@TBT), 13 Fires, and Water Wednesdays. He was recognized as the 2016 Canadian Red Cross Young Humanitarian of the Year, and in *Time* magazine as a "Next Generation Leader" in 2015.

Coeditor Jeff Friesen sat down with Jenna and Michael to discuss urban Indigenous spirituality and activism and ways in which the Church can support them.

People share food after a pipe ceremony at the corner of Main and Jarvis (Winnipeg) organized by Indigenous youth. The purpose of the ceremony was to bring hope to people from the community, many of whom have been personally affected bay colonial violence, suicide and addiction (August, 2016).

PHOTO: ZACHARY PRONG / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

JEFF: Talk a bit about your experiences with Indigenous ceremony and its connections to your activism.

JENNA: I'll give you a story of how Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO!) started. A well-respected knowledge keeper of ours, Chickadee Richard, opened her house to us as youth. People from across Turtle Island would come here. It was the house people would stay at when coming through Winnipeg. She would often talk about ceremony and the importance of going back to the land. She taught us how to see the land as ceremony because "without the land there is no us" – that's the way she put it. By going back to the land, we would learn our language, our cultures, and our traditions because they're in the land. And by "the land" she meant hunting, trapping, gathering berries, and working as community. Basically, it's living the way before Settlers came to our land. That's ceremony and without it there is no "us." Because of this, she said, "It's up to us to protect the land."

We were hearing all this at a very young and impressionable age. If it wasn't for her saying that we need to protect our land and our waters, I don't think we would be here today, doing the activism that we do. When she said that, we were like "How do you do that? How do you stand up for the land?" With the help of Michael and the community we started organizing ourselves. We decided that we needed to

start honouring our knowledge keepers and going to ceremonies because if we don't do ceremony we begin losing our connections with each other and the land because it's all rotten from pipelines.

MICHAEL: That was our collective awakening. It was largely the "Chickadees" of the world that reminded us of the role of land protection and ceremony and the work that we need to do as Indigenous people. Going back to your question about Indigenous ceremony, the first distinction I'd like to make is that the First Nations community has over six hundred different communities that interpret ceremony in various ways. There's also the Métis and our relatives in the Inuit community that each have different interpretations of ceremony. So when Jenna and I are speaking of ceremony, it's an urban perspective. To be specific, it's an Anishinaabe urban perspective. For me, as a Cree man, my family hails from Treaty 5. I'm a visitor here on Treaty 1 territory.

Secondly, Anishinaabe knowledge keepers like Chickadee have been foundational to young people, like Jenna and myself, trying to understand who we are in relation to the land and what our responsibility is to the broader community around us, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. While gathered with men and women from across Turtle Island in Chickadee's living room, youth would come together and would start ranting about challenges that we were facing – things like suicide, gangs, the child welfare system, and the justice system. We would get mad, for these things were and are failing us. All these services that are supposed to be protecting us, aren't.

Chickadee didn't have to be around for our entire ranting to make her presence felt. All she had to do was stick her head in for one second, hear the tone of the conversation and say to us, "Remember spirit, and don't forget to start the ceremony." That always reset us from our rage, from our ranting, and our frustration. Often at that moment we would ask one of the young people to find a cigarette or tobacco. We would then sit, sing, and listen to songs. That would ground us and remind us of the importance of our language, the importance of drums, the sacrifices that those animals made so that we could have those drums, the food and the water that sustain us, and the knowledge keepers that made it possible for us to sing these songs. It grounded us in our history but also made us understand how far these songs, these ceremonies, these sacred objects have come to be here for us, the urban Indigenous young people of today.

JEFF: How has this played out in the AYO! context, whether that's at Meet Me at the Bell Tower or elsewhere?

MICHAEL: It plays out in that context through street ceremony, something that has been common for us in the AYO! movement since the beginning. We were born at the Circle of Life Thunderbird House [a traditional cultural centre]. Thunderbird House is the rose that grew from concrete. It's so beautiful. In the middle of this urban setting to have a place like Thunderbird House to shield us, to wrap her wings around us, to protect us and keep us safe, is gift. That Thunderbird House has done that for AYO! led us to do that for others who couldn't necessarily make it there. AYO! is now a mobile street ceremony. We go around from place to place and do education or ceremony on the street corner. We held 13 public pipe ceremonies in 2016 in various locations – in front of bars or even right on Main Street. These youth pipe ceremonies were teaching ceremonies where Jenna and others would smoke their pipe and share Anishinaabe pipe ceremony teachings with anyone who'd care to listen. Young people who were walking by, who were intoxicated and who thought life with ceremonies wasn't for them because they were under the influence, would then participate. Their alcohol and drugs were not stronger than our tobacco or our prayers! As community members were attracted to what we were doing in our youth pipe ceremony, our circle got stronger. The gifts being shared increased the capacity we had to reach out to people who really needed us.

Those 13 youth pipe ceremonies are tangible examples of listening to our knowledge keepers and asking our young people to come forward and lead by example. Doing ceremony doesn't always entail leaving an urban centre and going to an isolated community to visit ceremonial grounds. Sometimes it means making the land that is before us sacred.

JEFF: What you're suggesting builds nicely on what Chickadee taught you about "living in the way before the Settlers came," adding an urban element to it — that the land on which you find yourself, whether

rural or urban, is sacred. Am I getting this right?

JENNA: The street is ceremony. Wherever you walk is sacred. That's the teaching that I was given. Everywhere you go, a piece of sacredness and a piece of ceremony is given out to people. Like right now, this conversation could be a ceremony. That's the way I've been taught – to see that the streets out there are sacred.

MICHAEL: The streets are land too. For us who are displaced from our home communities, the inner city is our land – that's our First Nation – that's our home community. This is why I call myself "North End MC," because this North End community is who I am. I don't often connect @northendmc, my twitter handle, to ceremony, but it very much is connected because I was told, like Jenna, that we are the land. If the land raises you up, you are that land. What land raised me up? The North End of Winnipeg. As I go around in this world, when I come downtown, when I leave Winnipeg, and when I travel across Canada and the world, I am still made from the North End streets. My elbow is Jarvis, my shoulder is Aberdeen, my mid-calf is Powers – all these pieces of the North End are me no matter where I go. This is a timely and needed conversation, not only for non-Indigenous people to understand, but also for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people that are now urban dwellers. They are now the roses growing through the concrete.

JENNA: This is especially crucial in Winnipeg as it is the main urban hub for Indigenous people in all of Canada.

MICHAEL: We have an opportunity here in Winnipeg that doesn't exist in other places because of the demographics that we have here. It is easy to see in the urban Indigenous village. It's easy to see in the events and activities that are led by Indigenous people in Winnipeg with Indigenous values and ceremony at the heart. Drag the Red, Bear Clan Patrol, MM@ TBT, Got Bannock?, Thunderbird House – all of these initiatives are redefining what it means to be Indigenous in this city. Ceremony is playing a critical part in that, but so is activism. They are not separate.

JEFF: Given our conversation today, what are some words that you would like to offer to the Church? What does the Church need to do and undo to better respect Indigenous spirituality?

JENNA: That question really gets to me. I have a lot of internalized frustration and hurt from the Church both personally and corporately. What can you undo? You can't really undo anything. What you can do is share your wealth. Churches have a lot of money and influence. We have influence but we don't have a lot of money. Organize something like a campaign to raise funds for Indigenous spirituality programs across Turtle Island. Help Indigenous people find their traditions and their beliefs by funding those programs. We need places like the Thunderbird House up and running with programs every single day, teaching our cultures, teaching our traditions, and hiring elders. What we need is partnerships with the churches that includes financial gifts. In a way, this is what it comes down to – Indigenous people know Christianity. We know that Eve ate from the tree and so on. But many people – Indigenous and Settler alike – don't know what ceremony is. How do you respond to that? Through partnership that includes finances and education. Pay elders to teach Indigenous courses to clergy with a requirement to go to sweats, and have it ongoing and mandatory. Those are some practical steps I'd like to see taken.


MITCHELL'S MEAT MARKET

There's a medicine that grows on the sidewalk called plantain. It grows anywhere – in dusty lots, the cracks of sidewalks – and if you pick it up and clean it and put it on a wound, it will take infection out and promote healing. In a lot of ways, the plantain is very similar to the history of Indian people in the city. They may be obscure and they may be sort of growing between the cracks in the sidewalk, but when they're brought back to who they are, then there's an immense amount of power, and there's an immense amount of healing.

RODNEY BOBIWASH
1959-2002

Anishinaabe teacher, community leader, and activist

Selkirk Avenue, Winnipeg, Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

PHOTO: BRYAN SCOTT / WINNIPEGLOVEHATE.COM

SECTION 3:
Re-membering Paths

Hózhó Náhásdlíí'

"Navaho Madonna"

BR. ROBERT LENTZ, O.F.M. (FRANCISCAN)

In northern New Mexico and Arizona, the Navaho people preserve an ancient way of life on a remnant of what was once their land. Their history and their art bear witness to the strength of their culture. This icon celebrates the beauty of Navaho spirituality.

COURTESY OF TRINITY STORES

On Grasslands, God, and the Gifts of Others

CHRISTINA CONROY is associate professor of Christian theology at Ambrose University, located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikuni, the Kainai, the Tsuut' ina, and the Iyarhe Nakoda. A prairie girl, Christina can't for the life of her figure out the lessons of the mountain.

Home on the Grasslands

Just south of the Trans-Canada Highway, somewhere between Moosomin and Maple Creek, is a vast expanse of grasslands. For a visitor, this stretch of highway afflicts the soul; Saskatchewan offers "nothing to see." We who have lived here know differently. The grasslands of Saskatchewan are teeming with obscure forms of life. And the so-called empty spaces of the south have become my sanctuary. If I close my eyes right now, I can imagine the silence that amplifies the careful steps I take over graminoids and lichen, the waft of a turkey vulture, the lope of a white-tail deer. I can smell the sage and wolf willow. I can feel the wind that blows me over, hard, just as I can feel the nothing-at-all that gives way to uncomfortable stillness. It is in this place, where earth is overshadowed by sky, that I find community. The green gamma grass, the crocus, the fleabanes. I go to the grasslands not to be alone, but to be surrounded by an abundance of life. Life that shares with me a common Maker, and the Maker's designation of "good."

I was raised in the church, have been a minister of the church, and teach Christian theology. I love the Church for its capacity to be the good news of Christ, a voice of praise, and a comfort to those in need. I have also been harmed by the Church. This may be why I slip out the church's doors and find my way into a place where brush and bugs and birds declare the glory of God in the sheer exuberance of their good existence. It is in the midst of this strange and overlooked community of God's handiwork that I am afforded a space where I can claim a different identity. Here, I am neither problem nor enigma. I am a bearer of the beauty marks of God just like the austere creation that surrounds me. The grasslands teach me how to quiet my heart, how to recognize my own goodness, how to hear the stones who cry out when there is no one there to rebuke them.

A break on a hike in Grassland National Park, Saskatchewan.
PHOTO: TERRY LAWSON / FLICKR COMMONS

My first walk through the grasslands felt like a homecoming. I was rewoven into the fabric of life. I can remember turning back toward the valley before I left and kneeling down to put both of my hands on the ground – my attempt, perhaps, to remove some of the distance between my own flesh and the dirt, and to offer some kind of gratitude for the goodness it freely shared. I shuffled and turned so that I could place my hands in all directions. This was not an

intentional cactus-stabbed botch of what I would later learn was the Indigenous understanding of the four directions. It was intuitive. The land was helping me. But I am a student of text, not earth, and I would need the teaching of those who attend to the lessons of the earth, as endless generations before them have done, in order to make sense of my experience.

Rediscovering God

Call to Action #60 asks us not only to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right but also to teach this respect as the fundamental orientation towards Indigenous–Settler relationships. I was asked to reflect on this *Call to Action* because of my deep investment in the testimony of former residential school students. After six years of listening to survivors from across the country, I now teach that Christian theology did not only justify the abuses of residential schools, but inflamed them. I remind students that Christians are a community marked by turning and transformation not because God is a divine Father who loves, but because, as we are told in the First Letter of John, God *is* love. It may be that part of our responsibility to learn Indigenous knowledges flows from our call to live more fully into that love. It may be that loving God and neighbour means facing our own culpability in telling (and showing) the original occupants of this land that their stories, languages, and ceremonies were wrong kinds of knowledge. We Settler Christians acted as if God were hate, not love. *Call to Action #60* could be for Christians the call to repentance, the very *practical* reason why we should respect Indigenous spirituality.

The *theological* reason why we need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right is a matter of creation. Our Christian stories of origins are full of wildness and diversity. Through breath and speech, God calls the world into being. And each *thing* that fills the earth is declared good. There is a playfulness to the Genesis 1 story, a rhythm that takes us from day into night as suns and sparrows tumble out of God's words. When children I know clap along to the narrative and yell out the word "good," they catch on to something that most of us adults do not: what God creates is always going to be good. Every time. Theologians try to communicate that the designation of "good" defines what it means to be created. "Good" is not just a label. "Good" means our Maker, Goodness itself, participates in every form of life as its source and its goal. God's declaration of goodness is my inheritance and my essential nature. But it is also yours. It is the inheritance and essential nature of the grasses and trees and the moon and the beasts. It is the inheritance and essential nature of every human, Christian or not. We have in common God's participation in us. The lavish plurality of the world is a reflection of the divine in Christian theology. God is greater than anything we can say or think or imagine; we depend on the differences in creation to disclose their portion of the infinite depth of goodness, should we choose to listen.

The great theologian Edward Farley says it better:

> Follow wisdom wherever it is to be found. The world is so beautiful and varied– let it show itself.

The most obvious consequence of God's participation in creation is that "goodness" has real meaning. When we are saying something about goodness, we are saying something about the reality of God. We know, for example, that God is love, that God's presence brings back together what has been torn apart. When we see love, mercy, strength, and healing in the world around us, we can acknowledge those things as the beauty of the divine. The presence of those things anywhere – in a good meal, in good music, in an act of innovation – gives praise to God.

Needing the Knowledge of Another

For Christians, the less obvious consequence of God's participation in creation is that there is something about Indigenous spirituality that has the capacity to reflect God's goodness in a way that Western spirituality cannot. This does not mean that I should gather all sorts of practices and knowledges into myself. It means that we need each other. We need difference. To think that one person or tradition or culture could represent the totality of divine love is to mistake the part for the whole. Each tradition, and each person, has a skill or gift that offers a particular insight into the divine mystery. But that insight is a tiny drop in the infinite ocean of divine wisdom. We sometimes put walls around this tiny drop and call it church, but not always. For God's Creation also radiates good teaching whether we think it should or

not. Anyone who has experienced sanctuary in the grasslands knows that goodness and wisdom flow wherever they will with little regard for traditional religious structures or even belief.

So what does this mean for me? It means that I will always be a student of my own tradition, learning from the stories and texts and practices that have marked the path of Christian wisdom. I have tried to learn these well. It also means that I am impoverished without the teaching of the elders. As former Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Commissioner Senator Murray Sinclair reminds us, it was not just the residential school children who were taught that Indigenous languages and ceremonies had no value. We Settlers were taught the very same thing. We too had the capacity for greater goodness withheld from us. Without other knowledge keepers, how will I come to know the lessons of the land? How will I learn the language of sage and wolf willow?

A recent experience while teaching illustrates my point. I was scheduled to offer a class in the church's relationship to residential schools during my first year living in Calgary. In any class that draws on live testimony witness, it is important to bring the voices of survivors into the classroom space. Using narrative that I had recorded during the TRC's national events, I gave a short but explicit overview of the kinds of experiences the children had in schools across the country. I was mindful that this would be difficult for my graduate students to hear in part because the stories tell of deep cruelty and pain and in part because the narratives would be new to them and hit them with the kind of force needed to shatter illusions . . . which shatters other things as well. We talked about this. I prayed for them. I gave them a chance to debrief. But I had nothing in my tradition to address the deep brokenness, the nightmares, the heaviness that followed. I scrolled through the Christian practices I had at my disposal – songs, silence, candles, walking, more praying, laying on of hands, baptism, communion – but what we needed in this time of heaviness was the smudge. There are some who will say that I should have smudged the class myself – these are gifts of the earth! – and others who will agree that I should not. The teaching that came to me through that experience was that my own tradition needed the knowledge of another. And because I was new in Calgary and shy and did not know a single elder from any of the four nations that surround our campus, we experienced the absence of something good – the kind of "good" that comes only from the Maker of good.

A residential school survivor shares her story at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

STILL IMAGE: MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

Just as the grasslands have taught me how to recognize my own goodness, they have taught me to recognize their goodness. And the goodness of every strange and wonderful thing I encounter. We are kin in this goodness, lights that illumine a particular mystery of the divine. The powerful participation of God in anything that has life means that Indigenous knowledges will reflect the beauty and goodness of their Maker in a way that is not duplicated in any other occurrence. If I am blessed enough to encounter Indigenous knowledges myself, if I am blessed enough to make my way back to the lessons of the Saskatchewan grasslands, I will do my best to listen.

■

Being Spiritual Before A Common Creator

TERRY LEBLANC is a Mi'kmaq/Acadian, married to his wife Bev for 45 years, living in traditional Mi'kmaq territory. Terry is the founding chair and director of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community, one of four members of the Indigenous Pathways family which also includes iEmergence, My People, and Wiconi – all focused on building capacity with Indigenous peoples.

The word "spirituality" evokes a wide range of human responses. For some, spirituality is a mystical, indescribable quality of life that has no proof (or place) in reality. Others might allow for its existence but only as something that cannot be fully demonstrated and is therefore subjective. It is beyond the "real" world and is nonempirical. In other settings it has been described as an aspect of humanity that cannot be comprehended by the human mind. It is transcendent. Still others use spirituality to describe the ethos that exists in all of the cosmos.

We might say that, for many people, experience with the spiritual is like holding water in your cupped hands. It is there for a moment and the senses can tell that it was, but within seconds it evaporates or drains away to be replaced by an almost illusory memory of its existence. Describing it to someone who has no experience at all with it is like Neil Armstrong trying to tell someone what the moon was like as he walked across its surface. There is no immediate point of reference.

Every Indigenous people group I have had the privilege to meet and talk with about the topic is in significant agreement that the spiritual permeates the human community. But Indigenous people go further to say that the whole of our existence, in fact all that lies within the boundaries of existence, is of a spiritual nature. More than anything else, this is what differentiates Indigenous understandings from those of the majority in the Western Christian world.

And it is this that would be my own understanding, amended by some important caveats.

Human Spirituality Is Human

Turning to biblical faith, we might say that spirituality is to be understood as the human journey to apprehend God – to understand the spiritual. The Apostle Paul made this clear in his address to the Athenians, in Acts 17, when he observed that

> From one [human being] He [God] made every nation of [human beings], that they should inhabit the whole earth. . . . God did this so that [human beings] would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though he is not far from each one of us. "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 26–28).

It would seem, then, that Paul understood other expressions of spiritual behaviour beyond his Jewish community as having the same purpose.

Christians ought to agree, at the very least, that all of humanity has been created in the image and

Elder Vincent Yellow Old Woman offers up a prayer.
PHOTO: NAIITS

Leaders in the Indigenous evangelical community gather at the annual North American Indigenous Insitute for Theological Studies symposium.
PHOTO: NAIITS

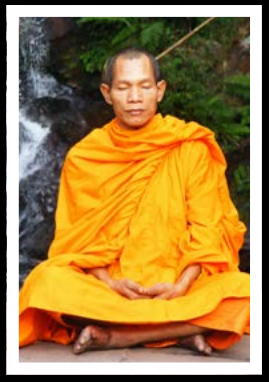
Casey Church leads a gathering of Indigenous and Settler Christians in a pipe ceremony (c. 2012). / PHOTO: WICONI INTERNATIONAL

likeness of God – irrespective of their religious behaviours, attitudes, or dispositions (or lack of them for that matter). We ought to be able to agree that human beings are possessed of a spiritual nature by reason of their having been created. Therefore human spirituality, as an innate quality of being human, ought to be readily understood as being the same in all people. While behaviours, understandings, and practices that arise out of that common spiritual reality may differ, the essence of being spiritual and possessing a common human spirituality should not be in dispute. While history and the human sciences can tell us that these differences are shaped by context, history, and multiple kinds of experiential reality, this does not change the fact that human spirituality is just that – human. Unfortunately our ability to be self-centred and culturally prejudiced makes this assumption a stretch in reality. Let me illustrate.

To say that the communion wafer is the "host" is to make a claim that carries a certain set of understandings about Christian worship – understandings that can differ dramatically between Christian traditions. To speak instead of "bread and wine" often makes other assumptions, drawing on different understandings and experiences. As a result, there are some dramatically different understandings of the practice of communion in the wider expressions of the Church. These are in part based in differing theologies, in turn based in different experience, values, practice, and readings of the biblical text. But while these theologies of the "Lord's table" will vary by church tradition, we would be unlikely to say that the people consuming the "host" are of a different spiritual nature than those "breaking the bread and drinking the wine" (or grape juice). To think such things would be considered absurd.

Muslims pray together.
PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

Jews offer prayers at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.
PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN



A Buddhist monk meditates.
PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

This difference in understanding of what, on the surface, might appear to be the same practice and belief in Christian faith also occurs in Indigenous spiritual practice and belief. In fact, Indigenous people from within the same people group will often differ in their understanding of ceremonies and their meaning. Allow me once again to illustrate.

Elijah Harper, a Cree-Ojibway and former member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, convened a sacred assembly in Hull, Quebec, in 1995. Traditional spiritual leaders and elders from many different regions of Canada came together with Christian religious leaders and government officials as a part of a conversation concerning what Harper had determined to be a spiritually rooted problem within Canada. These traditional elders were to lead in setting the "spiritual tone" of the assembly. It would not be uncharitable to say they had a difficult time determining what ceremonies might be the right ones to open, facilitate, and then close the assembly. In fact there was strong disagreement – and not just between regions of the country. In some cases elders from the same Indigenous people group struggled to concur. In the end, many of them left unable to agree what ceremonies should be done.

Perhaps, whether Christian or Indigenous, these attitudes exist because we have understood human beings and spirituality in a kind of divisive way from the outset. By that I mean to say Christians have understood human spirituality in a specific, and very reductionist, kind of way. But it may also be true that in some similar ways Indigenous peoples from our varied "tribes" and peoples have done the same. As a consequence, whenever we say "Christian spirituality" or "Indigenous spirituality," we create an "Us versus Them" categorization. It's kind of like the

childhood playground taunt, "My mom is better than your mom!" And while it may make us feel a swell of pride at the time, no one wins in such a scenario.

There is, however, another way forward.

Spiritual and Religious

Spirituality has a very wide range of meanings, but all working definitions put forward include some formulation of a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves. It typically involves a search for meaning in life, a personal belief in a supernatural realm, a quest for an ultimate or sacred meaning that transcends the base and material aspects of life, and a sense of awe, wonderment, and reverence toward the universe. It is a universal human experience – something that touches us all.

The Oxford Dictionary defines religion as:

> The belief in and worship of a superhuman power, especially a personal God or gods; a particular system of faith and worship; a pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance.

Application of the definitions of religion and spirituality can be made to the belief and behaviour of each – Christian and Indigenous. To say, as some do, that religion does not apply to what Indigenous people practice, is to create a third framework – one that would be difficult to imagine and even more difficult to make the case for. In fact, to do so is to ultimately create another playground taunt using a straw person or *ad hominem* argument.

Christians may note the need for salvation from sin. They may maintain belief in the uniqueness of Jesus who alone provides the means by which this is to take place. They may act on the need to share this "good news" with those who may not have heard of Jesus. However, they should at the very least be able to acknowledge – as their own scriptures make clear – that all of humanity possesses a common spiritual nature.

But to suggest that Christian spirituality as a category of human substance is different than Indigenous (or Baha'i or Buddhist) is to claim that there is an internalized, spiritually genetic difference between human beings with one set of spiritual behaviours and another. While DNA has demonstrated difference in human physical traits, the same cannot be said about human spirituality. In fact, Mario Beauregard and Denise O'Leary, in their book, *The Spiritual Brain* (HaperOne, 2007) argue that human beings are in possession of the same spiritual qualities. There is no difference between one person and another in this characteristic of human existence – though for some it is more obvious in its presence due to practices that enhance its quality.

Indigenous people, in turn, may argue that Christians do not fully comprehend the nature of the spiritual – and for the most part, they may be right. Yet for Indigenous peoples to claim that they alone are of a spirituality that is not religious in nature is disingenuous. If, as many believe, there is but one Creator who is known by many names, then it also must hold true that all human beings are of the same nature. Western-oriented folks have simply forgotten the truths of the breadth and depth of the spiritual world. They must therefore be taught again to embrace these things. But it does not mean that they alone are religious and that Indigenous people are simply "spiritual."

Clearly, in both Indigenous and Christian frames of reference, difference in spiritual practice occurs within and across each sub-grouping. Why then, is there such a struggle to understand that Indigenous spirituality, in this post-TRC era, is something that should be honoured and respected by Christians (and non-Christians for that matter), even if the personal practices and religious behaviours it gives rise to differ from their own?

It would seem therefore, if Christian teaching is to be believed as truthful, the TRC's recommendation that Indigenous spirituality must be considered equally as valid as Christianity is simply asking human beings to treat one another with respect and dignity irrespective of who they are. We may engage human spirituality with differing beliefs and behaviours, but we do so out of a common spiritual quality, one imparted by our common Creator.

■

Conversion to Wisdom

DEREK SUDERMAN is an associate professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario. His house, college, and church all lie in the Haldimand Tract, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Neutral, and Haudenosaunee peoples. With experience in Latin America and Benin, Derek is keenly interested in contextual biblical interpretation, and his research interests include psalms of lament, wisdom literature, and violence in the Hebrew Bible.

Recently I was standing on the very spot where Christopher Columbus landed in the so-called "New World" in 1492. Looking out into the bay, I imagined three tall ships floating on the waves and a rowboat coming ashore. As a Bible professor, I was also thinking about the theological perspective they brought with them. My eyes welled up as I pondered the ongoing impact of this encounter and wondered how it might have been different.

Try as we might, none of us experience life as a "blank slate." Our senses and observations map onto pre-existing frameworks; like coat hooks in a closet, these help us to organize and make sense of things we experience and people we encounter. European explorers and Settlers in the "New World" were no exception.

For Europeans of that era, biblical stories provided much of their mental map. And without a doubt, theological perspectives merged with political and economic interests to form a powerful cocktail of perceived superiority and divine right. As representatives of "Christian nations," explorers saw themselves as the heroes of an unfolding divine drama in which they played the part of contemporary Israelites. In so doing they assumed their superiority as a "civilizing" force meant to bring these folks out of their backward and idolatrous ways. In short, these Europeans brought the "gospel" enmeshed in European socio-economic aspirations.

A break on a hike in Grassland National Park, Saskatchewan.
PHOTO: TERRY LAWSON / FLICKR COMMONS

So much of history in the Americas, from initial European contact to residential schools in Canada, reflects this basic orientation. And now, as a professor in a Christian institution, I face the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) challenge "to develop and teach curriculum . . . on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right" (*Call to Action #60*).

For me, an integral response requires a few key steps. First, it's important to try to understand the perspective of my European forebears and to acknowledge the immense role the Christian tradition has played in providing the logic to justify this history. As a Christian, this then leads me to critique their perspectives and foundational assumptions from within my tradition, and finally, to consider possible alternative perspectives.

While some claim that the Christian gospel is inherently imperial and colonial, I don't believe this is the case. In fact I would suggest that the most compelling critique of this domineering perspective actually comes from an attentive rereading of the Christian tradition from its original orientation as a minority reform movement fundamentally opposed to imperial aspirations.

The Europeans' conviction that their role was to "Christianize" has significant roots in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). However, they merged this primary call to "make disciples" (or followers) of the teachings and gospel of Jesus with the idea of a "Christian nation." Rather than a call to follow Jesus as a countercultural way of life opposed to the trappings of empire, this became a mandate to "convert" the nations (sometimes at the point of a sword). In so doing, they conflated being Christian with nationality or loyalty to a particular ruler.

Perhaps the problem lies not so much in that they *followed* the Great Commission, but that they *did not take it seriously enough*. What would have happened if Christians had modelled Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, including turning the other cheek, loving the enemy, and choosing to serve God rather than wealth (Matthew 5–7)? What might have been possible with a focus on attracting voluntary adherents rather than coercing "conversion"?

I hope the irony isn't lost on us: where Matthew addresses a minority group without military or political clout and calls them to follow a Messiah who consistently rejected the trappings of such power, European explorers linked the gospel with the military might and economic interests of kings. What had been a call to lift the downtrodden and rescue the destitute morphed, shockingly, into a divine duty and a royal mandate to claim land and subordinate peoples.

And what was the gospel to be spread? A far cry from the call to social justice and economic reorientation envisioned in the good news Jesus proclaimed as the blueprint for his own ministry (Luke 4:18–19). The Church has too often functioned as an arm of the imperial project, pacifying Indigenous populations and aiding exploitative colonization.

Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba.

ART: GUSTAVE DORE (C. 1866) / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Rediscovering Biblical Wisdom

If the overarching framework for thinking about the encounter with Indigenous peoples was one of superiority and special status, what other perspectives might be available for envisioning this relationship? Are we forced to either adopt this perspective or leave the Christian tradition behind?

The biblical wisdom tradition has provided me with a helpful alternative framework for conceptualizing this encounter and its ongoing possibilities. Let me explain by way of a few examples.

Recall the ancient story of the Queen of Sheba found in 1 Kings 10. When she arrives to "test" Solomon she's impressed by his wisdom, which is described with a laundry list of categories: architecture, cuisine, administration, fashion, and more. Faced with the extent of Solomon's wisdom, the Queen is left speechless, marvelling as she returns home from this encounter.

While a great account in its own right, two things stand out as particularly relevant here. First, *as an outsider,* the Queen recognizes Solomon's wisdom. She comes from a far-away place and a different cultural context, but is open to seeing wisdom in the strange new world she encounters. Second, there is no indication that she converts to or worships the Lord after this encounter. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case, since she proclaims, "Blessed be the Lord *your* God," not *our* or *my* God (1 Kings 10:9). This story illustrates that wisdom can be recognized not only beyond kinship, ethnic, cultural, and national boundaries, but even beyond religious ones.

In light of the TRC's *Call to Action #60*, one element here is particularly striking. The list of wisdom-categories ends with "and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the Lord." Here *even religious ritual* can be recognized as a type of wisdom without, as we have just noted, conversion to that religious perspective.

As a Christian, I may be happy to recognize this since the Queen was recognizing the wisdom of the Israelites, God's special and chosen people (according to the witness of the Biblical tradition). This is why a second, and much less widely known, example of recognizing wisdom proves so interesting.

The book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings meant to provide guidance for life. Intriguingly, scholars are virtually unanimous in agreeing that one section of this book (Proverbs 22:17–24:22) actually draws upon an older Egyptian document, the *Instruction of Amenemope*. This was not a simple cut-and-paste job (multiple Egyptian gods are omitted in Proverbs, etc.), but a process of selecting, shaping, and reorienting this material to fit within the Israelite tradition. But the key thing for us here is that this example reflects a recognition of wisdom from a different culture and religious tradition – the "outside" – *within the Bible itself*.

Though often downplayed in favour of narrative material, the wisdom tradition reflects an international, intercultural, and interreligious exchange over what it means to live well in the world. This was not, and is not, a one-way street where "everyone recognizes the wisdom of *my* tradition but there is no revelation outside of it." And I for one don't think we should be surprised by this. If I truly believe that all people are created in the image of God, then I should *expect* to see reflections of the divine in the different people and peoples I encounter, as well as within their social,cultural, and even religious understandings

Recovering My Own Tradition

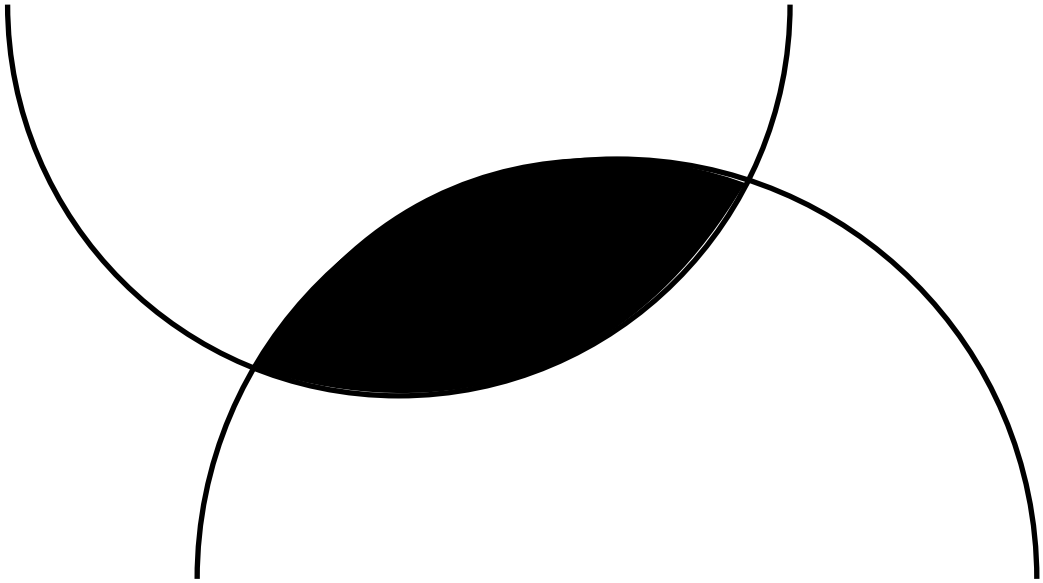
I find it helpful to think of wisdom as an aura around the specifics of particular beliefs, stories, and convictions of a given tradition. If you think of it this way, various religious traditions and their wisdom reflect something like the intersecting circles of a Venn diagram, with elements that are very different but others that overlap. In other words, it is possible to recognize wisdom in a different tradition, and even agree with and cooperate on areas of mutual interest and concern, without becoming an adherent of that tradition.

For instance, learning from Indigenous perspectives,

- **I consider it very wise to make decisions today based on how they would affect people seven generations down the line.**
- **I resonate strongly with an emphasis on care for the land and the conviction that humans and our activities are part of the natural world, not hovering over or emerging outside of it.**
- **I am impressed by the wisdom of making decisions or dealing with problems in a circle process where everyone is given a voice and everyone's concerns and suggestions are heard.**

Rather than simplistically defending or rejecting my faith, encountering these convictions has helped me to recognize, reconsider, and recover aspects of my own tradition. Like the ancient Israelites, contemporary Christians are also part of an international, intercultural, and interreligious dialogue about what it means to live well and wisely in the world. This is not a one-way street where God's wisdom flows through only one particular group to everyone else, but a mutually challenging and reinforcing dynamic. Christians certainly have much to contribute, but also a great deal to learn.

For me this has been a helpful way to frame *Call to Action #60* and the "need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right." This call challenges me to



recognize the value of these traditions, not simply as initial stepping stones or pale imitations of something else, but rather to respect their own distinctive logics and ways of being, lived and embodied in the world.

The irony may be that freeing the Christian tradition from the expectation that everyone needs to adopt it (or that making this happen represents its primary calling) allows me to dig deeper into my faith and ponder what could (even should) make me strange or stand out as a Christian. How does *my* life and *our life together* embody a unique wisdom that may be recognized and even attractive to someone beyond my tradition?

At the end of the day, I must ask myself if I am willing to

- **give up a sense of control and the assumption that everyone should think or believe as I do,**
- **recognize wisdom that emerges from and lies beyond my own tradition, and**
- **look for the image of God in others instead of expecting to find a mirror reflection of myself.**

A powerful memorial at the site of Columbus's landing symbolically depicts the disruptive entrance of the ship of European civilization into a circle of Indigenous tradition. Describing it as a "commemoration," a "remembering together," our guide clarified that this monument does not celebrate but rather acknowledges the fact of this encounter.

Imagining three ships floating in that bay, I felt a sense of sorrow and shame for the trajectory that Columbus's voyage, emboldened by my faith tradition, set into motion. Yet I also wondered: what might be possible if, for the next five hundred years, interactions between Indigenous and Settler peoples were characterized by mutual respect and a desire to encounter divine wisdom through each other's traditions?

There is hope for a better future together. But for me this lies not so much in the idea that all will eventually convert to my tradition. Rather, I hope and pray for my own "conversion" (turning), and that of members of my own faith community, as we seek to truly live out the gospel in our time and shared place.

■

No Greater Faith: Jesus and the Religious Other

JODI SPARGUR is a Settler of Scandinavian and German descent who lives and works in the unceded traditional territory of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tslei-Waututh on the west coast of British Columbia. A Baptist pastor, an urban farmer, and a seeker of justice, Jodi longs for right relations between the Church and First Peoples.

The wise-man built his house upon the rock . . .

The old Sunday school song comes to mind as I sit in the cool air of a traditional pit house on a hot spring day deep in Wet'suwet'en territory. We have put the finishing touches on the roof just in time for the grass to begin to grow on top; the root system will provide a layer of thatch, finalizing the waterproofing process.

This is not an exercise in alternative building practices, though a family would inhabit this structure come winter. It isn't simply an attempt to return to traditional ways of living. It's a strategic placement of a home at the juncture of two proposed pipelines. It's the intentional and courageous placement of community, healing, and resistance in the pathway of exploitation and power.

The pit house is a part of the Unist'ot'en camp, an attempt to reassert sovereignty over Wet'suwet'en territory in the north of the province of British Columbia. That sovereignty is being challenged by oil and gas companies. The Wet'suwet'en resistance is focussed on demonstrating that this land is not empty or unused. It is inhabited, and pipeline projects threaten life and community well-being.

JESUS AND THE CENTURION
PAOLO VERONESE (1528-1588
IMAGE: WIKIMEDIAA COMMONS

Who is wise?

The wise man built his house upon the rock (repeat 3x)

The rains came down and the floods came up (repeat 3x)

And the house on the rock stood firm.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus offers up a lesson on wise and foolish builders (6:46–49) and then moves on to the town of Capernaum, where he has an encounter that illustrates the point of the "builders" parable. In typical Jesus fashion, expectations are turned on their head. *Who really is wise?* The story goes something like this.

A contingent of Jewish leaders come before Jesus in the unlikely role of couriers. They carry a request on behalf of a Roman army captain. They want Jesus to help the man. It's all highly unusual for a number of reasons. First, the relationship between Jewish leaders and the Roman military presence is built on an uneasy alliance between two parties whose purposes are at odds with one another. Second, the leaders advocate that this man is worthy of a miracle because of the kindness he has shown the Jewish people.

"If anyone deserves your help, it is he," they said, "for he loves the Jews and even paid personally to build us a synagogue!"
(Luke 7:4–5).

Yet the role of the Jewish leaders in the story seems less about their persuasive arguments to come to this man's aid. Rather, it's about their presence as witnesses to the surprising, even shocking declaration that Jesus will offer up about the military leader.

Jesus was amazed. Turning to the crowd he said, "Never among all the Jews in Israel have I met a man with faith like this" (Luke 7:9).

Now it is one thing to praise someone for being a good ally. It is another to say that they exceed the level of commitment of the core group – in this case, a people who understand themselves as God's chosen. Moreover, Jesus' pronouncement of exceptional faith is made about a man who is a part of another religious system. As a Roman army captain, he's likely a part of the imperial cult. He gives homage to Caesar as Lord. Shouldn't this classify the man as foolish, not wise? Yet his faith is called out as exemplary.

Let's back up. Why is Jesus so taken by this man?

His request is that Jesus heal his ailing servant who is "sick as unto death" (Luke 7:2). As Jesus is on his way to the man's home, more messengers are dispatched to let Jesus know that there is no need for him to come in person. It's assumed that Jesus has the authority to dispatch healing from afar. In response, Jesus heals the servant and proclaims the man's incomparable faith.

What's so notable about the faith demonstrated by the army captain? It's the trust that he demonstrates in Jesus' authority. He believes that Jesus has a power to heal that transcends geographical boundaries. But it could also be connected to the fact that the captain does not seek healing for himself or a friend or family member. He seeks care for his servant, who is of a different class and lesser social standing. This, the gospel writer implies, is what a house built on rock looks like.

The story would have unsettled social expectations. And it should do the same today. Jesus receives the request of a man from another religious tradition. He commends that man's faith above all others in the "Church" of his day. All expectations of faith coming only from adherents to the religious tradition of Jesus are shattered. Through this healing encounter, the lines of community wholeness are being radically redrawn.

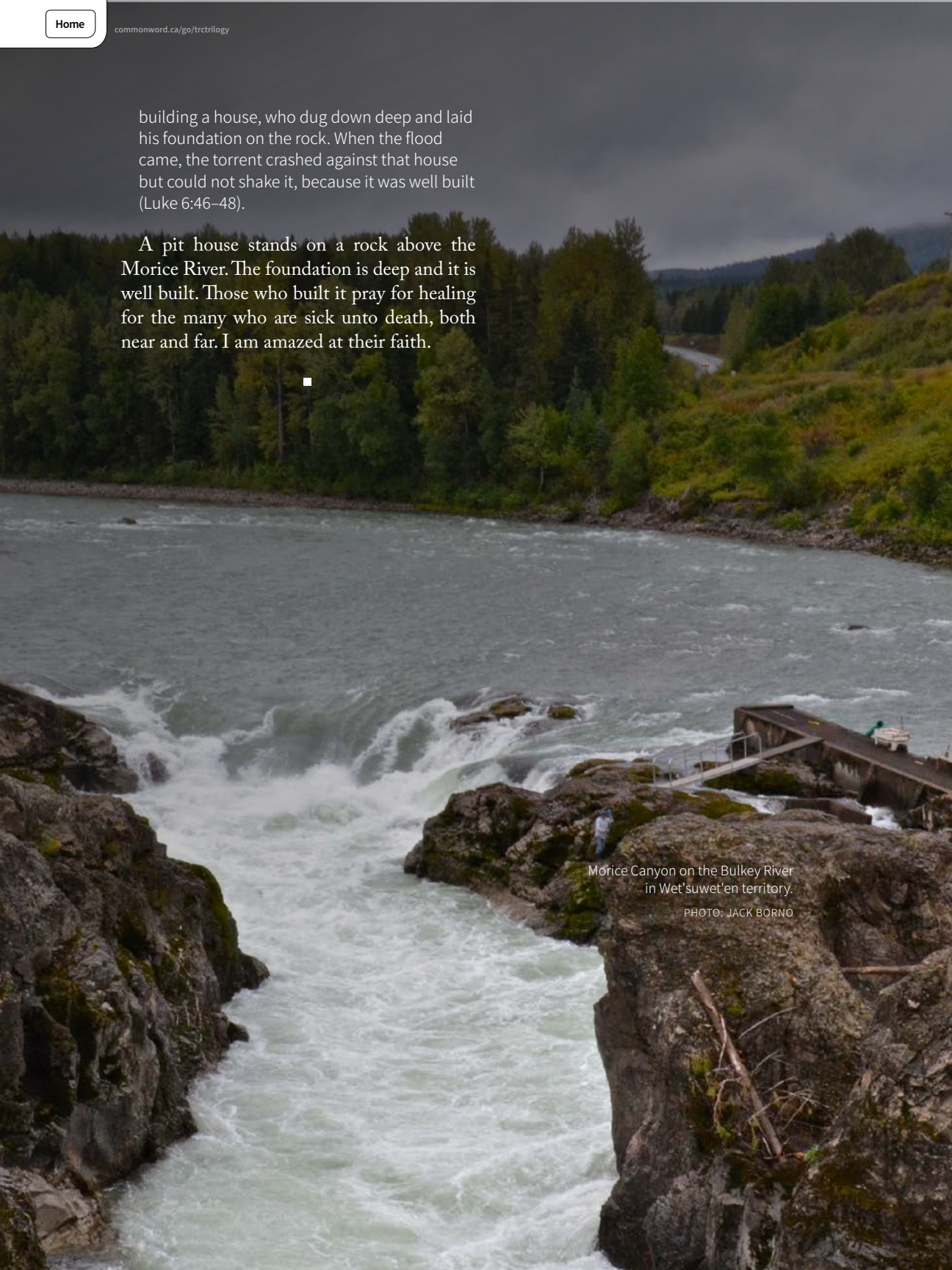
A Pit House Built on Rock

As we take refuge from the heat and share a midday snack together, the master builder of the pit house speaks of his dreams for this place. He longs for healing – healing for the youth of this and other Indigenous communities as they return to the land and to ceremony. But beyond concern for their own, this family has come to live here *not* for their own well-being and comfort, but for the sake of their whole community. They have come for the sake of all who share the watershed of the Morice River. They have come even for the sake of those who work for the pipelines and their families.

building a house, who dug down deep and laid his foundation on the rock. When the flood came, the torrent crashed against that house but could not shake it, because it was well built (Luke 6:46–48).

A pit house stands on a rock above the Morice River. The foundation is deep and it is well built. Those who built it pray for healing for the many who are sick unto death, both near and far. I am amazed at their faith.

■



Morice Canyon on the Bulkey River in Wet'suwet'en territory.

PHOTO: JACK BORNO

Place

CHERYL BEAR is Nadleh Whut'en from the Dakelh Nation and Dumdenyoo Clan (Bear). An artist, pastor, and educator, Cheryl has helped build bridges of understanding between Christian and traditional communities through her music, storytelling, and humour. Though she has travelled to many continents and countries, Cheryl is certain "Nadleh is my home, and these are my people."

I was born into grief
No one spoke of it
No one could
It ran too deep
If someone spoke it we would all shatter

We lost track of the old burial grounds
Some elders knew things and spoke up
But no one listened
So they kept to themselves
Sad when we don't listen to elders
When they become even more quiet

I was sad about what we lost
And angry about what could have been
All the days of laughter replaced
with bewilderment and shadows
We all went wild with grief
That wildness only made it worse
Gave us shameful memories
And fresh scars criss-crossing
The unhealed gashes of grief
Trying to fill the deep crevasses carved by grief
Only made them grow
Grief and shame are dangerous lovers

I cried for you for years
So angry

So sad
Like a search light went out and left us in the woods
Whatever we were looking for left us more lost than ever
Lost Dark Stumbling

And yet the beauty of this place
The river
The rapids
That were man-made
Placed to slow the fast river
They have called to me since my birth

This is the first place they brought me
The old house by the river
Where I first heard your laughter
Where you carried me after the barbwire cut into my soul
And this is where you left me
Standing on the river's edge
Searching, crying, longing to see your face one last time
The things you plan when you're sober
Seem only to come true when you're not

So I go to the mountain and leave my burdens
In the smoke to be carried to Creator
This beautiful place
I see signs in the sky that tell me
Everything is going to be ok
The winds in the trees stops me, I listen
"One day at a time" they say
Yet we must work for days
For piles of wood
To carry us through the winter

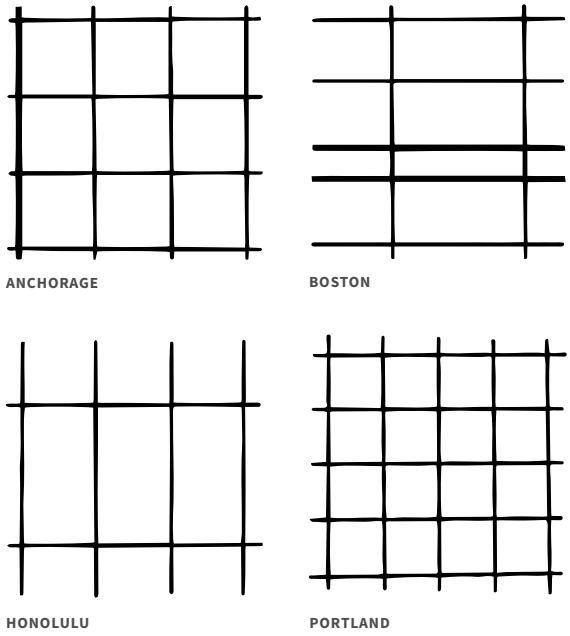
How do we plan for the days of grief?
I need piles of healing
Where do I find you?
How does the light work?
Why does it keep going out?

Possessed by the Land: An Interview with Deanna Zantingh and Willie James Jennings

DEANNA ZANTINGH is keeper of the learning circle at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Beausejour, Manitoba, Treaty 1.

WILLIE JAMES JENNINGS is associate professor of systematic theology and Africana studies at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut, traditional territory of the Eansketambawg.

We live in a world that views land as something to be possessed, something that exists separately from our lives. For Deanna Zantingh and Willie James Jennings, such a view of land is theologically dangerous and impacts not only our relationship to the Creator, but all of creation, including other peoples. Coeditor Jeff Friesen spoke with the two of them to discuss this critical theological challenge and what it means for future engagements with Indigenous communities across Turtle Island.



JEFF: Both of you are attempting to actively name a "distorted social imagination" that Christianity presently inhabits, one that manifests itself in the separation of peoples from each other and the land. In the simplest of terms, can you say how we have arrived at this place?

DEANNA: For me, it begins with the emergence of capitalism as the dominant socio-political structure across the planet. It's this form of economic relations that fuels the view of land as a particular entity separate from our own being. It forces us to view it as a commodity. We no longer see land as something connected to what it means to be human. It's been commodified.

WILLIE: I agree. The way I try to begin is by speaking of greed and power. How did Christians react to what we imprecisely call the "age of discovery" where people came to a new land only to discover and acquire unanticipated power in those new places? Christianity has never done well when it comes into unanticipated power. We thrive as a persecuted minority. But we really struggle when we have power. The power and wealth the "New World" represented meant that Christians found themselves doing things with the creation that they had never done before. They saw the commodified potential of the land and capitalized on it. But this in turn absolutely destroyed their own understanding of themselves as creatures of that creation. I think that's really where it begins. When the church encountered the power and potential of this new land, the world, the *entire* world, was commodified.

A mirrored and bloated image of Chicago's industrialized southside (c. 1947) "taped" over a dimmed image of mountains.

REINTERPRETATION: MATT VEITH
IMAGES: PUBLIC DOMAIN / UNSPLASH

DEANNA: This strips humanity of the knowledge of how to live in the land in a good way. What we learn through the biblical traditions is that land is a gift. But it's a gift that has conditions that necessitates care. We see a totally different view of land take root throughout the colonial project. With no acknowledgement of covenant, land and humanity both become unbounded.

WILLIE: That's exactly right. The tragedy arising through this is that we have developed a possessive understanding of land. This is one reason why it is so difficult for non-Indigenous people to understand Indigenous ways of living and connecting with land and animals. It's why this call to "respect Indigenous spirituality" from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is so important. We have a possessive vision of creation where we believe that the land has to belong to someone. That narrow way of understanding possession is at the root of the problem. And for us to then Christianize this vision is the deepest sadness. We Christianized this vision by interpreting the land as a gift given to Euro-Christian Settlers by God; a gift to redeem the native and bring the land to developmental maturity. A more proper Christian vision of creation is to see that it's not what land we possess, it's what land we are possessed by. This is something we can relearn from our Indigenous friends. I think it's precisely that inability to see our connectedness to land that is the deepest sadness resulting from the legacy of this commodified vision of creation.

DEANNA: That's one of the things I've really appreciated about Willie's work – the understanding

of how this vision of disconnection between land and body becomes Christianized. Whenever I explain it, I borrow Willie's story of Zurara, the record keeper of Prince Henry (1394–1460) charged with detailing the events of a slave auction occurring on Portuguese soil. Zurara's words capture the ritualized and Christian nature of the slave auction. Henry gave a tithe to the Church to give thanks for the wealth acquired, young slave boys were given to local churches, divine providence was invoked, and the claim was made that all was ultimately being done for the salvation of the "heathen." This separation of black bodies from their traditional lands not only marks a turn to commodification... it's a Christian commodification. And the same logics are at work today. The disconnection, distortion, and dehumanization enacted by the dominant almost always occurs alongside the understanding that it is in someone else's best interest. It's astounding. The Christian vision that should have objected loudly to this process comes to exist and work within it unquestioningly. Willie's right – it's not only poor vision, it's the deepest sadness.

JEFF: How is this sadness manifesting itself?

WILLIE: Two things. First, we are geographically adrift. What that means is that our moral sensibilities have no geographical anchor. We can have a church building a block away from intense suffering and we don't see our connection to whatever that is or whoever that is. Our imaginations have been trained to think only inside our borders and property lines, and this is affecting our ability to relate to others. We don't understand how important space is for us and our theological practices. Second, there is no awareness, no sense of the history or sorrow of this transformation of God's plan for creation, and this is further disconnecting us from the land we are possessed by. Animals and plants are becoming extinct every day, and we don't sense it, we don't feel it, we don't mourn it. Much of Christian thought is caught in this unprecedented social distortion that is affecting our capacity to come to grips with the transformation of the world.

DEANNA: Lee Maracle, a Stó:lō poet, says "How you treat the earth is how you treat women." I think you can extend it far beyond that. In Canada we are undergoing an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, and we have calls out for inquests into youth suicides in reserve communities. When you look at mental health across Canada and the U.S., it's a crisis entangled with our rootlessness. It all comes back to this kind of deep disconnection.

JEFF: So we find ourselves in this crisis of rootlessness, which has been normalized to a great extent. I like the way you put it, Willie, in your work *The Christian Imagination* (Yale, 2011) when you say, "One must look more deliberatively at the soil in which the modern theological imagination grew and where it continues to find its deeper social nutrients" when attempting to respond to these crises. Looking at our soil today, what are some of the theological possibilities beginning to sprout?

WILLIE: Regarding the soil that churches are possessed by, we ought to do three basic things. First, we must better understand the history of the land on which we stand. What was here before we arrived? Second, ask why are we here in this specific place – not just in economic terms, but in theological terms as well. What is God saying to us about what it means to be in this place? And third, ask how can we together spread our bodies in this place as if we are seed? How might we feel fully and materially touched by the earth in this place? Collaborating with Indigenous communities on these questions would prove helpful. We could have Indigenous elders lead us through these questions in good ways. There are tremendous benefits that are on tap for us when we try to do that kind of work together. I would love to see more churches decide to start asking some questions of where we live, why we live there, where we should live, and how to connect in the community. How do we actually come to see ourselves as connected and in kinship with the creatures that inhabit this place where we are?

DEANNA: One impact colonialism has had on Indigenous communities is that you either became Christian or you were counted as other. There was no acknowledgment of prior spiritual practices. No questions were asked about what kind of knowledge one had about God, or the world, or even what it means to be human. I think this is something that's catching up to us now, and it's not unrelated to these

topics. It has disconnected ourselves from each other. You can say what you want about the challenges we face today in our society, about religion, or politics, or whatever. All I see are humans crying out for more embodied ways of coming together. That's also a legacy of this distorted social imagination that Christianity presently inhabits. Being separate from one another and separate from the earth is negatively affecting us in countless ways. For me, friendship with Indigenous people has named a journey of transformation that, at times, is very difficult and, at other times, rewarding. And as much work as friendships require of us, I think it's one of the only ways we can start to get to some of the roots of the various difficulties we currently face.

JEFF: One of my concerns with all this is that we start essentializing rural experience where the only way we can connect to the land is by leaving urban areas. Even looking at the metaphors that we are using, we're talking about soil, seed, and roots. We're not talking about concrete, or the streets – things that profoundly shape the soil on which many people today stand. What are some of the possible connections to land we may find in urban places?

WILLIE: It comes back to the three questions I talked about earlier. When churches are to look at the land on which they stand, the questions and people they encounter will change from place to place. I want to see all lands as sites for re-connectivity. For me that's the crucial matter as I talk about our interaction with real estate agents, land developers, and city planners as the church. I'm only now understanding and doing a lot more reading about the small decisions that go into the way that neighbourhoods are actually built – where houses are situated, the size of streets, lack of sidewalks, or the purpose of sidewalks. I'm realizing how important all those decisions are theologically. We spend so much time thinking about what a church building should show the community. There's not enough time spent thinking about a theology that builds the environment in which that building rests. Given the profoundly racially divided realities we find ourselves living in, you realize that even with the wonderful wishes and great desires among people of good will, if the geography has been shaped to create segregated corporate communities, re-connectivity will be hindered. Even with your best hopes and efforts, if the geography is working against you, over time it will wear you down. This is just as true in urban areas as it is in rural ones. We have to do a much better job at thinking theologically about land – something we see happening well among many Indigenous peoples.

DEANNA: A friend of mine, Harley Eagle (Dakota), has done a lot of antiracism work here in Winnipeg and now on the west coast. He told me once that the trauma that many Indigenous people deal with is the trauma that Settlers brought with them. It took me a long time to understand what that meant, and probably in a lot of ways I'm still learning to understand. But as Willie is talking about the reshaping of space as a commodity, I see how this sharing of trauma is geographically configured. We cut the land into blocks because then you can give those away to certain people as property rights in a clear and concise grid system. This simplified geography cuts us off from one another. I'm a beneficiary of that system. This has really pushed me to think more seriously about who really has the most healing to do. In Canada, I think there still is this prevalent attitude that Indigenous people need all these healing programs. And don't get me wrong, there is a lot of healing needed. But when I look at where these issues stem from, it's a massive need for healing across the board because our issues are not separate. We are so connected. So I guess I'm all for creating more spaces for our traditions, practices, and our histories to come into dialogue. But land must play a part in this. I think it's precisely the geographical separation, seen in things like the rural grid system, or the ways in which we structure our neighbourhoods, that prevents us from entering into the kind of relationship that helps us see the diseased social imagination we find ourselves in. I think Willie says it's a theological mistake so wide that it's expanded to cover the horizon of the journey – it's everywhere. But once you see it, you can't look away. And so we must work together to help one another catch this more compelling, life-giving, and healing vision of what it means to be human.

■

Paul and Indigenous Spiritualities

GORDON ZERBE is a member of Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship and a professor of New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University, located in Winnipeg, Treaty 1, traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene and homeland of the Métis Nation.

I've been asked to reflect on possible points of convergence between Pauline and Indigenous spiritualities. This is a nearly impossible, even if crucial, task. The task is especially difficult because "Pauline spirituality" names a quite particular, though very contested reality, and "Indigenous spiritualities" represent quite diverse sets of practices and postures even as such traditions display a number of common features around the world. Most crucially, we come to this topic with prior mental constructs of what is either Pauline spirituality or Indigenous spirituality. For Christians, this task therefore invites us to reflect on our constructions of both "theological authority" and of "spiritual others."

Paul as Theological Henchman

What portrayals of Paul have been handed down to us? How faithful are they? And how do they shape us?

Sometime in the early 1300s, pictorial representations of Paul witnessed a revolutionary development in the Western (Catholic) Church of Europe. Following the lead and permission of bishops, scholars, and wealthy patrons, Christian artists began to put in Paul's right hand a large double-edged sword, resting comfortably on his shoulder. From the beginning of surviving pictorial representations from the third century, Paul always had a scroll or book in his hand, which represented his learning and his preaching, his letter writing, or the gospel more generally. But this innovation for what to do with his other hand stuck so that, by now, Paul is always recognized in Western Christian iconography as the one holding a sword.

Statue of Saint Paul with sword and scroll in hand (Vatican City).
PHOTO: RYAN ORLECULA / FLICKR COMMONS

This new element in representations of Paul corresponded to two significant developments in Europe: the Western church had embarked on violent crusades to propagate and defend Christian

doctrine in other lands, and the Holy Office of the Inquisition was instituted to stamp out heresy back in the homelands. In both cases, Paul was invoked to provide theological justification. In mental and pictorial construction, his spiritual sword corresponded to, and propped up, the worldly sword. He became the prime figure representing the Grand Inquisitor.

Paul's legacy is a mixed one, especially in how he has been constructed, often a betrayal of what he originally stood for. Thus, in his book *Liberating Paul* (Fortress, 2005), Neil Elliott concedes that Paul's words, albeit wrenched out of context, are more easily used by systems of domination than many other parts of the Bible, often in service of death. Paul has not always been a friend of the marginalized (slaves, women, the non-white, the colonized, etc.), and "rescuing Paul" is not easy.

And All Things Become White?

In an interview with evangelical theologian Tony Campolo, the late Richard Twiss – Lakota theologian, educator, and author – explains how white "Christianity" was forced on him after he committed himself to the way of Jesus, and how he was compelled to abandon his own Indigenous spiritual culture. Twiss had to give up dancing, cut his hair, burn his drums and feathers. What he heard from the pulpit is that when someone becomes a Christian, "we become a new creation, the old things have passed away, and all things become white."

By playing on Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 5:17, Twiss shows how certain Pauline texts were being manipulated in conservative contexts to suppress the legitimacy of his own cultural and spiritual heritage.

Reframing Saul/Paul

If we resist this construct of Paul as a theological henchman – guarding doctrinal purity and promoting cultural hegemony – what are key elements of an alternative understanding truer to Paul's original legacy?

1. As someone committed to establishing and nurturing cell groups of Jesus loyalists in diverse places, Paul's greatest theological contribution is in the way he seeks to contextualize the gospel of Jesus into particular cultural and political contexts and contingent circumstances. What is most enlightening in his letters, therefore, is not his final answers or directives for ancient circumstances, but how he wrestles with the interplay of a coherent gospel and its manifold cultural and situational expressions. Paul does not preach a one-size-fits-all gospel. Rather, his letters show a constant adaptation of the gospel to different audiences, circumstances, and sensibilities. In his encounter with diverse peoples, he is careful to draw on significant points of commonality between the gospel of Jesus and traditional ways of understanding the divine (e.g. Acts 14, 17).

2. Understanding himself as Jesus' special "envoy to the nations," Paul engages in mission work in a manner entirely dissimilar to the later colonial missionary enterprise in which the cross and the sword came hand in hand. His mission work represents a commitment to the margins, embracing weakness as the means of God's work in the world, as it confronts privilege and power in the centre and at the higher echelons. It is not an accident that Paul suffered martyrdom for subversive activities at the hands of imperial authorities. But when the preaching of the marginalized (the "Apostle of and for the Conquered") is later taken up as the rhetoric of the powerful (the "Apostle of the Conquerors"), it becomes used as weaponry against the very marginalized and dispossessed that it was originally designed to embrace.

3. Paul should be invoked as Saul/Paul – his birth name as a Jew, his apostolic name as a Christ follower – representing his cultural hybridity. It is Paul's experience of marginality as a migrant that gives his work its passionate edge. Inside himself, Paul wrestles with the complexities of multiple subjectivities and identities. His overwhelming conviction is that through Jesus, God's desire that all peoples of the world should be blessed, as was the promise to Abraham, has now been fulfilled. He argues that the "letter" of his own sacred scriptures has the potential to kill, contrary to its "spirit" (its own inner intention), whose goal is to bring things to life. His main problem with the "holy, good, and spiritual" laws of Moses is not that they were legalistically burdensome, but that they were applied in such a way

that the sacred text became a weapon of exclusion, contrary to God's original promise, whose goal was the inclusion and reconciliation of all peoples.

4. Paul, as a theological and spiritual resource, needs to be understood as a child of his own cultures and limited/constrained by those cultures. No doubt Paul would want his own words, which he never expected would become sacred scripture, to be assessed for their deep intention ("spirit"), not just their surface content ("letter"). Indeed, Paul's own spirituality is not adequately accounted for without a very careful consideration of the broader socio-cultural-political system and context out of which it emerged. In Paul's rhetoric, God's reign must ultimately out-empire (i.e., be universally victorious over) all human empire. This is not because Paul endorses the notion of empire as such, but because human empire-building poses one of the most crucial obstacles to the dawn of God's gracious reign of peace and justice, of love and compassion throughout the universe. Paul is convinced, therefore, that for God's compassionate reign to be supreme, realized by power only displayed in weakness and always in favour of the weak, it cannot stay in one corner of the world. Paul's theology cannot be properly comprehended apart from the imperial context in which it emerged.

5. Saul/Paul's theological vision of well-being and deliverance (salvation) is fundamentally transformational, pertaining to individuals, to diverse people groups, and to the entire cosmos. He embraces oneness within diversity, but never in a way that seeks to undermine or negate prior particular identities that people bring to their faith in Christ. He is fundamentally opposed not only to an exclusive particularism, but also to any culturally or politically coercive inclusivism or universalism.

While he is convinced that all things are transformed through Christ, and become new in Christ, never does he say that things are replaced in Christ. Thus, Paul never gives up on his own cultural-religious particularity (his "Jewishness"), and never does he ask people to give up their own histories and identities when they embrace the Jesus way. For Paul, the way of Jesus as Messiah is the very fulfillment of his hopes and dreams as an Israelite.

6. It is important to recognize that Jesus and Paul lived and worked "before Christianity," that is, before Christianity came to be understood as a movement and a set of doctrines and practices distinct and separate from Judaism. Moreover, Jesus and Paul can hardly be blamed for the various ways in which Christianity forsook the spiritual and liberating vitality of its beginnings. In his own time, Paul was a radical innovator who continued to build on the liberating preaching of Jesus. But in later generations, his letters became vehicles of conservative authority for doctrinal and moral purity.

Christian Constructs of Indigenous Spiritualities

What, then, about our constructs of spiritual others? Through the course of Christian history, there have been varied and divergent constructs of Indigenous spiritual traditions in the wake of European contact and encounter. The following summary along a continuum of Christian approaches to spiritual others is designed to foster reflection and discussion.

1. A pervasive attitude during the period of European colonization is that Indigenous spiritual practices are both fundamentally or extensively "demonic" and represent the innate intellectual inferiority of Indigenous peoples.

2. A slightly more generous attitude is that while Indigenous spiritualities may represent the witness that God has left with all human beings (Acts 14:15–17; 17:22–28), these prior practices must be entirely left behind as a person responds in faith to Christ.

3. For others committed to authentic "contextualization," Indigenous spiritual traditions represent the innate quest for the divine in all human beings, have their own inner logic and consistency, and can be positively embraced. But they still function to lead toward Christ, and can only be fulfilled in Christ, even as the gospel must be carefully contextualized for its relevance in particular cultural and spiritual contexts.

4. For some Christians, Indigenous spirituality should be embraced as a kind of dialogue partner in the ongoing discernment of the gospel, toward mutual enlightenment. Working in the context of religious pluralism, Asian theologian Archie Lee describes this process as "cross-textual hermeneutics," moving beyond the limits of one-way "contextualization." While not forsaking one's Christian identity, the goal

is to read the sacred texts (including stories, myths, rituals, sacred symbols) from different religions for mutual illumination, not only to help make the Christian scriptures fully accessible in Indigenous contexts, but also to reclaim the Christian scriptures as an Indigenous book. He proposes that one should be on the lookout for both liberating and enslaving elements in both textual traditions, noting that it is often in the encounter with another tradition that insight into one's own spiritual tradition can become clearer.

5. Others have concluded that many Indigenous spiritual traditions have been so impacted through colonial Christian contact that a time of recovery and reclamation of these spiritual and cultural traditions is most needed. Only after a revitalization of what has been lost can there be true dialogue and encounter.

The question before us is: which of these approaches has the potential to "respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right" (*Call to Action #60* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission)?

Can One Compare?

Though I have hesitated to attempt any generalized comparison of Pauline and Indigenous spiritualities, let me in closing note at least some points of obvious convergence as a hint of some foundations for ongoing "cross-textual" dialogue and respect.

- Both Pauline and Indigenous spiritualities fundamentally affirm that all life is sacred and that the entire cosmos has its source and meaning through the Creator.
- Both affirm that the divine is not separate from the world of creation, but inherent in it. (For Paul, God is both "above" and "in" the world at once, and sometimes Paul uses the Stoic, panentheistic vocabulary of the whole cosmos as an emanation of the divine soul that animates all creation).
- Both regard the human being as a body–spirit unity.
- The social and personal virtues espoused in both display a remarkable convergence (for example, compare the Seven Grandfather teachings of the Anishinaabe to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23).
- Both are not about spirituality in some isolated, privatized, or compartmentalized domain of life, but see spirituality as integral to a holistic vision of the fullness of life in its multiple dimensions.

Flipping the Script on Respect

JAMES W. PERKINSON is a long-time activist, spoken-word poet, and educator from inner city Detroit, renamed such by Jesuit Settlers taking over Ojibwa/Odawa/Potowatami and later Wendat/Huron territory. Currently teaching as professor of social ethics at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary, James is the author of numerous works, including *Political Spirituality in an Age of Eco-Apocalypse* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

> Yes, Lord, yet even the little puppies under the table receive the little crumbs that fall from the little children's plates (Mark 7:28; author's translation).

This sage comeback in Mark's gospel, voiced by a robust Syrian woman after Jesus had refused her request for her daughter's healing, establishes the direction for the reflection I want to offer here on white Settler Christian approaches to Indigenous spirituality. I write, as an Anglo-American Christian dweller on the strait of water (just north of Windsor) called "Detroit," in response to the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Call to Action #60*. That summons enjoins church leaders in Canada to develop and teach curriculum in their seminaries and training centres that "respects Indigenous spirituality in its own right." If only my own country had such a commission to stir Christian responses to our own genocidal history of relationships with First Nations peoples! But I can at least write out of a shared concern, if not a shared directive.

Evangelized Through Difference

On this far side of five hundred years of Settler plunder and decimation, how might we who are white and Christian think about and interact with continuing Indigenous spiritual vision and practice? It is a question I have plunged into as best I am able for some 15 years now as a kind of second step in my own spiritual pilgrimage out of ignorance and into responsibility.

A folio from Ilyas Basim Khuri Bazzi Rahib's Gospel of Mark depicting the story of the Canaanite woman. Rahib was a Coptic monk living in Egypt. The text is written in Naskh (c. 1684).

ART: ILYAS BASIM KHURI BAZZI RAHIB / WALTERS MUSEUM

My first step involved a now four-decades-long "re-schooling" in both Christianity and history at

the hands of black culture and African American people. Having grown up Presbyterian and bored in Cincinnati, along the banks of the river the Iroquois called Ohi-yo (beautiful creek), I had undergone an evangelical conversion in my first year in college, followed rapidly by immersion in the charismatic renewal movement and a potent experience of the Spirit in the student prayer group I helped lead during those years at my hometown university. Graduation witnessed me moving north to inner city Motown to join a Christian community living and ministering among low-income black neighbours in the most decimated congressional district in the country. I thought I was on mission to "help" poor folk in the city deal with their reality.

It took eight years of slow-motion "upending" of my own white assumptions and subtle arrogance to get to the point where I could simply recognize the amazing survival skills and profound creativity of my black neighbours in dealing with daily life in that impossible situation. What I saw "evangelized" me in a whole new way: the instinct of youth to take minimal resources and innovate remarkable entertainment (for example, using the abandoned car in the weed-grown lot next to the dilapidated duplex I lived in as a makeshift trampoline, flipping from roof to hood to discarded box springs placed at the front bumper); elders spinning animated stories on summer nights that captivated all of us listening for hours; four generations of one family (28 people) co-dwelling in one duplex unit, cooking food 24/7, sleeping in shifts in three bedrooms, struggling immensely, but exhibiting an uncanny capacity to translate adversity into humour and irrepressible personality.

Seeing such events, I quickly realized I was in the presence of a spiritual capacity far beyond my own. I was not there to help but to *learn* – long term and bone deep. The lesson was not academic and familiar, but rhythmic and "other" as I witnessed a communal use of percussive culture and florid style – in talking, walking, clothing, dancing, arguing, thinking, etc. – to make desperation yield beauty in spite of itself. This, for me, was a whole new level of "Spirit-Baptism"; this time into a cultural current of tongues-speaking and life-making that did not answer to my own cultural norms of propriety or notions of belief. It was literally revelatory – a peeling back of a veil that continues to astonish up to today – and vocation altering. I moved into a life-posture of being continuously "converted" by what is different from me, learning that the Spirit – and indeed spirits – are bigger and more creative than anything Christianity can claim a monopoly over. I take solace and warrant for such from the gospel text already invoked.

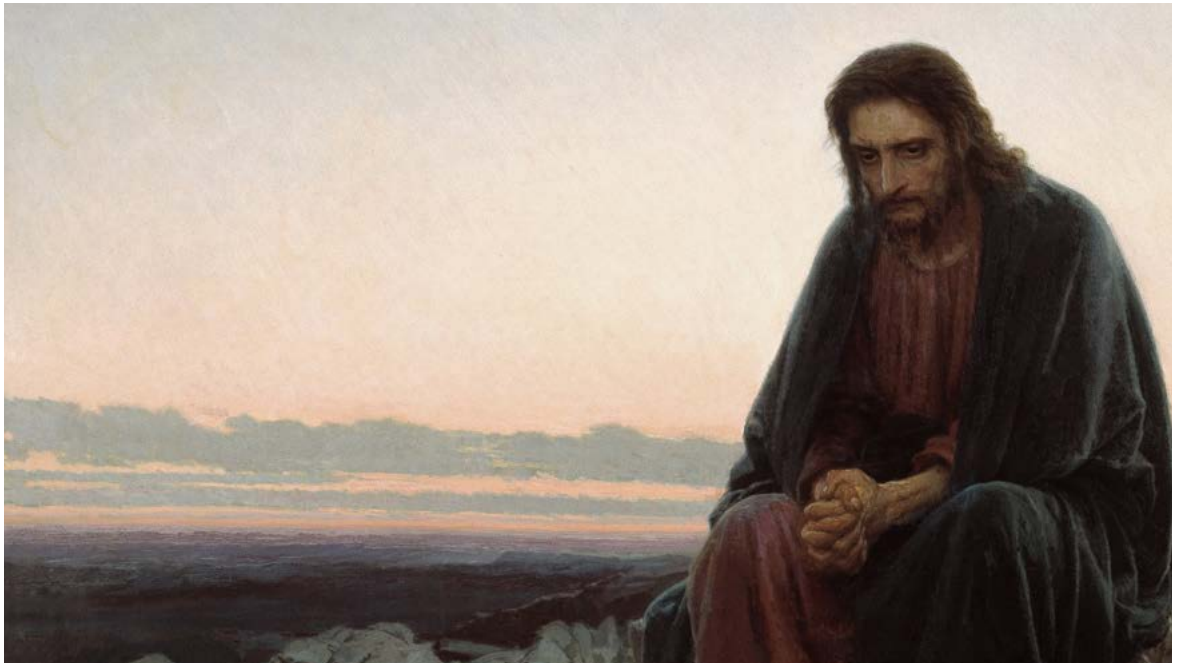
An Indigenous Saint of Repartee

In Mark 7, Jesus is a marked man. The plotting on his life is well advanced and the surveillance coming down, heavy. He goes underground, outside Israel proper, to rethink strategy. Ferreted out by a Gentile woman seeking aid from him as a rumoured healer, he refuses, citing other priorities:

> It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs (Mark 7:26).

She flips the script, repeating "littleness" three times (in relationship to crumbs and kids as well as dogs). In effect, she beats Jesus at his own game, cornering him into having to realize her request. He is a champion of little ones. She throws the value back at him threefold. It is a savvy trump of his tactic; simply for honour's sake, he can no longer refuse. And actually, a close reading will show that it is her own word (*logos*) that accomplishes her daughter's healing. He merely affirms that "the demon is already gone." It is the only time Jesus is noted in the gospel corpus as losing an argument. He loses it to a woman who is a single, female, head of household, who is not a Jew. Matthew will name her "Canaanite" – part of a long line going back to the Indigenous that Jesus' own people colonized (Matthew 15:21). I would name her the patron saint of repartee.

What all of us who are Christian need to anticipate when we approach those who have suffered colonization and domination at the hands of Christian power are these words from the Canaanite woman. In that moment, it is not *we* who judge whether *they* are acting in a manner *we* can acknowledge (for example, asking if Christians dare embrace sweat lodge ceremonies or tobacco offerings). It is rather we who are settler colonial Christians who are in question. Is our own spirituality big enough – that is humble and open enough – to recognize our own limitation and littleness? Are we honest enough



"Christ in the Wilderness"
IVAN KRAMSKOI (1872)
IMAGE: GOOGLE CULTURAL INSTITUTE

to own the terrorism we have enacted on so many millions of people around the globe?

Jesus was schooled by a Canaanite – indeed, even mentored in what would emerge as his strategy for the rest of his ministry (i.e., flipping the script on his opponents' attempts to discredit him). In like manner, we might say that white Settler Christianity is in dire need of being schooled by Indigenous tradition and wisdom on the terms of the latter.

Rewilding Christianity

But in truth, white Settler Christianity can hardly be paralleled to Jesus in its approach to respective Indigenous populations. The Christianity that emerged after 313 CE, when Constantine made it the religion of the Roman Empire, rapidly altered from what it had been before. In deep history, the tradition had emerged as a pastoral nomadic attempt to exit the empire of Egypt, walking out of slavery into the desert to relearn how to live on the land, led by a Moses who had been "re-schooled" for 40 years by an African clan integrated into that ecology by their herd animals. On entering the promised land, Israel itself amalgamated with Canaanite peasants and Indigenous folk in a movement attempting to exit the imperial city states on the Mediterranean seaboard and re-tribalize cooperatively in the hills.

But of course, Israel finally chose to become part of the regional domination system and organize itself as a monarchy (1 Samuel 8:1–22; 10:17–19; 12:1–18). The result was four hundred years of chaos and violence and finally exile. Five hundred years later, John the Baptist and Jesus the Prophet led movements attempting to return to that early Israel experiment in cooperative economics and communal decision making (Luke 3:10–14; Mark 10:17–30; 9:33–37). But both had first to be "deprogrammed."

John, mimicking Elijah, travels to the wilds east of the Jordan, the terrain of Bedouin peoples, where he learns to live well, eating insects and wearing skins. Jesus goes out to his wilderness cousin, accepting initiation (Mark 1:9–14). He is baptized into the watershed – immersed in the river, tutored by a dove, taught out on the land among the wild animals, pursuing something akin to a vision quest – before launching his campaign of challenge to occupied

Palestine. The "civilized" city is a place he will name as a war zone and site of plunder, and it is where he will die (Luke 19:41–46). And though Paul will re-centre the effort precisely inside imperial cities, it is only as an underground, outlaw movement of slaves and workers, hijacked from their homelands and peoples while labouring to keep alive the memories of movement beginnings in the wilds of Galilee.

But from Constantine forward, Christianity is profoundly re-shaped as imperial and urban to the core. Columbus merely extends the reach and violence of such a theocratic enterprise to an entire globe. All of us, who have been Christianized in mainstream Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical versions of settler colonial domination, are now the "discoverer's" heirs and unwitting accomplices. We are imperial exactly in our certainty of Christian supremacy.

But we must remember: Jesus himself was re-schooled by a Canaanite woman and by wild land. The re-schooling in light of Indigenous tradition needed by the European Settler family is beyond profound.

Respecting Otherness

At one point when the Spanish were decimating the Caribbean islands, American coasts, and Aztec, Mayan, and Incan cultures, Dominican priest and native rights advocate, Bartolomé de las Casas wrote of such Indigenous suffering from back home in Spain:

> I leave in the Indies Jesus Christ, our God, scourged and afflicted and beaten and crucified not once, but thousands of times.

For Las Casas, Spanish missions to the Indigenous inverted his sense of who was who and what was what. In a perception inverted by European savagery, Christ appeared in the Indigenous, and the Spanish showed themselves to be children of hell. The Spanish and Portuguese colonial behaviour provoking his perceptual shift was not worse than what the British, French, and Dutch would do throughout the rest of the Americas, including the Great Lakes and Canada.

But the Las Casas evaluation – necessary as it is – itself colonizes Indigenous experience in a Euro-Christian frame. Today, the question *Call to Action #60* poses to Christian leaders is far more radical. How do we halt the inveterate Christian arrogance that seeks to recast Indigenous practice in Christian discourse? That practice *must* be approached on its own terms, in its own language, subject to its own protocols. Anything less is more of the settler colonial same. And not merely for the sake of Indigenous folk! Precisely from such a place of otherness, *respected in and of itself*, we might find ourselves re-converted to our own tradition. We may learn once again to follow a Jesus who was not a Christian, but a Jewish man, initiated in a river, led by a bird, taught by the land, and re-schooled by an Indigenous woman – one who dared lift up Samaritan "heretics" as icons of Jewish faithfulness (Luke 10:25–37) and Canaanite challengers as speakers of truth and correctors of his own self-understanding and practice (Mark 7:29)! Are we only capable of embracing otherness to the degree *we* remain the centerpiece of truth and supreme arbiters of what will be named as valid? Or dare we embrace a Spirit that cannot be incarcerated in a formula or a norm, who may well call *us* to change?

Beyond Us and Them: An Inter-Religious Journey

RABBI LAURA DUHAN KAPLAN is director of inter-religious studies at the Vancouver School of Theology (VST), located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam Nation. Laura, a granddaughter of refugees, codirects VST's graduate program in Indigenous and inter-religious studies.

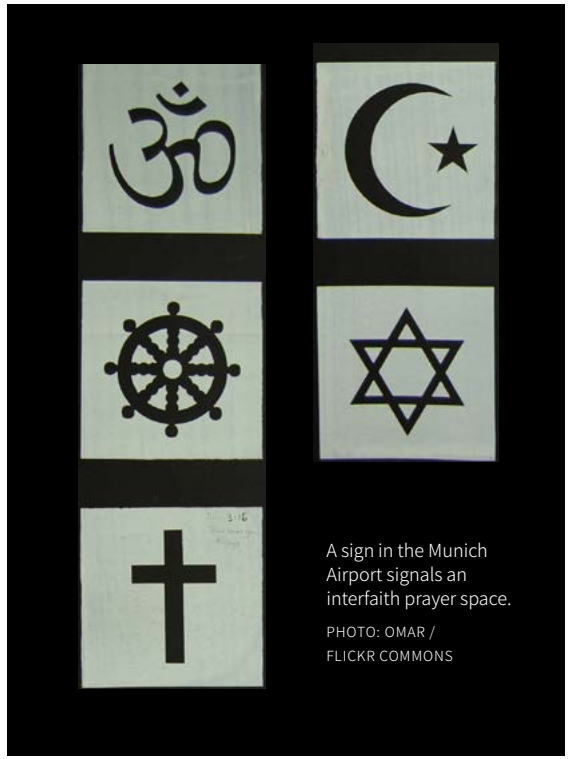
A Challenging Task

It's September 2014. I'm a new faculty member at the Vancouver School of Theology (VST), a progressive, ecumenical Christian seminary training Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church ministers. Our mission statement says we are "thoughtful, engaged, and generous."

We try to respond thoughtfully to current events as they unfold. We expect our graduates to engage with history and move Canada's Christian churches forward. We encourage them to be generous, actively healing the world. At VST, our mandate is to heal through education. To that end, we have created programs in Indigenous and inter-religious studies.

It's November 2014, and I, still a very new faculty member, am swept up in a project. My colleague Paula Sampson, director of Indigenous studies and an adopted member of the Nisga'a Nation, is finalizing our Native Ministries Consortium Summer School program. Students from all over the region will spend two weeks at VST, studying Christianity through an Indigenous lens. "I want them to study religious pluralism this summer," Paula says, "It's very timely. And I can think of no one better than you to teach it."

Gulp! It's true, I think. I've taught adults for 30 years and inter-religious studies is my field. But I'm a Jewish rabbi from New York City – neither Christian nor Canadian. So how can I be of service to students studying Christianity through an Indigenous Canadian lens? Especially in an Indigenous culture where your land of origin shapes you deeply? "You'll be fine," Paula says. But what I hear is, "Expect to learn a lot."



A sign in the Munich Airport signals an interfaith prayer space.

PHOTO: OMAR / FLICKR COMMONS

It's July 2015. An experimental summer school begins; it's our first year welcoming non-Indigenous students to sit in on the native ministries program. Twenty-five students will study religious pluralism with me. They sit in a circle, introducing themselves. As they speak, it dawns on me: this will be the most diverse group I have ever taught.

Everyone except me is a Christian of some kind – one of 20 different kinds, that is. They come from Alberta and British Columbia, South Dakota and Hawaii, England and Scotland, China and Korea. Their ethnicities are complex blends of First Nations, Pacific Islanders, European Settler lineages, and Asian backgrounds. A few have two master's degrees, others never finished high school. Some are urban sophisticates, at home in all kinds of cultures and traditions. Others hail from tiny villages tucked into the northern wilderness where they have never met a non-Christian.

Did I think I would be facilitating an introduction to Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism? If so, I was wrong! Actually, I will be witnessing members of this mixed group encounter one another. Part of me feels relaxed. We are not a commission, tribunal, or council with a practical problem to solve. Little rests on the success of our gathering. But another part of me feels a heavy responsibility. Our class is a form of first contact, and our students are learning to lead religious communities. The relationships we create will ripple through Indigenous–Settler relations for a long time.

A Journey Unfolds in Stages

It's Monday. We begin to get to know one another in a carefully crafted morning class, weaving together moments of lecture, dialogue, and experiential learning. In my lecture, I teach that interspiritual, intercultural encounter is a journey. We might describe it as unfolding in five stages:

1. You start by getting to know one another.
2. You may well move beyond safe territory.
3. You share what is easy and what is difficult.
4. You emerge into deeper understanding.
5. You develop a willingness to share spiritual practices.

The class listens politely. Everyone behaves graciously in the afternoon session facilitated by the teaching assistants. They do not yet know how deeply they will live into this journey.

Tuesday. We move beyond safe territory. We welcome an Islamic guest speaker. Some of our students have never met a Muslim. But this exceptionally articulate and friendly young man gives a clear introduction. He does a great job answering hard questions about gender, jihad, and Jesus. Or so I think.

The afternoon tutors facilitate a debrief of the morning. One of the First Nations students says, "I don't understand those people." She means, of course, that the Christian students are "us" and the unfamiliar Muslims are "them." She speaks honestly. It's challenging for her to learn in a mixed Indigenous–Settler class where, as she says, "your ways are not our ways." At least everyone is Christian. But to add an even more unfamiliar "way" into the mix is too much.

Other students are also on edge. One of the students of European descent hears only "us" and "them." Misunderstanding the context, she says "How dare you divide our class into "us Indigenous people" and "you Europeans?" Everyone rushes to explain or defend; interpersonal fireworks explode. No one wants to be stereotyped; no one wants to be attacked. Students offer their own hybrid identities as examples: European raised on an Alberta reserve; Indigenous married to a Settler; Hawaiian with one Samoan and one Japanese parent.

Wednesday. We share what is easy and what is difficult about multicultural encounter. We make lists of the simple and the challenging aspects. When we share them, we find many areas of agreement. The religious studies portion of class is relaxed as I teach about Judaism. When I show a traditional Torah (Bible) scroll, written on cow skin with vegetable ink, Indigenous students resonate with our attempts to preserve our early culture. When I speak about Jewish histories of oppression and displacement, they empathize, expressing kinship.

But yesterday's conflict still hangs in the air. Outside of class, we deploy all of our school's resources in the activity of listening. I meet individually with stressed students, as do the tutors and the new director of Indigenous studies, Ray Aldred, an Alberta Cree (Treaty 8). We listen to every perspective, correcting no one. We refer some students to spiritual directors for longer explorations.

Thursday. We emerge into a deeper mutual understanding. Today, everyone feels they have been heard, seen, and affirmed. To my surprise, everyone shows up to carpool to the Chinese Buddhist temple. At the temple, we are all equally challenged by the carved images and equally impressed by the respect

for ancestors. Some First Nations students say the meditation activity reminds them of sweat lodge. Inspired, I cancel the afternoon tutorial meeting. We pool our money, and the entire class goes out to lunch together. We laugh, share desserts, and tell stories about our childhood neighborhoods.

Friday. We share spiritual practice. Five students from our class – three Indigenous and two European – collaboratively plan a community worship. It is eclectic, ecumenical, experiential and beautiful, honouring both Christian and Indigenous traditions.

Principles of Respect

As we say goodbye, I remind the class of my lecture on the five-stage journey. Everyone is amazed: how could it be both so intense and so predictable? It was predictable, I say, but it was not mechanical. With intentional commitment, we followed a variety of good practices.

These practices are embedded in the story of our class's week-long journey. All of them can help as non-Indigenous people learn to respectfully approach Indigenous spiritualities and thought. Here are the practices, listed more explicitly:

- Recognize that First Nations people are diverse, just as Settlers and refugees are. Indigenous Canadians speak multiple languages, feel comfortable in multiple landscapes, have roots in specific local cultures, and practice varied rituals. No individual should be expected to speak for everyone, and no amount of background knowledge can substitute for getting to know a person.
- Understand that to Indigenous eyes, your place of origin matters. So does your lineage. Listen carefully as someone tells their story of origin. Let the high points and details guide you in looking anew at your own story. It's okay to respond by sharing your lineage; you may come to understand yourself better.
- Learn that Indigenous Canadian history has included displacement, abuse, and death. People who identify with an Indigenous community and its history feel the pain of that history. Pain can make relationship building difficult. As you seek to build relationships, expect to make mistakes and atone for them. Remember that the painful history is still unfolding in the present. Choose to play a positive role.
- Be flexible in your understanding of religion. Many First Nations practice Christianity. They adopted it generations ago, and it has become theirs, blended with local traditions. While it might not look like mainstream Christian practice, they do not want it judged as inauthentic or taken away. Watch and learn as you participate. Be willing to be addressed by spirit in all its manifestations.
- Listen to the story. Indigenous thought can be allusive, metaphorical, nonlinear. A question is often answered with a story that circles back to a punchline. The main point often comes at the end, not the beginning. If the beginning of a story confuses you, hold your tongue and keep listening. If at the end you still don't understand, ask.
- Be a good guest. A learning space or conversation circle may not belong primarily to you. Leaping in with your knowledge, your objection, or your reaction is not always productive. Watch how others speak; let them set the tone. Be authentic but not transgressive.
- Collaborate and consult. If you are planning a gathering of Indigenous and non-Indigenous folk, create the program jointly. Deliberate together: What should be the rules for speaking? Should shoes be on or off? What kind of rituals should set the tone? Collaborative action helps avoid a symbolic repetition of a terrible history in which non-Indigenous folks appropriated territory then forced Indigenous people to inhabit a corner of it.
- Allow commonalities to emerge. Rather than assuming what will help you bond, listen to what matters to others. You may hear about family, land, spirituality, or friendship. In response, share your stories.
- Develop an inner posture of mindfulness. Try to observe your thoughts and feelings and evaluate them before speaking or acting impulsively. Ask God for a glimpse of a spacious divine perspective so that you may know yourself more objectively and see others more compassionately.

Do Not Fear: The Joy of Engaging Religious Neighbours

PETER C. PHAN was born in Vietnam and came to the United States as a refugee in 1975. The Ignacio Ellacuría chair of Catholic social thought at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, Peter writes extensively on religious pluralism, interreligious dialogue, and migration. His latest work is *The Joy of Religious Pluralism: A Personal Journey* (Orbis, 2017).

The title of my reflection, suggested by coeditors Jeff Friesen and Steve Heinrichs, couldn't be more fitting in the age of Trump. Depending on how the three ingredients, "Fear," "Joy," and "Religious Neighbours" are arranged in the ideological kaleidoscope, diametrically opposed attitudes can be provoked. A demagogue can stoke fear and hatred of the "other" among the discontents to promote the kinds of postures that we see currently touted in the walled-in vision of "America first." By contrast, many devout followers of religious traditions will project a borderless world in which strangers, especially religious strangers, are embraced with joy, gratitude, and love.

These two attitudes are by no means completely sealed off from each other. Any one of us, at any time, may be sorely tempted to cross and maybe even has crossed from one side to the other. Fear of our religious neighbours as mortal threats to one's well-being, on the one hand, and joy at welcoming them as beloved and equal members of one's community, on the other do not come naturally. Nor are these attitudes confined to certain economic, ethnic, gender, or religious enclaves. Both attitudes are *learned* behaviours and therefore can be changed.

This article explores how a loving and welcoming attitude toward the stranger, especially the religious stranger, can be developed and nurtured. In the United States, such an attitude is a much-needed antidote to the deadly poisons of nationalism, racism, bigotry, and hatred that exist and are growing in our body politic. In Canada, such an attitude will enable Christian leaders and their congregations to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to learn about Indigenous spirituality not just out of duty, but out of real expectation.

The chedi of Wat Umong Suan Phutthatham – a place of Buddhist prayer and worship – in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand.

PHOTO: HEINRICH DAMM / WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

For millennia, Jerusalem has been a centre of interreligious conflict and dialogue.
PHOTO: BUECHERWURM / PIXABAY

The Joy of Engaging Religious Neighbours

At the start, note the quaintness of the title of this piece. Ordinarily, to inject a note of levity into the subject matter under study, authors (or publishers, to boost sales) include "Joy" in the titles of their books. Such are *The Joy of Cooking* and *The Joy of Sex*. Pope Francis has his own *The Joy of the Gospel* and *The Joy of Love*. My recent book *The Joy of Religious Pluralism* could also be titled *The Joy of Engaging Religious Neighbours*.

Cooking, sex, the gospel, and love can certainly bring joy, but would anyone expect religious pluralism to do so? For many Roman Catholics, yoking *joy* with *religious pluralism* sounds like a joke, since in recent years writing on religious pluralism in the Catholic Church has brought much stress and anxiety. Rather, perhaps the activity should come with the warning that it may be hazardous to one's health. Indeed, this is no idle caution since one of the foremost theologians on religious pluralism, the Belgian Jesuit Jacques Dupuis (1923–2004), was reported to have had his health irremediably ruined by the investigations of his *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Other theologians whose works incurred ecclesiastical censure have suffered loss of job, reputation, and peace of mind.

The central contention of my reflections is that engaging religious neighbours in dialogue is a joyous and exhilarating, albeit challenging, affair. Such undertaking is joyful both as it is carried out with joy and gladness despite potential personal harm and as it builds up a community of believers, or spiritual pilgrims, who are wholeheartedly committed to sharing life with one another, working collaboratively, exchanging theological insights, and sharing spiritual experiences. Thus, engaging religious neighbours is joyful since it participates in the transformed world order that Jews and Christians name "the Kingdom of God," promoting justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Do Not Fear

If joy is both the way in which interreligious dialogue should be engaged and its product, it seems inappropriate that the first prescription for engaging religious neighbours is "Do not fear," for the opposite of joy is sadness, not fear. Hence, the relevant imperative should be, "Do not be sad!" Yet upon closer analysis, the primary motive for rejecting interreligious dialogue is indeed deep-seated fear. Overcoming fear then is the necessary condition for engaging religious neighbours. What is the object of this fear? I suggest a twofold object: the "other" and "oneself."

Fear is the first spontaneous reaction – physical and psychological – to what is perceived as a threat or a danger to one's well-being. The threat stems from the foreignness, unknownness, and the potential to cause harm of the perceived object, which may be referred to as the "other." This fear and anxiety may be termed "xenophobia" – literally, fear of the strange. The "other" is anything outside one's group; it presupposes and reinforces the opposition between in-group and out-group based on race, ethnicity, gender, culture, or religion. The fear, suspicion, and hatred of the other is a *learned* attitude and behaviour.

In religious matters, the religious "other" is often cast as pagan, heretic, schismatic, morally degenerate, and spiritually lost. The "other" can stand for everything one's own religion rejects as bad and sinful. As a result, believers are strongly warned to shun the religious "other" lest they be contaminated.

The second object of fear is, paradoxically, oneself. By "oneself," I mean one's own culture and religion and all the elements that define one's religious identity, both personal and collective. The fear here is *for* oneself. The concern is to preserve and strengthen oneself, and it is feared that in engaging the religious other, one's culture, organization, religious beliefs, and doctrines will be denied or weakened. For Christians in particular, there is the fear that one's exclusive commitment to Christ and the church would be diluted if they were to acknowledge that other religions may contain some, though not all, of the truths taught by the Christian faith (inclusivism), or that other religions are equivalent or complementary ways of salvation (pluralism). Interreligious dialogue, if ever permitted, is practiced as an opportunity to proclaim to others that Christ is the unique and universal Saviour and to convert the "other" to the Church through baptism. Furthermore, in religious institutions with absolute authority over religious practices (for example, my own Roman Catholic community), this fear of loss of identity and heterodoxy often leads to the use of coercive measures such as censure and excommunication to enforce doctrinal conformity.

The injunction, "Do not fear," so often repeated in the gospel, is one we need to hear. It encourages us to meet the challenge of religious diversity with creativity and joy and to embrace it as an opportunity to broaden one's religious horizon, enrich one's spiritual life, and work together with people of all faiths and of no faith for peace, justice, and the integrity of creation.

From Stranger to Neighbour

So how do we engage the "other" not as enemy but as *neighbour*? The concept of "engaging the religious neighbour" evokes many rich images. The neighbour as someone who lives next door suggests geographical and physical proximity. It also implies common concerns and shared interests such as keeping the neighbourhood safe, clean, and beautiful. Above all, it implies hospitality, friendship, and even love.

When someone new moves into the neighbourhood, they should be warmly welcomed and provided with necessary help and information to feel accepted and to make their transition smooth. A neighbourhood is where everyone knows your name. Neighbours exchange greetings, share their family stories, look out for one another, visit and take care of anyone who is sick or in need, watch over others' children as their own, share recipes and food, bring home little gifts and souvenirs to others after vacation, borrow a cup of sugar or oil in case of emergency, celebrate birthdays and anniversaries together, and extend sympathies and assistance when tragedies strike. These are but a few things good neighbours do for one another, even in a modern city where anonymity often prevails.

"Good fences also make good neighbours," the proverb wisely cautions. To be good neighbours, people must acknowledge and not overstep physical and psychological boundaries, observe customary

privacy, treat each other with respect, state their beliefs and opinions with sincerity and humility, and honour differences in these matters without condescension and dissemblance.

Transfer all these behaviours to the religious sphere and we see how people of different faiths should act toward one another. Imagine a neighbourhood where Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and traditional Indigenous peoples live together. Such a neighbourhood is no longer a figment of the imagination but has increasingly become a common phenomenon. Imagine a meeting of these religiously diverse people for a business gathering or a party. Even though religion, like politics and sex, is a taboo subject that is likely to provoke passionate discussion, and therefore not brought up in polite conversation, it is better in the long run not to avoid it. Yet the most important thing is not to approach it as an abstract system of ideas, beliefs, and practices, but as it is concretely embodied in real people one lives with as neighbours and friends.

This kind of "interreligious dialogue" is not just religious talk. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences recommends a fourfold form of dialogue:

- Sharing life together;
- working collaboratively to make the world a better place for everybody so that justice, peace, and a healthy ecological environment prevail;
- honestly and accurately presenting the beliefs and practices of each religion so that believers of different religious traditions can learn from each other; and
- mutually sharing religious activities and experiences as far as possible without falling into a superficial and individualistic syncretism.

That fourth and last form of interreligious dialogue is no doubt the most challenging and transformative. In my experience, this is engaging the religious neighbour at the deepest level.

Personal Encounter

Some time ago I was invited to deliver a lecture at a conference on "world Christianity" and its encounter with other religions at the University of Payap (Church of Christ), located in Chiang Mai, a city of enchanting beauty in northwest Thailand. As is customary during academic gatherings, there was a free day for sightseeing. Participants were given a tour of Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, one of the most famous Buddhist pagodas some 1676 meters above the city of Chiang Mai. Dominating the whole pagoda is a golden statue of a sitting Buddha in serene meditation.

Throngs of pilgrims, young and old, women and men, rich and poor, ritually walked around the statue in prayerful silence, hands clasped at their chests. Others stood in front of the Buddha, incense sticks in their hands, eyes closed, lips murmuring prayers. There was of course the usual number of tourists, but the majority were faithful worshippers. There was none of the hustling and chattering I have seen at Christian pilgrimage centres. The atmosphere was suffused with an awe-inspiring aura of sacredness. I was told that on certain feasts pilgrims would go on foot, sometimes on their knees, from the bottom of the mountain up to the monastery, a pilgrimage that would take days.

After the conference, I stayed another day to see the city of Chiang Mai. I hiked to another famous pagoda, Wat Umong, just on the outskirts of the city. There was heavy, smoke-spewing traffic and ear-splitting din surrounding the pagoda, but inside the enclosure, there was an eerie peace and tranquility. There were several smaller pagodas where people came in and out for prayer and a garden with Buddhist proverbs displayed on the trees to help the faithful meditate as they walked along the path. Deep silence reigned everywhere on this sacred ground; even birds seemed to cease twittering.

In the middle of the compound stood the main pagoda, majestic and magnificent. In it there were several statues of the Buddha and his disciples, with a huge golden one placed at the centre of a high stage. On the left side, there was an altar on which there was a sitting statue of Quanyin, commonly known as the Goddess of Mercy, whom many East Asian Catholics regard as the equivalent of Mother Mary. As I walked toward it, I saw a young woman sitting in a lotus position a short distance in front of the statue, her head slightly bowed. Not to disturb her, I moved quietly to the back and sat on the floor at

about twenty feet behind her. Intrigued by this figure immersed in prayer, I decided to stay for a while. For nearly three quarters of an hour, the young woman sat wrapped in prayer, not a limb twitching, not a turning of the head, utterly still, like the unrippled water of an autumnal pond, under the loving gaze of the Buddha of Compassion. I was irresistibly moved to pray – to the Christian God *and* to Quanyin – by this Buddhist devotee. When I left, the young woman was still praying there. On my way back to the hotel, as I walked the meandering streets of Chiang Mai, my mind was haunted and deeply blessed by what I had witnessed.

I call these opportunities, and countless others, "blessings" because I consider them to be God's gracious gifts, as precious as the gift of the Christian faith. I do not, however, claim to have any privileged or superior knowledge on account of these experiences. But I must confess that they have transformed me, for better or for worse, both spiritually and intellectually. They have taught me new ways of relating to the divine as well as stimulating me to examine anew traditional Christian teachings on non-Christian religions. Such enterprise carries many risks, but it is worth all the troubles I have encountered. I came to realize the joy of engaging religious neighbours.

Embracing the Middle

TINU RUPARELL teaches at the University of Calgary in the Department of Classics and Religion. A member of Foothills Mennonite Church, Tinu lives in the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.

We are all hybrids, some more than others. Human beings are mixes of various elements and ingredients: biologically we share genes from both our parents' lines; our personalities and the various roles we inhabit are the result of engagement with all of the various people whose lives have intersected with our own; the events of our lives – our stories – are a tapestry of the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories told about us, necessarily interweaving ourselves with others. We are irreducibly mixtures, hybrids, compounds, blends, masalas, hyphenations, pluralities, composites, fusions. Sometimes we inhabit only one or even a few aspects of this plurality, even to the point of hiding (albeit temporarily) the others. But this does not erase the fundamental fact of our hybridity.

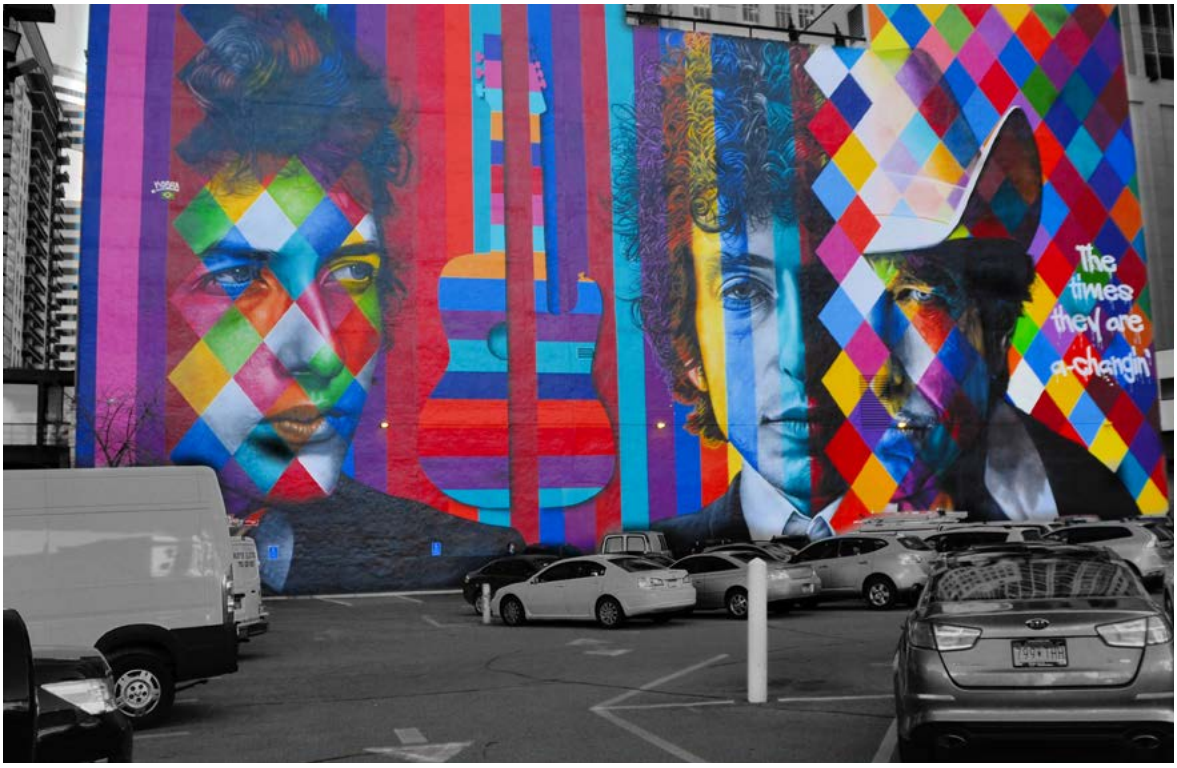
Hybridity and Metaphor

There are a number of ways to think about this hybridity, and metaphors abound. I've already used the idea of a tapestry, but any metaphor where multiple parts are combined into a greater whole without erasing the constituents will do: a symphony, a salad, a pointillist painting. Each of these happily mix up their constituents, revealing a tension at their heart wrought by a commitment to *both-and* rather than either-or. In what follows I want to consider the model of *metaphor itself*, and the *space between* words or ideas to which metaphors draw our attention. In so doing I hope to highlight the provocative middle ground – that interstitial space – as a source of imaginative, playful creation and potentially a ground

upon which Settlers may meet our Indigenous neighbours as ourselves and vice versa.

Now for a little philosophy of language (don't worry, it won't hurt). Metaphors are figures of speech that refer to one thing in terms that reveal commonplaces associated with others. That's how the Cambridge theologian Janet Soskice defines metaphors in her book *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Clarendon, 1987), following the masterwork in the area, *The Rule of Metaphor* (University of Toronto, 1977), by Paul Ricoeur. Both thinkers highlight the fact that metaphors are ways by which we creatively think and speak about something through the lens of other things. Or rather, how we refer to one concept by stretching its connotations to overlap those of other concepts.

This somewhat abstract way of describing the work of metaphor becomes immediately clear when we consider an example. Take Bob Dylan's "Chaos is a friend of mine." Here Dylan refers to "chaos" in



"The times they are a-changin'"
EDUARDO KOBRA
Street art in Minneapolis shows the transformations of Bob Dylan. Maybe even his hybridity.
PHOTO: JPELLGEN / FLICKR COMMONS

terms that recall various aspects of "friendship." The metaphor brings together two hitherto unrelated ideas and, through forcing our minds to resolve the peculiar tension the metaphor creates, elicits new, more "friendly" associations for the notion of chaos. The metaphor makes us see chaos as something more familiar and trusted, something with which we have a history – a friend. Moreover, the twist goes both ways; through the metaphorical tension, friends become slightly more unpredictable and quixotic, inviting us to live less deterministically. Thus, a metaphor refers to one thing in terms and associations that are pulled from another thing. Each pole of the metaphor is *redescribed* in terms of the other. Thus, Groucho Marx's wry metaphor, "A hospital bed is a parked taxi with the meter running," describes the resigned anxiety we sometimes feel when stuck in a hospital bed. But by the same token, we may now feel like an immobilized patient next time we are stuck in a taxi in the middle of a traffic jam.

So metaphors act by forcing us to mutually redescribe their terms. By doing so, each term's associations and connotations are stretched towards the other, creating an overlap in the space between them. This is the liminal, interstitial space that interests me here and which, I suggest, may help us think through our engagement with religious others, particularly Indigenous neighbours.

Now before we delve into what this interstitial space entails, I should be clear that while the overlaps created by metaphors are real, these hybrid, overlapped positions are not yet solidified into reality. They are sustained through our imaginations. The back-and-forth movement of our minds – the dialectic between terms of a metaphor, each being redescribed by the other – creates and sustains this

hybrid position only as an option, a possible new way of thinking (or rethinking) the poles of the metaphor.

So, returning to Dylan's example, the interstitial metaphors "friendly chaos" or "chaotic friends" each present new possibilities for us to think of particular aspects of friendship or chaos. The metaphor doesn't so much create a new kind of friend so much as it affords us a new perspective or insight into an aspect of friendship. The insight may be new, but metaphors by themselves don't create new types of friends, at least not at first. This is important because the poles of the metaphor remain themselves – they are not forcibly syncretized with the other. Metaphorical hybridity is thus a fluid and dynamic process, not a forcible conversion. It is sustained by the power of the metaphor to elicit imaginative, creative redescription, but it does not force its parents to cease to be themselves. Rather than an actual blend between, say, an apple and a pear, an interstitial, dynamic hybrid is thus more like a new option for thinking or living (though apple pears are delicious!). These creative, exciting new options might be helpful in our trying to understand people who might at first seem very different from ourselves.

Metaphors themselves can act as a model for the kind of hybridity that I suggest reflects us all. Just as a metaphor produces an interstitial, hybrid redescription of its terms in *the space between* the poles of the metaphor, we find ourselves as hybrids in the middle of the various traditions, stories, people, and places that have intersected to create us. Furthermore, if this is true for one, it is true for all. So we find ourselves making up part of a vast network of others who in turn partially make us. This model of what we are, that is, a nexus of multiple overlapping and interrelated nexuses, has gained broad acceptance among contemporary scholars and theorists working on theories of the self. Little wonder, you might think, since this understanding of the self is rather old. John Donne expressed the same notion in the first lines of his famous poem:

> No man is an island entire of itself;
>
> every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

Towards the Stranger

What is most interesting for our present purposes is that the interstitial hybridity I have been describing is a way to make a bridgehead towards the stranger. By exploiting the power of imaginative, interstitial metaphors, we can cross the divide of language, culture, tradition, religion, histories, and oppressions in order to help us decolonize our imaginations. Settlers can begin the long process of coming to understand our Indigenous neighbours, and in turn be understood by them (and ourselves) in a new way. I believe we have a responsibility to engage in this hybridisation, not only to respond to and take responsibility for the history by which we come to live and stand in this country, but also because the religious traditions we belong to compel us to empathize and commune with, and even sacrifice for, the other. We have a responsibility to enter into and expand our own hybridity towards the stranger.

I understand that this might seem both radical and threatening to some. I am indeed suggesting that conscious hybridization is something in which we ought to engage. However, we need not worry about losing ourselves by doing so because the model of metaphor ensures we remain ourselves while stretching towards the other. Moreover, redescribing ourselves in terms of another produces new options for being and seeing the world: we become Indigenized by imagining ourselves anew in the terms of our Indigenous neighbours. The hybridity we develop through careful metaphorical redescriptions allows us to inhabit in a creative and experimental way, the interstitial space between traditions, cultures, and religions.

- This space is fruitful – it allows for a perspective that is simultaneously part of two or more traditions in a ***both-and*** kind of way.
- This is no zero-sum game: we add layers to ourselves rather than trade away something of ourselves in order to gain new insight. We are enriched by doing this and we can better enrich others as a result.

So how does this work?

The key is to engage with Indigenous traditions, allowing them to redescribe us. This requires open, honest, and risky engagement with the other. This could occur through listening to and reading Indigenous voices, conversation with Indigenous neighbours, participation in shared experiences, appreciating art and music and food, and a host of other possible ways to get to know and understand people better. Of course it also means sharing our own traditions, stories, and cultures with them. In short, it means becoming a friend. However, it may require us to use our imaginations to try, haltingly and respectfully, to bring elements of ourselves into metaphorical tension with elements of their selves. For instance, could we imagine our stories through their terms? Could we narrate our lives not through a chronology of events but rather through our connections with place? Such an exercise would likely create for us a tension of unfamiliarity, only resolved through revealing a new way of thinking about ourselves. The model of metaphor bids us to seek and embrace the unfamiliar, allowing the resultant tension to redescribe us.

I am, through no doing of my own, very familiar with this process. I am a first-generation immigrant to Canada with ancestry from Western India via East Africa. Growing up in Canada, I was thrust into an unfamiliar environment and have been hybridized by it. I live in the middle of two very different ways of being: Indian, Hindu, Gujarati-speaking, historically colonized, immigrant; and Canadian, largely Christian, English speaking, historically colonizer, non-immigrant. I have learned to live as a hybrid, equally Canadian, equally Indian – not a hyphenated Indo-Canadian (which always raises the question of which term is adjectival) but equally, both Indian and Canadian. While being a hybrid can be problematic and not always comfortable, it has the signal virtue of being relatively resistant to ossification, universalization, and triumphalism. A hybrid, interstitial identity is a good corrective for black-and-white, us-them judgment. It reminds us of our fallibility and the always-tentative foundations of our so-called certainties. It enforces a form of humility. I do not claim any special ability to understand others, but I would suggest that the interstitial, hybrid identities I have tried to describe above afford a powerful perspective for the task of truly responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its call to learn about Indigenous peoples and to respect Indigenous ways.

One does not need to be an immigrant to be hybridized. We are all hybrids already. By consciously stretching and redescribing our own identities through careful, respectful, imaginative, metaphorical engagement with the other, we can use this hybridity to understand and be understood by our Indigenous neighbours, hopefully to become friends.

SECTION 4:
Creating Circles

"Welcoming New Life"
LEAH DORION, MÉTIS
LEAHDORION.CA

Hidden Truths: Learning from the Land and Each Other

ANGELINA MCLEOD is Anishinaabe kwe from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in Treaty 3 (Ontario). Ange is a water and land defender.

JOBB ARNOLD is a Settler activist who is assistant professor of conflict resolution studies at Menno Simons College in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 territory and homeland of the Red River Métis.

Histories are never singular and always incomplete. In between the moments and events that come to mark the passage from one generation to another, it is in the day-to-day relationships that occur in particular places where we change precedents and collectively do things differently. The Canadian colonial project was built upon unequal power relations and a genocidal disdain for diverse and complex Indigenous peoples and their spiritual traditions. Attacks on Indigenous spirituality were also directly connected to the systematic dispossession of peoples from their lands and sacred places. Communities were weakened by catastrophic disease epidemics while simultaneously subjected to an assault from Christianity – specifically, a Church–State complex determined to suppress and eradicate the ancient traditions and sacred knowledge that had woven peoples and places together for millennia. In the wake of these histories, there remain many hidden truths that are only beginning to come to light as we collectively pull back the curtain of lies that have dominated the stories we tell about the foundations of the nation of Canada on Turtle Island.

We are two authors, writing from very different backgrounds. We decided to write this article collaboratively as part of our ongoing efforts to connect and build our communities. Angelina is an Anishinaabe kwe (Indigenous woman) from Shoal Lake 40 on Treaty 3 territory (Northwestern Ontario), and Jobb is a white, Settler man raised in rural Ontario. We both now live in Winnipeg, on Treaty 1 territory. Our relationship began during the planning phases of a week-long, land-based field school held at Shoal Lake in 2016. The field school brought together a diverse group of young people from Winnipeg – Indigenous, newcomer, and Settler – to take part in Indigenous-led, land-based activities, including teachings from the people of Shoal Lake.

Shoal Lake water has been undrinkable for twenty years, while Winnipeg citizens can turn on the tap and receive clean gifts every day. / PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF KLASSEN

Jobb and the other outside participants were welcomed onto the traditional territories of the people of Shoal Lake. The programming was facilitated with generous logistical support provided

Participants in the Shoal Lake Field School. / PHOTO: JOBB ARNOLD

by Manitoba Pioneer Camp, a Christian summer camp also located on the lake. We were fortunate to have Indigenous knowledge keepers and elders who helped guide our planning processes and activities in light of Anishinaabe protocols and teachings. Taking these steps helped the event emerge as a space for relationship building and land-based learning.

Hard Truths, Hidden Beauty

Our purpose in writing this piece is to reflect on some questions and themes that emerged during our time together at Shoal Lake. We hope these reflections will be of some use to others seeking to connect with their own regional neighbours. Making efforts to connect people who have been divided by historical injustices requires that we face some hard truths. These encounters are necessarily emotionally charged because they point to grave injustices, ongoing exploitation, and endemic despair. Alongside these dark realities, there are also other hidden truths full of hope, profound beauty, and even the sacred. There are undoubtedly challenges that remain, but in persisting we learn how to continue to move forward collectively into an uncertain future. To put it another way, to ignore the hidden hard truths is to allow injustice to prevail. To ignore the hidden beautiful truths is to throw the proverbial pearls to swine.

Throughout the history of colonization, up until today, the sacred has too often been sacrificed on the modern altars of wealth, power, and privilege. Such acts have been downplayed and justified in our telling of Canada's colonial story simply in order to serve the so-called "national interest." In contrast to this narrative, we understand sacredness to have always existed within and between peoples, places, and our other-than-human relatives. Finding ways to nurture and honour our mutual interdependence through the

Pictorial notation of sacred Ojibwa music on birch slab (c.1820). / IMAGE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

sustenance sought in different spiritual traditions is not just something that is good, it is in all of our collective interests, and in an ecologically uncertain world, may very well be a matter of our collective survival.

Historical Lies and Colonial Realities

Historical depictions of Indigenous peoples, from the 17th century Jesuit *Relations* to contemporary Canadian literature, have presented biased information that has obscured the true histories of early colonial encounters with Indigenous peoples. These colonial fictions have contributed to a distorted idea of Indigenous people within Canadian society in both the past and the present. The colonial myth-making process simultaneously created Indian savagery while using religion as a weapon to justify the invasion of Turtle Island and condone the theft of the lands presumed to be empty, unoccupied, or belonging to nobody (*terra nullius*). Christian Settlers believed these undiscovered lands were given to them by God (as in the Doctrine of Discovery). As these myths turned into legal titles, the concept of the land itself was reconstructed in ways that nullified Indigenous governance structures and their relationships with specific territories while legitimating the Crown's claim to vast and uncharted (according to European perspective) areas.

Shoal Lake has played a major role in the precolonial history of the lands now called Southeastern Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. Located at the juncture of watersheds with river routes flowing in all four directions, Shoal Lake has long been a powerful community because of its strategic location well suited for travel, trade, and defence. In the early 1900s, Winnipeg, in desperate need of a source of clean drinking water, built a massive gravity-fed aqueduct to access Shoal Lake's pristine water. To this day, Shoal Lake still supplies the city with all its water.

The water from Shoal Lake 40 is an extracted resource taken by the City of Winnipeg without prior consultation or consent. The aqueduct through which the water flows was built over Angelina's

ancestral burial grounds. The original Anishinaabe village that was located at the site of the aqueduct intake was moved to a man-made island. All of this was done to benefit the city of Winnipeg, while the community itself was isolated and left without access to clean water.

ANGELINA: Members of my community continue to suffer the consequences of settler colonialism on a day-to-day basis. I often hear stories about skin rashes, lesions on fish, people falling ill (especially the elderly and young), no access to medical care or medicine for the sick, or families running out of clean water to drink. In the winter months, people must risk falling through the ice simply to access necessary supplies. The simple task of grocery shopping has cost people their lives. These hard truths must be exposed to decolonize our hearts and minds; to find practical ways to dismantle the racist myths created by colonialism.

Recovering Spiritual Arts

The real truths about Indigenous history can be told in many ways, and they should be told. The very act of seeking out truths can generate the power necessary to reverse racist trends, end negative stereotypes, and dispel the myths of savagery. To pursue these truths in practical ways is to end violence against Indigenous women and girls, to revive Indigenous ceremonies and culture. To teach Indigenous youth their true history empowers them to be proud of who they are and where they come from. Most importantly, building relationships from an open and honest place is a path to reconciling with Settlers who can help further reveal the hidden truths.

For Angelina, Indigenous artwork is a very important way of passing on the stories and true histories of Indigenous peoples – histories that extend to a time long before the arrival of the Europeans on Turtle Island. *Anishinaabe Midewiwin* creation scrolls, the four creations, migration scrolls, ghost lodge charts, sky degrees, ritual charts, and birch bark scrolls were all once used to ensure the continuity of our culture. These types of sacred Indigenous artifacts – "art forms" – were once used to pass on symbolic knowledge teachings through our ceremonial practices. The reclamation of Indigenous cultural art practices would undeniably revive Indigenous culture. This could be done by converting the stories and teachings into contemporary-style literature. But it must always be kept in mind that this should only be done with the permission and respect of Indigenous elders from the communities where these stories and teachings originate. Cultural protocols must be followed, and words must not changed or distorted.

Being Heard

ANGELINA: I can't speak for the entire community back home, but for me personally, to know that my story of truth is being heard, listened to, and honoured is really important. It means a lot to know that other people care about what's happening in Shoal Lake. It means even more to know that non-Indigenous people are actually taking action to help. Growing up in Shoal Lake as a kid, I often wondered why we lived the way we did when non-Indigenous people had everything easy. They had clean, running water, easy access to health care, education, safe, uncrowded housing, access to healthy food . . . I can go on and on. The point I'm trying to make is that growing up in Shoal Lake 40 on an isolated island with so much hardship made me feel like I was worthless and meant nothing to the people in the outside world. Now that things are changing for the community with a new road being built, new infrastructure, possibly a water and sewage treatment plant coming very soon, I don't feel the way I did when I was young. Now I know people care about what happens to us. It's a humbling feeling knowing that our truths are beginning to be honoured. Now I know what it feels like to be a part of the rest of the world.

Water is Sacred

Everyone, including Settlers, can appreciate the truths that "water is sacred" and "water is life" simply because every living thing needs water to live and survive. Water is the gift of life given to us by the Creator. There would be no life on this planet if there was no water. In Anishinaabe teachings, water is one of the sacred elements. We are created and carried in our mothers' wombs with water. Many of our ceremonies cannot be conducted without the use of water. It is considered a living, spiritual element that guides spirits to give us healing. When we pray, we offer tobacco to the water because it is a living

spirit. Traditionally, it is a woman's role to protect our waters and to conduct water ceremonies because women are the ones who bring life into this world.

Growing Strong Together

Awareness among Indigenous youth about the true histories of Canada is growing, and they are becoming more resilient. There is more Indigenous literature, a revival of participation in Indigenous ceremonies among the youth; there are more Indigenous graduates from schools, and Indigenous languages are now being taught in our schools and community programs. Growing up as an Indigenous youth, you have a bunch of lies taught to you in the public school system about the founding fathers of Canada who are made out to be heroes. Rarely do you learn that these men were directly responsible for the assimilation, colonization, and genocide perpetrated against Indigenous people on Turtle Island.

ANGELINA: When I began to learn the truths about Indigenous people, I no longer felt shame about who I was and where I came from. I started to feel proud and strong when I started learning the truths about my Anishinaabe ancestry. Both non-Indigenous and Indigenous people must continue to work together to reveal these hidden truths to Indigenous youth. We believe that in the future we will continue to see the resurgence of Indigenous culture, language, and ceremonies.

Trees, Roots, and Paths: Seeking Openness and Relationship

JEREMY BERGEN teaches theology at Conrad Grebel University College, on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples. A member of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Jeremy lives in Waterloo, Ontario, which is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. He is the author of *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts* (T & T Clark, 2011).

Understanding on Whose Terms?

The window in my office at Conrad Grebel University College (Grebel) overlooks a green space with trees, bushes, grass, a creek, and (usually) Canada geese. As I write this, I am looking out at two particular trees, each of which is commemorated with a plaque. One of the trees is a black walnut, which Settlers in the Waterloo region acknowledged was a sign of land fertile for agriculture. This tree acknowledges the first Mennonite Settlers in this region, Settlers of German and Swiss origin who came from Pennsylvania in the early 19th century, apparently following the trail of the black walnut. A second tree is an oak, grown from an acorn from a famous oak tree that stood at the centre of the Mennonite colony in Khortitsa, Ukraine. It acknowledges the Russian-Mennonite Settlers who came to this region in various migrations in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In broad terms, these two trees represent the stories of my wife's family and my own family respectively. In the case of my family, the story of settlement in Canada has been told as one of fleeing persecution and seeking land in which to practice faith in freedom. In an oak tree descended from one that grew at the centre of the Mennonite colony from which my paternal grandparents fled the Soviet Union during the Second World War (eventually settling in Treaty 7 territory in southern Alberta), I can see how the connections of physical place, the stories that go with the land, and a particular spirituality are held together.

However, while Grebel names its connection to particular groups of Settlers on this land, there is no acknowledgement of the Indigenous people who lived here long before European Settlers arrived. There is no acknowledgement of the Indigenous spiritualities grounded in these particular lands. And while my college is exploring and consulting with Indigenous communities about how to make such acknowledgements, I can prioritize decolonizing my own eyes and my own mind. I should resist the temptation to be content with a third plaque posted in parallel to the first two. That is, I should resist the

temptation to conceive of Indigenous relations with this place on my own Settler terms.

The question I have been asked to reflect on is one posed by Justice Murray Sinclair, lead commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

> Can the Church affirm Indigenous spirituality as an equal and valid means of worship?[1]

I want to say yes, but I also want to say that it's complicated. I want to say yes because I believe reconciliation is essential. But I've also come to see the importance of not moving too quickly to reconciliation. Truth telling is essential – first and foremost truths I need to hear, receive, and learn. So rather than articulating an answer, I will examine what I take to be some of my own assumptions and barriers to truly engaging this question. My hope, therefore, is to point to a path.

Personal Barriers, Potential Paths

My own Mennonite Christian faith tradition is not neutral. While there are instances of respect and learning from Indigenous peoples, the tradition has also been actively complicit in erasing and denying the presence and spirituality of the First Peoples in this region. The ways in which my own spiritual tradition has been complicit include not only blatant acts of denial and denunciation but more subtle assumptions as well.

I need to be careful about assuming that I have a role in recognizing and validating Indigenous spirituality. The idea that the Church grants legitimacy can serve to reinforce the superiority of the Church. (In a similar way, I am coming to see how the Canadian apology for residential schools can reinforce the role of the Crown as the ultimate peacemaker. The apologies by churches can subtly reassert that the Christian framework is the way forward). Yet I also recognize that I do come with my own stories and perspectives. I see with the eyes of Euro-Settler Christianity. My place of beginning is not neutral, or universal, or superior. It is nevertheless my place, and I need to understand and recognize it as my starting place.

I am very much at the beginning of a journey of recognizing my complicity as a Settler and engaging with Indigenous realities, communities, and spiritualities. Twenty years ago, I took some courses on Indigenous spiritual practices at the University of Winnipeg. I have read theological writings by Indigenous authors, especially those of George "Tink" Tinker and Steven Charleston, and I have assigned them in courses that I teach. However, formal courses and published texts are the typical and familiar currency of university professors. I recognize that my inclination is to engage in ways that reflect Settler ways of knowing as well as my own personal learning styles. The danger is that I engage only in a certain kind of head knowledge and keep my distance. While I'm not the kind of person who needs everything to work out neatly, at the very least I want a conceptual articulation of the kinds of tensions and ambiguities we are dealing with.

The relationship between the Church and Indigenous spiritualities might be framed in terms of what might be called a "theology of religions." This framework is typically concerned about salvation. An exclusivist says that explicit faith in Jesus Christ is the only way. An inclusivist says that while Jesus Christ is the only way, other spiritual traditions may prepare the way for him. A pluralist argues that there are many different valid paths to salvation. A fourth model suggests that different religious traditions provide paths to very different religious ends or goals.

This framework of "models" is problematic on many levels, though I recognize that when I work with my students on texts by Indigenous writers, these categories do come up. Western Christianity is driven by a strong desire to categorize and control. Once a relationship is labelled, then the mode of engagement can become clear. Yet respecting Indigenous spirituality calls such practices of conceptual labelling and control into question. For one thing, what my own Western tradition considers to be "religion" is very often that part of life that can be separated out as private or as "spiritual" rather than pertaining to all of life. I regret this, but it is a pervasive assumption. At the same time, I should be wary of assuming that Indigenous spirituality can be separated and isolated in a similar way. I should be wary of thinking of it as a "religion" or set of beliefs that might be related to Christian religion in this way or that way.

"Encounters Along The Grand"
JUDY GASCHO-JUTZI
FIBRE AND FOUND OBJECT (2011).
Commissioned by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. On display at Conrad Grebel University College.

Rather than categorization, the pressing need is for openness, encounter, relationship, and listening. For me this is a challenge that involves my whole being; it is easier for me just to read another book.

The testimony of residential school survivors and others before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was profoundly human and therefore complex. As I listened to testimony at a TRC event in Toronto, I heard stories of tremendous suffering and abuse, of generational legacies of pain, and of resilience. I heard how Christian religion was used to justify and suppress, and I witnessed the way in which the commissioners listened, received, and acknowledged the stories. I wondered how I might learn to listen in such a deeply present way. The virtues that foster openness and true relationship are more important than conceptual precision.

My own congregation, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario, has made some initial efforts to develop relationships with Indigenous neighbours and take steps in solidarity. We have received teachings from elders during worship services, services that began with smudging. We have been led in worship by a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous singers. As a congregation, we participated in the "Blanket Exercise" developed by

Settler and Indigenous peoples dance together outside the Manitoba Legislature to honour the spirit and intent of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the living Treaty tradition.

PHOTO: MOSES FALCO / MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

KAIROS Canada. We routinely begin our worship with an acknowledgment of whose traditional territory we are gathered on. It is just a beginning. But I appreciate the fact that we are moving in this direction out of a desire to learn, respect, and be in right relationship. There isn't a grand theory at play about what Indigenous spirituality is, or isn't, or how it relates to Christian faith. Perhaps we will turn our attention to that at some point, but maybe at a further stage on the journey such a question will not be very relevant.

As the churches learn to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right, they will encounter very different ways in which Indigenous people integrate, or do not integrate, their spirituality with Christian symbols and practices. The colonial legacy of spiritual abuse has very understandably led many to reject Christianity entirely; yet others will testify that the Christian faith has been a source of healing and strength. Still other Indigenous people believe Christian spirituality and Indigenous spirituality are incompatible. This is a terrain that I do not really know how to navigate, but I think I should begin by trying to be self-conscious about my own biases because these will shape how I hear and receive others.

I am drawn to leaders and writers who present a spirituality that is both Christian and Indigenous because I believe the gospel is contextual and must be so. For example, I am deeply appreciative of the recent book *Coming Full Circle: Constructing Native Christian Theology*, edited by Steven Charleston and Elaine Robinson (Fortress, 2015). Yet it is not for me to pick and choose the Indigenous spirituality that I can understand or that makes sense on my own terms.

From Tink Tinker I have learned to question my assumptions that the basic categories of Christian theology, such as the idea of a Creator, the concept of sin, or even the idea of "belief" can simply be applied to Indigenous spirituality. He is not saying that there is no Creator, but rather that Christians have been quick to pick out and affirm those teachings from Indigenous peoples that fit into Christian categories. And many Indigenous people have then come to express their own understandings in the terms shaped by Christianity. Tinker says that a monotheistic Creator who stands at the pinnacle of a series of relationships of hierarchy and inequality is inconsistent with Indigenous spirituality.

As I listen and learn, I should be prepared to encounter an Indigenous spirituality that might be different from what I expect. It is not that such difference means it is further away from Christianity, let alone less valid. Rather, recognizing these differences may be a sign that I am on the path to decolonizing the way I see the world. In that way, it may be a more truthful way of seeing and of hearing. At the same time, the call to respect Indigenous spirituality is first and foremost a challenge to me to seek out, be open to, and enter more deeply into relationships with people who embody this spirituality.

■

Back to the Womb: A Conversation at Turtle Lodge

DAVE COURCHENE, JR. – *Nii Gaani Aki Inini* (Leading Earth Man) is a traditional spiritual leader and the founder of the Turtle Lodge, located on the Sakgeeng First Nation in Manitoba.
Coeditor Steve Heinrichs went to Turtle Lodge – a place for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to learn ancient Indigenous knowledge and ceremony – to talk with Dave about Call to Action #60.

STEVE: Can you share a bit of your story and how you were introduced to traditional ways?

DAVE: I was born in the '50s, when the colonial system was in full force. The Indian agent in this community still had firm control. And, of course, we had the missionaries who had the control of the spirit of the people. There was a boarding school here that housed over five hundred students. And it wasn't only the residents of this community that were in that institution. Other native children from around the province were also brought here.

What I remember was the dominating influence of the churches. Christianity was not encouraged; it was imposed. We had to go to church and confession regularly, confessing sins that we didn't have. And throughout, there was the Indian agent who represented the Crown and the assimilation policy seeking to "Get rid of the Indian."

But I also remember that I had, as a young child, this attraction to the land. I would leave our home and would take off to spend time in the forest. I had a special place under the trees, and I would stay there. And there was something that was happening inside of me that I couldn't understand. It wasn't until later on in my life that I came to see that it was the naturally instinctive love inside of me, the spirit that I am. I was born with that spirit – to be Indigenous.

I never personally experienced the boarding school because my father would not allow it. My father was kicked out of the school because they said he was untrainable, that there was no way that they were going to convert him. But that reflected his courage. And he carried that spirit his whole life. That's why he became a great leader. Because of that passion and belief in his identity.

Building a sweat lodge on the Tulle River Indian Reservation.
PHOTO: DARIN BARRY / FLICKR COMMONS

I grew up around so many leaders. My great-grandfather was a chief. My grandfather was a chief. And my father became the grand chief of the Province of Manitoba. And I was fortunate to meet some of the greatest leaders in the '60s and the '70s. People like Harold Cardinal from Alberta, who wrote *The Unjust Society* (M.G. Hurtig, 1969), and George Manuel [the founder of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples], from BC, would visit my father. They spoke about all the injustices that were

being inflicted upon our peoples. But they were talking purely from a political sense. And I felt that, as great as these political leaders were, they had still not connected to the spiritual aspect because of the colonizer's influence.

Yet I sat and I listened. And in listening, I became very angry. I would ask myself, "Why are we being treated like this?" I couldn't understand. And I never could find anyone to address these issues. Politically – yes. When wrong is wrong . . . it's wrong. Yet my burning question was, "Didn't we as a people have a way of life?" And that was never really spoken about because I was in an environment where 99 percent of the community had been colonized and Christianized in relation to our way of life and our relations to the Creator.

As a young person, I carried a lot of anger. My father used to take me around when he travelled, and I saw firsthand the conditions that our people were living in – the discrimination, racism, and hatred. And that's one of the things my father tried to expose . . . that our people were in an environment of absolute imposition through the legislation of the Indian Act. We were being dehumanized by having our autonomy and self-determination taken from us. And the same situation persists today. The Federal Government basically still has full control over the lives of Native people in this country. There are no resources that come into this community without the sanction of the Indian Act. Education, social programs, and so on... it all comes through that racist Act.

STEVE: How old would you have been when your father was taking you around?

DAVE: I was between the ages of 17 and 20, a time when you're questioning a lot of things. And I will give full credit to my father and leaders like him. What they did was the beginning of the resurgence of our people. They opened the door to reclaim what was taken away from us – our identities and the right of self-determination. Yet, sadly, a lot of our own leaders never took advantage of it. And they continue to compromise and accept what the government imposes on our communities. When the Federal Government sought to "get rid of the Indian" they were seeking to get rid of a way of life. And they came pretty close. So I give credit to the people who refused, who remained faithful to our ways, those that went to the islands, the mountains, and the forests, and continued to sing our songs and hold on to the language. Here in Sagkeeng they used to go to Black

Women drum together on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature to honour the spirit and intent of the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

PHOTO: MOSES FALCO / MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

Island. The people would tell the missionaries that they had gone hunting, but really, they were doing ceremonies.

STEVE: So when did the connection to cultural ways take place for you?

DAVE: In my early 20s. Together with some friends, I decided to leave the community to go find elders who could teach the cultural aspects. And I was blessed to be taught by some of the most wonderful knowledge keepers. And they weren't just from my own nation. They came from the Dakotas and the Crees and so on. For example, one elder that had a big impact on my life was Peter O'Chiese from Alberta. I was in his lodges, and his teachings were always about love. It was people like him who inspired me and reminded me where the power was. And that's what diffused my anger – the old people saying, "That's who you and your ancestors are . . . you are a people of kindness."

When I went to the Dakotas, the grandmothers took me under their wing right away, recognizing that I was filled with anger. They told me, "You cannot live like that because a spot of darkness in your heart will spread fast. You'll hurt someone. You'll get sick." They called me and said, "We're going to take you back to the beginning." And I didn't understand. But I listened. And they built a lodge outside of this grandmother's house. I didn't know what it was. I had never seen one before. It was a sweat lodge. And they said:

> The beginning is the womb of your mother. That's what the sweat lodge does . . . it takes you back so that you can feel the warmth of your mother inside that lodge.

When I went in there, I knew that that's where I belonged. That's when my spiritual journey started. The grandmothers kept guiding me and, next thing I know, I find myself participating in a sun dance with some of the most powerful medicine people – Pete Catches, Joseph Flying Bye – some of the best and most strict teachers. And there I am dancing in hundred-degree heat! But because I was so determined, I didn't quit. I started to have visions, and started hearing things. Travelling home from the sun dance, I couldn't stop hearing the drum. I couldn't sleep. I realized that the drum was calling me. It wouldn't allow me to forget. The drum became central in my way of life.

The challenge for us today is to go back to the beginning. What does that mean? It means remembering who you are and the original instructions that we were all given as to how to live and behave as human beings. We need to know that there's a Spirit that defines our identity, our gifts, and what we are supposed to do to help serve the vision and the will of the Creator. It's not about following the will of man and his institutions. That robs you of your freedom to be who you are. This is what I began to feel in these lodges. I wanted to be free. The elders said, "You can be free!" And I chose to be free.

STEVE: How do you share this gift with young people today?

DAVE: Youth deserve to have the teachings that the elders have within their own heart. Here at Turtle Lodge, we seek to share these gifts. We do these rites of passages, for example, during the full moon. We bring the young women inside here. It's called *Makoose Ka Win*, which means "living like the bear." In the natural world, try to take that cub away from that mother bear. She will die for her cub. But how many women today will die for their children by giving them the teachings? By taking care of them properly? If you look at this province, there are over 10,000 Indigenous children in foster care. And people just look at that in a very short-sighted way and say, "Well it's the fault of those Indians!" Well, yes, we have to take some responsibility. But what is missing is the matter of identity and the teachings and rites of passage as to how to take care of children. If you ask any of those women who have lost children, I guarantee you that the vast majority have not received such a rite of passage. We have the answers in our communities.

STEVE: What does it mean for Christians to respect the traditional ways of Indigenous peoples?

DAVE: When I say that I respect you, I give you the spirit of respect for the religion that you believe. But you have no right to come and tell me what I must believe. And that was the problem – it was the imposition of Christianity and the colonial way of thinking. You have a right to have a relationship with the Creator in the way that you understand it. We would never want to stop and get in front of you and say, "No, that's not the right way to do it!" What

we would challenge is your spirit of giving. Can you give? Can you have respect?

I've said it before. We should have had [from the beginning] a First Peoples Immigration Department that asked everyone: Number one, "Will you follow the rules and protocols of being in our homelands?" Number two, "Will you respect all peoples?" Number three, "Will you take care of the land the way we take care of the land?" But it looks like you didn't. So you're going to have to go back home. (*laughs*)

STEVE: Or back to the womb?

DAVE: Exactly. Can you imagine if together we could speak that same word? But we have to find a way together that doesn't relinquish the right of our own uniqueness.

We're currently developing some good relationships with the universities. One of the things they are proposing is the Indigenization of their institutions. And I said, "No." I'm in total opposition to that.

STEVE: How come?

DAVE: How can you take the ceremony that we do, which is the foundation of our identity, and put that into the institution? Rather than Indigenizing the institution, why don't you come and learn from us? Don't try to take something and put it into your institution where you will then have ownership and control over our way of life. Come here! Come here to learn who we are. We have our own professors. But it can never happen within those institutions. It's impossible. We have to have full autonomy.

STEVE: Can any of this work around spiritual respect be done in the university?

DAVE: I think we can't overstep where the knowledge is received from. Before we talk about the university, we have to talk about how we share knowledge without relinquishing our responsibility to take care of that knowledge. Our knowledge is very land based and very spiritual. And the knowledge of most academic institutions is very materialistic and trained to be a part of the capitalist system, which has created much of the controversy. I think the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proposal [*Call to Action #60*] is well intended, but the reality of the situation is that, in order to be successful, we're going to have to begin here [in the lodges of the people].

If your community is serious and wants to learn about Indigenous peoples and our ways, why not bring your people to this lodge and have them experience our ceremonies. Why is that so hard to do?

Two Ears, One Mouth: Theological Education Towards Respect

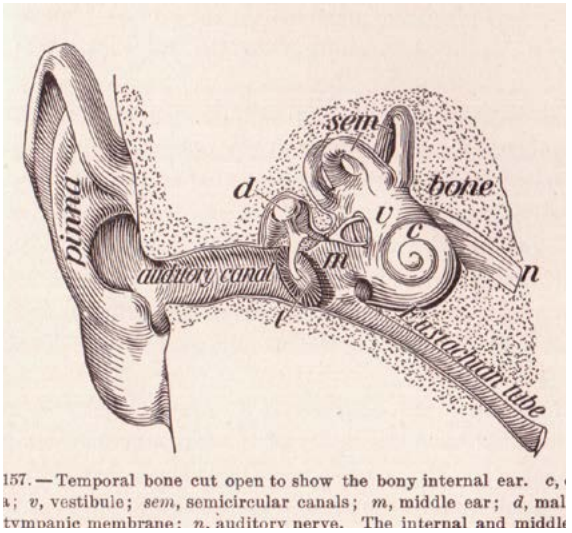
JONATHAN HAMILTON-DIABO grew up in Kahnawake, Quebec, is a member of the Mohawk Nation, and is the director of First Nations House at the University of Toronto.

THOMAS REYNOLDS is associate professor of theology at Emmanuel College and the author of *The Broken Whole: Philosophical Steps Toward a Theology of Global Solidarity* (SUNY Press, 2006).

Jonathan and Thomas both live in Toronto, traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

This essay seeks to explore what theological education might contribute to fostering "respect for Indigenous spiritualities in their own right," the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) *Call to Action #60*. As places of learning for church leaders, theological schools and seminaries should play an important role in the process, moving beyond harmful attitudes, policies, and practices of the past. Since the conversation is only beginning, our goal is modest. We hope to begin thinking about what creative change might look like in programs of theological study.

We write based upon our own experience and involvement at the Toronto School of Theology (TST), housed in the University of Toronto, a consortium of seven theological schools from different Christian traditions. We also have taught a course together at Emmanuel College, one of the seven schools, affiliated with the United Church of Canada. This course addressed Indigenous spiritual perspectives and histories, the damaging effects of settler colonialism, the TRC, church responses and responsibilities, and the theological implications



157.—Temporal bone cut open to show the bony internal ear. *c*, ; *v*, vestibule; *sem*, semicircular canals; *m*, middle ear; *d*, mal tympanic membrane; *n*, auditory nerve. The internal and middl

Internal ear. / ART: SUE CLARK / FLICKR COMMONS

that emerge from these. In addition, the complex and diverse relationships between Indigenous communities with Christianity as a faith and the Church as an organization were explored. We coauthor here in an effort to embody the kind of collaboration that we think moving forward with mutual respect entails between Indigenous and Settler perspectives.

Three interrelated points form the heart of what we would like to say. First, honouring Indigenous spiritualities involves reimagining Christian theology on many levels, particularly with regard to understanding the gospel in an engagement with other worldviews (and this engagement is not only about ideas, but people themselves as well). Second, curriculum is needed where learning *about*

Indigenous spiritualities is rooted in learning *from* Indigenous teachings. Third, this cannot help but be lived out in relationships and partnerships *with* Indigenous leaders, elders, and communities. All three of these themes work together as an integrated pulse, driving what necessarily will be an ongoing process of transformation in educational communities and churches.

Reimagining Theology

First, reimagining theology in ways that respect Indigenous spiritualities requires major shifts on multiple fronts. We can highlight only a few here. Most important is what many authors now call a "decolonizing of knowledge," which means critically re-evaluating what counts for research and learning in light of the effects of Western imperialism and colonialism. European modes of thought and education have been considered the norm, devaluing Indigenous knowledges and ways of understanding the world as "uncivilized" and "savage." Christian missionaries bolstered this by representing Indigenous spiritualities as "heathen" and in need of conversion to a gospel imported from and distorted by the West. Theological education often unwittingly carries forward such a framework, speaking in exclusivist terms about a so-called universal truth that, in reality, mirrors particular European interests and powers. It thus warrants critical intervention to uncouple research and learning from colonial modes of knowing.

The implications of decolonizing knowledge are significant for theology. Up front, it entails acknowledging the damaging consequences of Settler misrepresentations of Indigenous perspectives (church-sanctioned residential schools being one insidious example). In a spirit of repentance then, settler Christianity in Canada must rediscover what the gospel call to the love of neighbour means. Loving neighbour, in fact, is a way of discovering God's presence in the neighbour, who is loved by God.

And in theological education, this will require reorientations that explicitly recognize the distinct legitimacy of knowledges coming from Indigenous cultures and spiritual practices. Without this, stories like the following, relayed by a highly regarded elder in church leadership, will continue:

> As a person of First Nations ancestry, I knew that I saw things differently than others. When I picked up the first essay that I had written in a systematic theology course, I noticed I had a failing grade, and written at the bottom was the following comment: *"This is a heresy!"* Meeting these challenges became for me a life-long journey in spiritual expression.

Respecting Indigenous spiritualities in their own right calls for wider theological conceptions of God's work in the world than this. And such theology will be humble and mindful of its own limits, open to the genuine possibility (even reality) of God's presence in alternative perspectives, and sensitive to the needed work of reparation and justice.

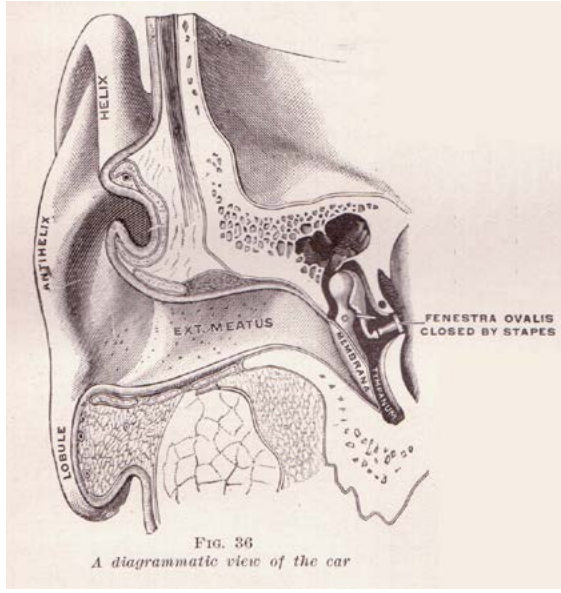


FIG. 36
A diagrammatic view of the ear

Learning From

This walks us right up to a second point. Respecting Indigenous spiritualities involves more than learning *about* a topic, something counted only as an object for detached observation and information gathering. Head knowledge like this in theological education has often been mistaken for genuine understanding and respect. But it serves more to objectify Indigenous perspectives as "other," silencing "them" as outsiders subject to the colonizer's gaze. An attentive learning *from* Indigenous worldviews and ways of life is needed for Settler Christians.

A first step in learning *from* is listening. There is real need in churches for an operative theology of listening. European Christianity – which has been called "Christendom" – has mostly been caught up in self-preoccupied pretentions of its own power and wisdom as if no one else has a right to self-determination or their own speaking voice. So, in arrogance, Settler Christians have often proclaimed without listening. But, as the proverb goes, a glass full cannot receive anything more. Or as an elder in the Toronto community once put it,

> People were born with two ears and only one mouth, and this demonstrates the importance of listening first before speaking.

Listening, then, is a humble gesture of receiving another as having something to say, of respecting another enough to yield space and be silent in anticipation of learning something. As a necessary starting point in forming a relationship, listening can lead to understanding.

For settler Christianity, understanding and learning from Indigenous perspectives then opens in multiple directions. It becomes evident that Indigenous spiritualities cannot be understood by a single definition, nor are they neatly separated from everyday life. There are many traditions, each uniquely spiritual in its own right and linked to specific communities – for example, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Métis, Stó:lō, or Innu. And unlike Western schemes, which tend to compartmentalize sacred and secular in dualist and hierarchical terms, such spiritualities connect deeply to broader cultural meanings, and they represent ways of being that are linked to everyday affairs, balancing relationships between people and the land and its many creatures.

Further, it becomes evident that in many Indigenous communities, Indigenous spirituality and Christianity are themselves correlated in various ways:

- Some follow traditional ways and relate to Christianity as a whole as something dangerous.
- Others embrace one brand of Christianity and reject traditional ways.
- Still others navigate two ways, finding balance between traditional and Christian outlooks through assorted means as integral parts of who they are.

Each of these varied paths evidences a struggle for identity and cultural renewal, showing resilience in recovering from the damage of colonialism. And from them, Settler Christians have much to learn. Through reverence and respect, such folk can even become allies in the work of reparation and justice.

Relationships With

Here, the third and perhaps most important point emerges: listening to and learning from Indigenous voices is itself a gesture toward being together, toward conciliation. Some may see this as a process of re-covenanting and repairing broken relations – a foretaste of the long goal of reconciliation – modelled after the Peace and Friendship treaties of the 1600s. Still others may see this as a new beginning altogether as there was never established a genuine, good relationship to begin with and so none to return to and "re"-concile. In either case, learning *from* can cultivate ways of being *with*. Genuine respect for Indigenous spiritualities involves relationship with Indigenous teachers and leaders as well as their communities. And in this, there is an invitation to become something different, to be transformed.

Steps Taken and Envisioned

At the Toronto School of Theology, there are efforts underway to reflect what we have outlined above in our response to the TRC. Under the leadership of Alan Hayes (director of the TST), a working

group composed of Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and faculty associated with various Christian traditions has been established to discern a path toward honouring the TRC recommendations in theological education here at the University of Toronto. Both of us are a part of this effort, which looks to create curricular renewal in partnerships with Indigenous students, faculty, and staff in the university and beyond. Among the seven schools at TST, there are a number of classes that address Indigenous histories and relations with Settlers, colonialism, and Christianity, church responses after residential schools, and the TRC.

In our particular class at Emmanuel College, we found three powerful ways in which Settler Christian students seemed to grow in respect and understanding for Indigenous spiritualities. First, with Jonathan's direction, the class learning style was formed using the circle as the teaching model. In the circle, each person spoke and reflected upon material from their own perspective while others listened, respecting differences, without comment or judgment. Through the use of this Indigenous learning model, Indigenous knowledge was less talked about as it was embodied in the very way we engaged one another. Second, each week the class met with Indigenous elders and teachers who shared their stories, knowledge, and experience and encouraged students to listen by their very presence. Experiencing these stories in connection to teachings became a powerful way that students not only learned about the importance of oral traditions in Indigenous knowledge but also responded with hearts opened to reimagining their own theologies. This kind of deep learning also played out by travelling to communities to do onsite learning – for example, at First Nations House (at U of T), at the Aboriginal Ministries Circle (of the United Church of Canada, General Council Office), and at Six Nations of the Grand River. The education in all three cases went beyond "academic" and became transformative for many of the students.

It is our conviction that theological schools, along with church communities, should become sites of respectful listening to, as well as engaging and collaborating with, Indigenous communities. This goal, however, needs careful attention to nourish and sustain. Seeds have taken root at TST, but further growth and flourishing requires ongoing support in a time when institutional resources are diminishing, curriculums are overcrowded, and faculty are pulled in a number of competing directions. Despite goodwill among the leadership, lack of institutional resources sometimes means there is no sustainable funding for integrated programming or faculty positions, let alone for supporting partnerships with Indigenous leaders in the university and surrounding communities. Much of the work, therefore, is short-lived – for example, occasional guest lectures in classes or extracurricular events hosted by one or another of the seven schools, which draw piecemeal upon local Indigenous leaders and elders. Sometimes the work is taken up by Settler Christian faculty who, while perhaps deeply committed, have expertise mainly in other areas. So there is great need for the creative allocation and prioritization of resources to nurture further research on Indigenous spiritualities, hire Indigenous faculty, collaborate with Indigenous communities, and attract and support Indigenous students.

Taking a closer look at Emmanuel College, some of these concerns bear out. There is a recent history of hiring Indigenous instructors to teach classes on Indigenous spiritualities, yet these were as sessional or adjunct instructors and not permanent faculty. Moreover, as curriculums for leadership and ministry training are tightly bounded by accreditation requirements, it is difficult to add a required course on Indigenous spiritualities. So, for example, the class we taught together is designated as an elective and scheduled once in three years. Otherwise, due to broad faculty support, content on Indigenous histories and spiritualities is woven into the fabric of pre-existing classes. While this is a positive step, it is not sustainable. Neither does it move toward the desired goal of mentoring Indigenous students and future leaders. Developing a long-term, integrative curricular plan would therefore be beneficial – one formed in possible collaboration with Aboriginal Ministries Circle and other Indigenous educational schools associated with United Church of Canada, such as the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. Without such commitment or partnership,

seminaries like Emmanuel College risk being perceived as not credible as they seek to increase Indigenous engagement and presence.

Opening Doors

- Reimagining Christian theology.
- Learning from Indigenous peoples and knowledges.
- Cultivating collaborative relationships.

In these ways, places of Christian learning, like Emmanuel College (or other schools at TST), might more meaningfully and more vitally engage with Indigenous spiritualities as having their own dignity and value. Such a process could go a long way toward repairing the fractured relationship between Settler and Indigenous peoples and creating institutional allies in Indigenous self-determination. It is still only the beginning phase as seminaries must work to open their doors and find ways to ensure that Indigenous community members also become part of the community as students and faculty.

Souls at Risk

JOY DE VITO is a Settler Canadian living in the Haldimand Tract, the traditional lands of the Neutral, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee Nations. Joy is currently studying theology at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, and exploring ways in which Christian institutions can be intentional about decolonization.

I wanted to write this story as a hymn
and slowly break down the standard structure
until faith had expanded beyond the form.
But this story does not fit in four stanzas and a chorus
and it cannot be reflected in a translated Book of Common Prayer.
I thought of reading the story through God's eyes but knew what I would find:
Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbour as yourself.
Instead I read the story through the eyes of the colonizers of 1912:[1]
Claims of planting the cross on the shores, as the divine roots were cultivated against cannibals, savages, and heathens.
Harvesting the fruits of heroic Jesuit captives,
wanderers fenced in, faith and fiscal responsibility,
devotion, and development.
Spiritual invaders who dismissed spirits as superstition
and made no reference to the beliefs they tried to replace.
An attempt at conversion into invisibility through silence.
I acknowledge that we have allowed Gitchi Manitou
but only with a makeover and a beautiful tune.
I thought of reading the story through God's eyes:
Isn't it interesting that the neighbour is not required to love
God before we love them?
Instead I read the story through the eyes of the colonizers of 2017:
When we call ceremonial objects "artifacts" and stare at them through glass
When we pitch our tents on burial grounds and sacred sites
When we dismiss ceremonies as pagan rituals or
(and this is my personal favourite)
as linked to traditional Catholic ceremonies that were appropriated by the "Indians" upon conversion.
We must decrease.
Will God increase?
Because isn't that what stresses us out?
How can we rest when souls are at risk?
Souls.
Not people.
It is too easy to injure when we don't see the person.
A person has faith and practices and children who cry out in terror when they are stolen from their family to learn the faith of the strangers who have declared themselves superior.
We target(ed) the soul
And ignore(d) the person
We need a different narrator.

Living into New Relationships: Canadian Mennonite University and the Indigenous Education Blueprint

On December 18, 2015, Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Treaty 1 Territory, joined with Manitoba's other post-secondary institutions and the province's public school boards to sign the Indigenous Education Blueprint. A specific response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action focussed on education, the Blueprint committed each of the signatories to, among other things, "bring Indigenous knowledges, languages, and intellectual traditions . . . into curriculum and pedagogy."

Coeditor Jeff Friesen sat down with four CMU leaders to talk about the Blueprint *and its connections to* Call to Action #60.

To read the Blueprint *in its entirety, see* https://www.commonword.ca/go/3371

CHERYL PAULS has been president of CMU since 2012 and attends River East Church (Mennonite Brethren).

TERRY SCHELLENBERG is the vice president external at CMU and attends Home St. Mennonite Church.

ANDREW DYCK is an assistant professor of ministry studies at CMU's Graduate School of Theology and Ministry and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary and attends Westwood Community Church (Mennonite Brethren).

WENDY KROEKER works as an instructor of peace and conflict transformation studies at CMU, is co-director of the Canadian School of Peacebuilding, and attends Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship.

JEFF: Tell us about the process which CMU went through prior to signing the *Indigenous Education Blueprint*. Was it a collaborative initiative?

CHERYL: This began as a collaboration of the presidents of universities in Manitoba. As vice president external, Terry joined the working committee on our behalf.

TERRY: We met often for one-and-a-half years leading up to the *Blueprint*'s signing. Initially, I was uncertain about what I was getting into on behalf of CMU or what the reception to my presence would be. That's for a couple of reasons. First, relative to the other universities involved, CMU is a small institution. And second, unlike those institutions, we come into this conversation as a school of the church. The six universities at the beginning of the conversation were Manitoba, Winnipeg, Brandon, University College of the North, Université de Saint-Boniface and us. It was Wab Kinew (Onigaming First Nation), from the University of Winnipeg, and Debra Young (Opaskwayak Cree Nation), from the University of Manitoba, who took key roles. Fairly quickly, we wondered whether a shared collaborative blueprint of common commitments could arise from our conversations. That's where it took off.

I think one of the first realizations was that if universities are going to speak with any collaborative voice into the issues, we couldn't do this in isolation from education that occurred prior to university. This is where the project got complex as it grew to include kindergarten to grade 12 and pre-kindergarten in addition to the Manitoba colleges. There was a sense that the initiative in and of itself was unique

Cheryl Pauls (left), President of Canadian Mennonite University, signs the Indigenous Education Blueprint (right) (c.2015).

PHOTOS: KEVIN KILBREI / CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

Signatories of the Indigenous Education Blueprint.

PHOTO: KEVIN KILBREI / CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

in Canada. I recall Wab saying at one point, "This has the potential to make Manitoba a 'centre of excellence' on matters of Indigenous education."
From my perspective, it was a very collaborative initiative. I felt welcomed to the table from the outset. I didn't sense reticence, and my observations were sought and welcomed. The interesting thing after one-and-a-half years is that we gradually became friends. There was a relational comfort among us and that was fun.

JEFF: Has that relational network continued? Is it there to help your work now that you've signed the *Blueprint*?

TERRY: It's changed a bit, simply because the people involved have changed. Wab is now a New Democrat Party Member of the Legislative Assembly here in Manitoba and Debra has moved to Ottawa. It has continued in the sense that there was a recognition from the very outset that the commitments, even though they were shared, would be applied, interpreted, and contextualized uniquely in each institution. We've been working together to discern what the document means in each setting. I have been part of a working group that planned a "Best Practices and Models" conference, which was held a few months ago. I am also part of a steering

committee working on a five-year implementation plan, which we hope shows that we are serious about what this looks like even as we expect institutions to work at this in ways that are unique to their contexts.

JEFF: So why is it important that CMU signed the *Blueprint*?

ANDREW: This matters because we live here and now. "Here" means that we live in Winnipeg, we live in Manitoba, we live in Canada. These are our neighbours – First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. We live here. This is where we are. And the "now" is what's really struck me. The last residential school closed not just at the beginning of my lifetime, but in the middle of my life time, not long ago. We are talking about something that is people's lived experience right now.

I think we live in unusual times when things are up in the air with our relationship with Indigenous peoples, where the pain is raw and fresh. I think that is the reason why the Church, and therefore CMU, needs to be involved in these kinds of endeavors – because we live here and now. It's the stuff that I'm ready to stand for.

CHERYL: A very simple response is that we've been asked to do so, and we are responding. The request is there in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Call to Actions* – with certain items for educational institutions to attend to and others for the Church to address.

WENDY: What it's also brought out for us is the opportunity to acknowledge we are peoples who have inherited a settler colonial legacy. I have students asking why it's important that we've signed on and participated. Even if people don't want us going there, we're saying this needs to be talked about. There are words I would say with my students – "Settler," "privilege," and so on – that are uncomfortable, and I think we must move to places of discomfort. Signing on says we are willing to engage in the larger and uncomfortable project of reconciliation.

CHERYL: Students ask for us to engage this by challenging the way we tell our own stories as Mennonites. There is a large group of students whose own family history is the same as mine. Our ancestors migrated in the 1920s from Russia after much persecution. Yet many students narrate this story differently. They don't tell the story about the persecution. They tell the story of our ancestors coming to Manitoba and being given land from the government through questionable means. As they tell that story in a different kind of way, they are wrestling with who they are. They are now asking us to engage with them in asking who we are as Mennonites in Canada.

JEFF: Article 2 of the *Blueprint* commits CMU to creating space for Indigenous knowledges, languages, intellectual traditions, and pedagogy. Some Church schools and seminaries might be wary of such a commitment. Why do you think this specific commitment is important, and how do you connect it back to the traditions that have helped shape CMU?

CHERYL: I'm going to start somewhere else and then come back to your question. Our participation in the *Blueprint* signals a willingness to learn along the way. One thing that concerns me in all of this is the pace at which we are moving. There is a certain sense in our time that we instantly need to do things differently and add all kinds of new things to our programming. What stands out as my most central learning with Indigenous peoples is to prioritize relationships and go for the long road. We are working at what this *Blueprint* means in relationship. And the risk is that we would quickly think we know what this means and change everything that we are doing instead of letting our ways of thinking and doing develop in relationship with Indigenous peoples.

TERRY: I would agree. I think we are trying to figure this out. I think there is a commitment to living slowly into this. By that I mean not laggardly, but attentively – listening to our own voices, listening to Indigenous voices so that we can give life to the future. There is a shared commitment that whatever it is that we do, somehow it is relationally rooted and context specific – that this is who we are in a particular time by way of our ethos, our theological commitments, and so on.

JEFF: What of the theological challenges that this specific commitment presents? How does this affect the school of theology? What are some of the conversations happening here in the hallways with faculty?

CHERYL: We are being intentional about forming relationships with Indigenous people who identify as

Christian and with those who don't. There is a desire to look through our friendships to help understand Indigenous spiritualities in their diversity and *then* look at what is and what is not in tension with Christianity.

ANDREW: For me, a starting point theologically is the *Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith* (1999). The article on "Christianity and Other Faiths" indicates an openness to recognizing that there can be good in other faiths and other cultures and other communities beyond our own. This openness is based on God's witness to everyone of the Creator's goodness and power. I want to be open and ask what is there that I recognize within Indigenous spirituality. Let's talk together. Then once we are in conversation, let's talk about building relationships and exploring together. It's about nurturing relationships first and listening well and not pre-determining what is or isn't going to be the point of connection or the point of disconnection. And yet I want to be honest enough to say that not everything will fit with the ways of Christ. I hope for long-term mutuality where we don't have to say, Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing are now going to replace everything else – just as western European ways of knowing shouldn't replace everything else. Actual mutuality – listening and learning – is what I'm interested in.

JEFF: What are some of the fears, personally or institutionally, you may have?

TERRY: One of the fears that I have is losing this relationally rooted context. The impulse is to create another bureaucracy. I think that can be natural and understandable. Some bureaucracy is needed. But my fear is that we forget where we started: connected and working together as friends.

ANDREW: I worry about stereotyping whole groups of people. When we use a category like Settler, for example, one of the dangers is the perception that everything about being a Settler is bad. Whereas to think about being collaborative or being both teacher and learner you must avoid stereotypes. Another concern of mine is how to comprehend Indigenous spirituality as a Christian. When living out one's spirituality, it makes a difference to believe that the witness of Jesus Christ is unique. What's helpful for me in this matter is listening to Indigenous Christian elders. Those are some of the people I want us to be speaking with.

JEFF: You are emphasizing the importance of engaging relationships with Indigenous folks in your institution. What are those relationships looking like and what are some of the ways in which CMU is being pushed by them?

WENDY: One relationship I'm working on is with Clairissa Kelly from the Peguis First Nation's Post-Secondary Indigenous Transitions Program. We have collaborated on several projects involving her students and courses that I'm teaching. Next school year, we will do a joint course. In anticipation of this, we are sharing specific teaching methods with each other. I'm trying very deliberately to use sharing circles in these classes, not as a "Oh, it is nice to chat around a circle," but as a means of articulating the important role Indigenous circle practices have had and continue to have in Canada. It was within these circles that information came out in class that I think never could have happened otherwise. One of the Peguis students commented, "I found out that white people really care." I don't think she would have said that if the students were sitting in rows. The ways we talk, learn, and teach together are transforming a lot of students and relationships.

■

Watch and Pray: A "How-Not-To" Guide for Christians

LAUREL DYKSTRA is priest of Salal + Cedar, an Anglican church which worships outdoors in the lower Fraser watershed in Coast Salish Territories (BC). The author and editor of a number of books, including *Bury the Dead: Stories of Death and Dying, Resistance, and Discipleship* (Wipf and Stock, 2013), Laurel is continually looking for ways to learn from grassroots Indigenous leadership on issues of land justice.

How do non-Indigenous Christians relate to Indigenous ceremony and spirituality in a good way? What are key postures and values that we should hold close? What are the dangers we should pay attention to, the missteps that we must avoid?

What I offer here is a "working list" based on my own experience. I am very fortunate to have had opportunities over the past decade to be present with Indigenous people practicing ceremony and spirituality. These experiences have come about almost exclusively through organizing and participating in activism as a Christian alongside Indigenous people on justice issues, rather than through pastoral immersion in Indigenous communities. The ceremonies I have attended are among the more public of practices, and I have been invited to participate in them by Indigenous people who are open to sharing between traditions.

The Indigenous ceremonies that I have been witness to and part of have included:

- settings that are explicitly traditional and adamantly not Christian, such as a Lakota flesh offering on a cross-country walk for Leonard Peltier (a Native American political prisoner);
- settings where Christian and Indigenous spiritual traditions are practiced in respectful parallel when, as a priest, I was invited to "bring my medicine" and sprinkle Holy Water at the site of the Vancouver Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) national event alongside spiritual practitioners cleansing the site with smudge, cedar boughs, eagle feathers, song, and rattles; and
- settings where Indigenous Christians were bringing their traditional spiritual practices like smudging the altar with sweet grass and sharing a family welcome song at a church service.

"My privilege, your culture"
ART: GREGG DEAL
PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE

My intention in offering the following suggestions is to take seriously both people of colour and Indigenous people who say that they cannot and will not do the work of educating white and non-

Indigenous people about the harm that we do. White people need to educate ourselves and our communities. This is not a seminary curriculum but a practical sharing – an attempt to "bring my people along." And I imagine that as I learn more I may look back on some of this writing and cringe at assumptions I did not realize I was exposing.

While these are personal reflections, I think the "worldview" issues I am raising apply to white people and to western Christians demonstrating the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that racism and white privilege function.

Land: Despite being rooted in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,* the TRC still mostly avoids the issue of land. What I have observed, and what I have been told, is that Indigenous spiritualities are profoundly connected to land – to the water, plants, geographical features, and creatures of a particular place. If we sidestep the role of the Church and the function of residential schools in the Canadian project of displacing Indigenous people from their land, if we are not at some level engaging on land justice issues with Indigenous people, then our efforts to respect Indigenous spirituality are necessarily limited.

Beware of false parallels: Any time we think something like "Oh, a naming ceremony is just like baptism," we are making Indigenous traditions into "little" versions of our own tradition. Listen, learn, and pay attention. *Kise-Manitow* is not "Yahweh." Some Nehiyaw (Cree) Indigenous people may describe their own experience that way, and that is their prerogative, but there are traditional Nehiyaw who say adamantly that this is not so. Outside of very few relationships, this is not something for a white Christian to say.

Know your history: Christians, especially Christian leaders (white or people of colour), are inheritors of a colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples and communities that targeted spiritual traditions and practices. The Bible contains plenty of passages that are pro-conquest and opposed (often murderously) to spiritual traditions that have a creation base or multiple deities. There are many Indigenous people who assume that all Christians consider Indigenous spiritual practices to be pagan or heathen. There are a small number of Indigenous Christians who believe that as well. Whatever our personal feelings, virtues, years in relationships with Indigenous people and communities, or positions in opposition to ongoing settler colonialism, this fraught history is present in every Indigenous–Christian conversation.

Some Indigenous people won't trust you: If you have "paid your dues," built relationships and trust with a community or with some individuals, that is all that you have done. The relationships and credibility that you develop with one community or with some individuals does not automatically transfer to others, although some of the skills will. Relationship and trust building is an ongoing task.

It's complicated: Do Christians believe the flood was real? What do Christians think about marriage equity? The conflicts and dialogues among Indigenous spiritualities are at least as complex and nuanced as those within Christianity, more so when we consider the diversity of Indigenous traditions. If one friend or teacher or elder has told you something about their practice, then you have one perspective on one tradition.

One way that traditional people address this diversity is by always explaining who their teachers are and who their teachers' teachers were before they offer a teaching or initiate a ceremony.

Don't idealize: Pre-contact Indigenous spiritual and cultural systems were not all idyllic, devoid of hierarchy, or free of conflict. The impacts of colonialism and residential schools have made it more difficult to decipher what is in fact traditional and what has been filtered through a colonial experience. Respecting Indigenous spiritual traditions means recognizing that Indigenous people are in fact fallible people like the rest of us. However, saying "Well, the Haida had slaves" is not an end to a disagreement or a justification for colonization.

You can't always get what you want: Contact with Indigenous spiritual traditions sometimes touches a deep longing in us for authentic connection to place, a resonance with symbols that are meaningful to us, and a desire for a spirituality that is "untainted." But the way that non-Indigenous people approach what they admire in Indigenous spiritualities can be another expression of colonization – we recognize something that is good, and we want it for ourselves. Respecting

Indigenous spiritualities means recognizing that they belong to Indigenous people – that there are traditions, practices, stories, and ceremonies that are simply not for non-Indigenous people.

None of this belongs to you: Just because someone has shared a teaching, story, or song with you does not mean that you can share it with others. Especially in West Coast traditions, but elsewhere too, individuals and families have ownership and responsibilities for particular songs, teachings, and ceremonies. Any invitation for you to participate does not mean you can share those.

Ceremony does not equal religion: Non-Indigenous Christians think and talk about the separation of Church and state. We make a division between our spiritual lives and the rest of our lives. Many Indigenous traditions don't make that distinction. For example, Christians think of the potlatch as being religious or ceremonial but know very little about its function as a legal and land-access distribution system. Conversely, while we may recognize particular Christian activities as religious, we often fail to see the pervasive integration of spiritual practice into Indigenous daily life, such as prayers of thanks to animals and plants that provide tools and sustenance.

Try not to think you are so special: Indigenous elders who have been waiting to share generations of their people's teachings with that special white seeker are pretty much a fiction of white exceptionalism. Everyone wants to feel special, but when, as a non-Indigenous person, you are included in ceremony, what feels like an honour to you may very well be politeness or acceptance at the very most basic level. Sometimes thanks, gifts, and respectful address are not about the recipient but about the dignity, integrity, and honour of the host or presenter who is concerned with not shaming a visitor or avoiding a future obligation.

Community, community, community: Spiritual and ceremonial practice happens in community, so it is very unusual for there to be lone practitioners of Indigenous spiritualities. It is possible to unwittingly throw your weight behind a particular individual, unaware of greater community conflicts. Sometimes the people most interested in sharing spirituality with non–community members are disenfranchised in that community for a number of reasons.

Be quiet . . . and speak from the heart: Many Indigenous cultures are more comfortable with silence than most European cultures, and certainly popular North American culture. In a mixed setting, or Indigenous-majority setting, white people often jump in or speak to fill a silence, sometimes cutting off elders. Practice letting silence go on longer than you are comfortable with. Almost everywhere else we go, white people dominate. We can take an opportunity to flip that script and button our lip. Know also that a lot of eye contact can be considered aggressive or invasive in some cultures and communities.

Notice what is said and not said; ask beforehand about protocols. What is appropriate? Who is respected and how? What forms of address are used? If you are called upon to speak, and it is clear that you should, in Indigenous communities there is a high regard for speaking honestly from the heart, and reading from a paper can be considered insulting.

Don't call yourself "two spirit": Christianity has misunderstood Indigenous experiences by reading our own misogyny, hetero-centrism, and gender rigidity on to them. We have also distorted and harmed Indigenous peoples' sexual expression, gender expression, and bodily autonomy both through religious teaching and sexual abuse. Thus, Christians of all genders and sexualities need to be extremely cautious about asserting ourselves on issues of gender and sexuality in ceremonial or spiritual settings. "Two spirit" is not a word for you to use about yourself if you are not Indigenous. Skirts, gender divisions, and menstrual teachings are not issues for non-Indigenous people to raise. Doing so can contribute to harmful tropes, particularly about Indigeneity being a threat to white womanhood. There are plenty of "two spirit," queer, feminist, femme, and female Indigenous people engaging these issues with and in their communities – you can support and learn from them. If you are invited into a situation you find uncomfortable, you can politely decline.

Do not tokenize: If you want to have an Indigenous person come and welcome you to their territory prior to an event, but you don't know who to ask – then maybe, just maybe, you are not actually welcome

there. If someone is going to smudge, drum, and sing as part of an event or service – ask why would they want to? Why do you want them to? Do you have a shared agenda? If you want to be "inclusive," what are you including people in? Do you welcome Indigenous leadership and input elsewhere?

Cedar Considers Lavender: On Spiritual Appropriation

SUZANNE OWEN is a senior lecturer in theology and religious studies at Leeds Trinity University in the UK. Born in England, she spent most of her childhood in California before returning to the UK. Her PhD from the University of Edinburgh was published as *The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality* (Continuum, 2008). Since then, she has continued to research Indigeneity in Newfoundland as well as British Druidry.

Seated on a log in a clearing overlooked by black spruce and birch, Sage watched the fire heating up the grandfather rocks. He could hear a radio in the distance playing a recent hit song. His nephew Cedar stood nearby, mouthing a silent prayer before releasing a pinch of tobacco into the flames. The sun was touching the trees now. The radio stopped, leaving only the crackle and hiss of burning wood.

"Is it just us?" asked Cedar, sitting down on the log beside his uncle.

The lodge at the edge of the clearing was large enough for 10 people.

"My daughter will be here, bringing someone from England."

Cedar shook his head. "You know what will happen? That person will go back to England saying they're a shaman and pour a sweat for 50 dollars a head."

Sage considered his thoughts before speaking. "Once a man full of anger came to me for a sweat. Keeping my own intentions good, I poured the sweat and prayed. When I asked him to pray, there was no answer. He was not there. I looked outside and found him shivering by the fire. He said Spirit kicked him out."

"Non-Natives may come with good intentions and seem genuine, but they can't help themselves," Cedar argued. "Just like they did when they took our land and forbade us from speaking our language, right?"

Indigenous and Settler peoples pray together at the Sacred Stone Camp as they resist the Dakota Access Pipeline (c. 2016).

PHOTO: JOE BRUSKY / FLICKR COMMONS

"What matters is what's in our hearts, not what's in theirs," his uncle insisted.

"You would just let them take our ceremonies? It's a type of colonialism . . ."

Cedar shut his mouth when a crack of a twig to the south alerted him to the presence of two women walking up the path toward them. Like his cousin Sweetgrass, the English woman was wearing a long skirt.

"You see, Sweetgrass has prepared the visitor," said Sage.

"This is Lavender, from England," said Sweetgrass once they were in the clearing. She was carrying an

empty metal bucket. "My father Sage will pour the sweat. This is my cousin, Cedar."

"Just to be sure," he said, rising to his feet. "You've had no alcohol for four days?"

"No," said Lavender, "and I'm not on my moon either."

Cedar raised his eyebrows, but said no more as he returned to the log.

"May I attend the sweat?" The English woman said as she took a few steps toward Sage. He was filling his pipe and did not notice at first that she was holding something in her hand. When he saw it was a pouch of tobacco, he nodded, taking the pouch and placing it on the log beside him.

"This woman will go back to England as a shaman for sure," Cedar whispered to him.

"What was that?" asked Sweetgrass. She knew Cedar's views about sharing their spirituality with outsiders. He glared at her and then turned away and sighed.

"I will get water from the brook," she said, taking the bucket with her.

"It is better to say what's on your mind now than to take it with you into the lodge," Sage warned his nephew.

"Alright, I will."

His uncle motioned for Lavender to sit down on one of the other logs near the fire. "We won't begin the ceremony for a while yet."

Once she was seated, Cedar said, "You seem to know some protocols, but it's more than just wearing the right clothes."

"What do you mean by protocols?"

"Knowing what you can and cannot do, the right way to do a ceremony, with guidance and permission from elders and long years of training."

Sage lifted his hand for attention. "There is not so much as a right way and a wrong way to do a ceremony. What matters is your intention."

"Yes, but if done in the wrong way, it can be harmful," said Cedar. "It can even lead to death."

The older man nodded. "If someone's doing it wrong, and the result is harmful, I bet they didn't have good intentions."

"Like misleading people about their authority," Cedar added. "They come here, and we invite them to a ceremony, and before you know it they are selling it or writing a book about it as if they're the experts."

Lavender recalled some of the sweat lodges she had seen in Europe. Participants were not asked to abstain from drugs and alcohol beforehand. Also, they were expected to remove all their clothing, like in Scandinavian sauna traditions. "I see. If someone doesn't have proper authorization, they're appropriating the ceremony?"

"Right, and it disrespects us. When someone, even one of us, conducts a ceremony without permission, disregarding protocols, they are not maintaining respectful relations with First Nations. It's as simple as that."

Sweetgrass returned and set the bucket of water down by the lodge. "I heard that last bit. In some cases, it's not so clear. I can do a sunrise ceremony with whoever I want. We did one this morning. If Lavender would like to do it in England, that's up to her."

Cedar furrowed his brow. "I would call that appropriation because it's not her tradition."

"What if I burned lavender, which is native to Europe, instead of sage or sweetgrass?"

He had to smile, his anger lessening. It had helped to speak his mind. "As long as you don't charge people to do it."

"What did you think about having the pipe in church?" Sweetgrass asked her cousin.

"I was uncomfortable when I heard about it because it mixes traditions." He tried to clarify his thoughts. "No, worse than that, because we lose our spiritual traditions when they're incorporated into the dominant tradition, no matter the intentions."

"I thought it was a good thing," said Sweetgrass. "It brought the community together, having a traditional elder share the pipe ceremony in church."

"Well, I mean him no disrespect, as he was invited and it was his decision, but not everyone was happy about it."

In the silence that followed, he softened his view. "It's fine as long as people know where the tradition comes from."

"And what about this paper on spiritual appropriation?" Lavender pondered. "Isn't the author appropriating First Nations' voices?"

"Well, the characters *are* somewhat stereotypical," said Sweetgrass, "and the names, like 'Cedar' are not real names. Why not call him 'George'?"

"True, this is a fictional account of some views about spiritual appropriation," Lavender conceded. "Taking them out of context and generalizing them." She felt less sure than before. "Maybe this paper is misrepresenting First Nations."

"Cedar is right about it coming down to respectful relations," said Sage. "Even with this paper. Ask yourself if you are showing respect to those who shared with you."

"And check if your intentions are good," Cedar said before his uncle could.

"And if I'm not sure?"

The young man smiled. "All you have to do is ask."

As the fire burned down, stars appeared in the sky, and darkness filled the clearing.

Seeing they all had come to understand one another better, Sage crouched down by the fire. Using a leaf, he scooped up a small glowing ember and tipped it into the bowl of the tobacco-filled pipe. "We are ready to begin the ceremony."

Dead Soil Revived

LYLA JUNE JOHNSTON
was raised in Taos, New Mexico, and is a descendent of Diné (Navajo), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne), and European lineages. A poet, musician, educator, anthropologist and community servant, Lyla sees each poem as a prayer for all of humanity. She holds a degree in Environmental Anthropology with honors from Stanford University.

On any given day you can find Trisha Moquino,
working in the classroom.
Cultivating little seeds with
bright brown eyes,
smiles so wide,
open minds,
open hands.
They speak their dreams to the daylight in the Keres language.
She is nourishing
their minds,
their bodies,
their speech.
Linguistic diversity in the age of extinction.
Like the cottonwood trees,
like the rare desert rivers,
prayer births the sustainability of genes and languages.
Those who seek conquest have their backs turned to her.
They are lost
in business,
busy-ness,
busy building a cemetery for the unborn.
When will they stop and help her plant the seeds?
When will they see it is time to nourish what their grandparents worked so hard to destroy?
Even dead soil can be revived,
when we work together.

TALKING ABOUT RESPECT:
A Study Guide

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is unequivocal in its call for Christians to "respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right." But many of us approach such a call with questions: What is "Indigenous spirituality"? What does it actually mean to "respect it in its own right"? And how does that mandate fit within the teachings of Christian theology?

Use this study guide as a resource for facilitating conversation around Call to Action #60 in your church, classroom, or small group.

Be sure to allow enough time for sharing and exploration – this might mean splitting these discussions over several sessions. Use the questions and recommended readings provided as entry points into each section, but feel free to explore any ideas or themes that you encounter along the way.

While you can certainly consider these questions on your own, they're best explored in community. If your church or small group hasn't already planned a reading group for this magazine, encourage leadership to do so or become a leader and organize one yourself.

SECTION 1:
Indigenous Spiritualities 101

We begin by exploring some of the concepts, perspectives, and ways of knowing that are central to Indigenous spirituality. As Carmen Lansdowne writes, "Until the wider Church is ready to really sit and listen to our whole stories . . . (as opposed to fixing our situations or problems) the world of Indigenous spirituality will never be fully accessible." Let us begin with open ears.

Recommended Reading

Questions for discussion:

- If we are to understand and respect Indigenous spirituality "in its own right," we must first acknowledge the assumptions and expectations we bring to the conversation. Have you had any previous exposure to Indigenous spirituality, whether through participation in ceremony, instruction from Indigenous elders or Settler teachers, your own research, or even representations in pop culture? How did the readings in this section resonate with or challenge your prior knowledge, experiences, or assumptions?
- Blair Stonechild acknowledges that there are some fundamental differences between Indigenous and Christian spiritual traditions. Christians have often responded to these differences with proselytization or violence. What do you think are some strategies, tools, or shifts in thinking that could enable more Christians to come to terms with difference, rather than striving to eliminate it?
- "Indigenous spirituality," like Christianity, represents a diverse range of beliefs and practices. Rarihokwats notes that it is "understood differently by each living creature." It "appreciates and encourages diversity," and is therefore embodied in a great variety of ways. From your initial reading, what do you see as some of the basic tenets uniting the various forms of Indigenous spirituality? How do these perspectives and ways of thinking overlap or conflict with the Christian tradition that you're a part of?

SECTION 2:
(Dis)honouring – Stories Past & Present

After beginning to understand what Indigenous spirituality means, we turn now to hear stories of Indigenous–Christian encounter both in the past and today. This is a diverse and multifaceted history, yet as Viv Ketchum writes, "I need to share a small part of my past for people to understand my future."

Recommended Reading

Questions for discussion:

- As J.R. Miller demonstrates, the "mixed record" of conquest and collaboration defies sweeping generalizations about the history of Indigenous–Christian encounter. Are there any aspects of this history that were new or surprising to you? In what ways do you think a better grasp of this history could shape your understanding of Indigenous or Christian practice in today's context?
- Joseph R. Wiebe pushes back against the "hard-work-amidst-suffering" narrative that some Settlers use to describe their family histories. Have you ever told your family's story in these terms? How does it feel to reframe your story of suffering as one of privilege?
- Michael Champagne describes how returning to songs and ceremonies would often reorient the group he was a part of in times of rage and frustration. "It grounded us in our history but also made us understand how far these songs, these ceremonies, these sacred objects have come to be here for us, the urban Indigenous young people of today." What is the significance of traditional songs or ceremonies in your own Christian practice? How does a connection to your family history or the broader Christian tradition influence who you are today? Consider this connection in light of colonization – how would your identity or worldview be different if the connection to your heritage were severed?

SECTION 3:
Re-membering Paths

In this section, we look more closely at biblical and theological perspectives and consider what it might look like to learn from the wisdom of another. "At the end of the day, I must ask myself if I am willing to . . . recognize wisdom that emerges from and lies beyond my own tradition," writes Derek Suderman. This theological question lies at the heart of all interreligious conversation.

Recommended Reading

Questions for discussion:

- Gordon Zerbe provides a "continuum of Christian approaches to spiritual others"; while some Christians denounce Indigenous spiritual practices as fundamentally demonic, others say that "only after a revitalization of what has been lost can there be true dialogue and encounter." Where do you fall on this spectrum? Has your perspective changed over time? As Zerbe asks, "which of these approaches has the potential to 'respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right'"?
- "To think that one person or tradition or culture could represent the totality of divine love is to mistake the part for the whole," Christina Conroy writes. "Each tradition, and each person, has a skill or gift that offers a particular insight into the divine mystery." How does this statement reflect or challenge your own theological beliefs? If Christianity does indeed need "the knowledge of another," what are some practical steps you could take, either individually or as a group, toward connecting with people of different backgrounds and spiritual expressions?
- Many contributors throughout this magazine have noted that land and water are sacred within Indigenous traditions. How does intimacy with the land, or "creation care," fit into your Christian theology or practice? What are some ways in which this could be a point of connection or an opportunity to work alongside Indigenous communities?
- Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan describes a five-stage journey of interspiritual, intercultural encounter that proceeds from meeting new acquaintances to sharing spiritual practices. Have you ever experienced this journey of relationship building in your own life? Which of these five stages has been a barrier in past relationships? Which of Duhan Kaplan's nine "principles of respect" would you like to focus on nurturing as you go forward?

SECTION 4:
Creating Circles

It's important to become familiar with other ways of knowing, to hear stories, and to discuss the roles of our own traditions. But as Jonathan Hamilton-Diablo and Thomas Reynolds write, "Genuine respect for Indigenous spiritualities involves relationship with Indigenous teachers and leaders as well as their communities. And in this, there is an invitation to become something different, to be transformed."

Recommended Reading

Questions for discussion:

- In what ways do you think Indigenous spirituality should inform your worship practice, if at all? What is the difference between learning from the wisdom of Indigenous traditions and incorporating those practices or ceremonies? How might embracing Indigenous spiritual expression inadvertently repeat the mistakes of colonialism? How can these errors of appropriation be avoided?
- If you brought any assumptions, opinions, or feelings about Indigenous spirituality into this conversation, how have they been addressed? Are there any questions you'd still like to ask?
- Though these readings and discussions have focussed primarily on Indigenous spirituality, they can also provide an opportunity for self-reflection. How have these readings or discussions allowed you to take stock of your own spirituality?
- In light of everything you've read and discussed, what do you see as the significance of *Call to Action #60*? In other words, what does it actually mean to "respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right?" If, as Joy De Vito suggests, Christians "target(ed) the soul / And ignore(d) the person," how should the Church instead go about relating to Indigenous peoples?
- As an individual, group, or institution, where would you like to go from here? Name a few tangible next steps you would like to take in response to Call to Action #60. Laurel Dykstra articulates a "working list" of suggestions for engaging Indigenous peoples and spiritualities. Which of these suggestions stand out to you as most notable, and how will they inform the next steps you've just named?

EDITORS'S PICKS
for further reading

To borrow or purchase these books and other resources related to the call to respect Indigenous spirituality, visit www.commonword.ca/go/1090

HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS–CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER

Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies (1994)

KATHERINE PETTIPAS

Awareness of the Indian Residential School System is growing amongst Settler Canadians, but our recognition of other facets of colonial oppression is thin. Not many know that, for generations, Indigenous people were criminalized for gathering in prayer, practicing ceremony, and redistributing their goods. Like the early church, they had to go underground to keep traditions alive. Pettipas provides an in-depth look at how the Canadian government sought to destroy Indigenous spirituality between the late 1800s and the mid-1900s, why many Christians supported the efforts, and the ways in which Indigenous peoples responded.

Black Elk: Colonialism and Lakota Catholicism (2005)

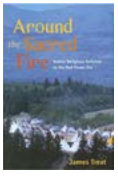
DAMIAN COSTELLO

Google Indigenous spirituality, and you're likely to find a book on Black Elk (Heȟáka Sápa, 1863–1950) and the Lakota medicine man's popular visions. Many look to Black Elk to discover a "pristine" Indigenous spirituality that takes us back to the "authentic" ways prior to contact. Yet most within the Lakota community see Black Elk as a Lakota Christian – one who revered Christ as much as he revered traditional paths. Costello's book takes us on a journey of understanding who this holy man was, letting us grapple with the ways our colonized eyes frame the relationship between Native and

The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies (2014)

JAMES L. COX

Historically, Christian Settlers have taken two dominant postures towards Indigenous religion. One is what I (Steve) call the "Elijah vs. Baal" approach: Indigenous religion is idolatrous and primitive; strike it down. The other is the "Bruchko" approach: all Indigenous peoples believe in some Supreme Being, even a Christ figure, so let's "fulfill" that religion. Cox pushes against both these postures, asserting that the religions of Indigenous peoples "should be studied as traditions in their own right." Using case studies, he warns us not to assert the superiority of our beliefs by framing the other "as a preparation for Christianity."



Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era (2003)

JAMES TREAT

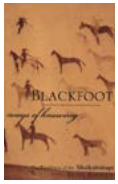
The '60s and '70s are known in Indian Country as the Red Power Era. It's the time of Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, and the West Coast fish-ins – major events of resistance and resilience. But alongside those famous engagements, the Indian Ecumenical Conference was taking place in the foothills of the Rockies. The Conference brought together traditional and Christian grassroots Indigenous spiritual leaders concerned about the generations-old conflict in their communities. Muscogee scholar James Treat describes how thousands of elders and young people gathered annually for more than two decades to promote spiritual healing.

TRADITIONAL SPIRITUALITY NOW

Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader (2000)

LEE IRWIN, ED.

Fourteen Indigenous and Settler thinkers team up to tackle questions around Indigenous spiritualities: How are traditional ways being represented and commodified? What are the current politics surrounding their recognition? Who can talk about them, let alone teach them? How have specific spiritualities changed – as all traditions do – over time? Why are Indigenous communities so much more comfortable with "syncretism" than Settlers? It's a thoughtful collection that offers both an historical overview and a discussion of current concerns.



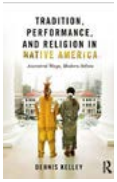
Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi (2004)

BETTY BASTIEN

Haudenosaunee and Cree, Mi'kmaq and Choctaw, Anishinaabe and Salish. The peoples go on and on, and so do their distinct ways of knowing. It's important that we Settlers become conversant with the particular spiritualities of those we are living amongst. We lift up Betty Bastien's book on Blackfoot worldview – a fascinating, personal engagement with her own people's ways of knowing – to signal the growing list of resources available to help us respectfully engage local knowledges.

Red Rising Magazine

A circle of brilliant Indigenous youth brings art, poetry, interview, and essay together to explore matters of decolonization, spirituality, activism, love, land, and more. Red Rising is a punchy and raw zine produced in Winnipeg by grassroots folks who are trying to animate life-giving, critical conversations. And we know that they're trying to live it too. We encourage you to check it out: www.redrisingmagazine.ca



Tradition, Performance, and Religion in Native America: Ancestral Ways, Modern Selves (2015)

DENNIS KELLEY

Most Indigenous peoples live in cities and their spiritualities are often pan-Indigenous. Given this reality, Kelley asks, "What does it mean to be an Indigenous American in the 21st century, and how does one express that Indigeneity religiously?" The result is a deft study on contemporary spirituality that takes both the city and the reservation seriously. We learn that "supratribal" practice (that which "employs a broad Indian identity") is not assimilation, participation in activism and protest is an experience of the sacred, recovery programs are sites of revitalization, and Jesus might be a good sun dancer.

THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENTS

God is Red (1972)

VINE DELORIA, JR.

Buckle up your Christian defensiveness as you engage this manifesto. In arresting, highly readable prose, Deloria articulates an Indigenous worldview and the ways the North American Church's worldview has been wrong. It'll be a challenge for many Christians. According to Deloria, the Church is leading people astray with its understandings of creation, time, space, social problems, and even conceptions of God, and it should look to Indigenous understandings for correction. This is not an, "I'm okay, you're okay," interfaith dialogue. Yet, over the past 40 years, many Christians have found themselves agreeing with a good chunk of its assessments.

Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada (1996)

JAMES TREAT, ED.

Is there an Indigenous person who follows Jesus who has not encountered the question, "How can you be Native and Christian?" This anthology of essays explores what our friend Adrian Jacobs (Cayuga) calls, "The Meeting of the Two Paths." Matters of history, scriptural interpretation, liturgy, theology, and community are taken up. Different perspective and postures, sometimes complimentary, sometimes not, are offered. Yet they're all together in this circle. Be sure to read the now-classic essay "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," by Robert Warrior.

Indigenous Australia and the Unfinished Business of Theology: Cross-Cultural Engagement (2014)

JIONE HAVEA, ED.

We have a lot to learn from our Indigenous sisters and brothers, and some Settler allies, down under. *Unfinished Business* explores why the Australian Church must engage host peoples and how it can honour their wisdoms, dreams, and heritages. As in Canada, there are significant roadblocks to be overcome. The Church is quick to speak good words from a distance, without accountable relationships, and calls for reparation are too often ignored. This theology is not abstract – it's passionate and real. Highly recommended.

NEXT STEPS FOR RESPECT

Volume 6: Canada's Residential Schools – Reconciliation (2015)

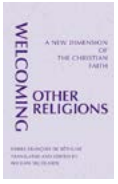
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA

This should be required reading for every pastor and church leader in Canada. Reflecting on the witness of residential school survivors and the research compiled over the course of six years, this volume details the complexities and challenges of reconciliation. But it also articulates clear paths forward. The call to the church is straightforward and demanding: "demonstrating long-term commitment to reconciliation requires atoning for harmful actions in the residential schools, respecting Indigenous spirituality, and supporting Indigenous peoples' struggles for justice

Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift (2007)

RAUNA KUOKKANEN

Some universities are responding to the TRC's *Calls to Action* by instituting a mandatory Indigenous studies class requirement. Others are encouraging the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives throughout the system. Rauna Kuokkanen (Sami) asserts that Indigenous knowledges can't simply be placed into our educational institutions, for those knowledges call for the transformation of the way we understand the university itself. It's a poetic and theoretically rich read.



Welcoming Other Religions: A New Dimension of the Christian Faith (2016)

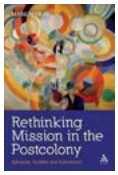
PIERRE-FRANÇOIS DE BÉTHUNE

How have Christians related to peoples of other religions over the centuries, and why have they acted so? In this short pastoral text, a Benedictine monk with years of experience engaging Zen Buddhism helps us contemplate the church's journey towards interreligious hospitality. He explores the fears many of us bring to this conversation and highlights the virtues that help us endure. Through the witness of those who courageously risked such dialogue – including Thomas Merton, Henri Le Saux, and

A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings (2007)

FERNANDO SEGOVIA AND R.S. SUGIRTHARAJAH, EDS.

Some Christians wrestling with the *Doctrine of Discovery* may be so disheartened by the death-dealing actions of the Church that they'll be tempted to step back from their faith. We have friends who have taken that path. And we understand. Yet for those who are able, we'd like to encourage a closer, critical walk with the tradition through the eyes of those grappling with issues of Empire and post-colonial theory. This text could be a solid help. Crack open your Bible with this near 500-page commentary by your side and discover, yes, those necessary questions that query our Scriptural inheritance. Discover that you're not alone in having such thoughts. But also discover genuine trajectories that can lead to life, liberation, and joy.

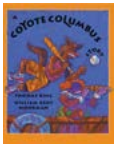


Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society, and Subversion (2011)

MARION GRAU

It could be the biggest question facing the Church today: What is the role of mission, if any? Some equate mission with colonialism. Others think the church's very existence is dependent on mission. Grau enters these disputed territories with critical care, grappling seriously with the concerns of "the colonies," conservative Christians (both Settler and Indigenous), and post-colonial practitioners. She'll leave you with a lot of questions, an admission that Christian mission is terribly ambiguous, yet also some real possibilities towards discovering a mission that relinquishes certainty and celebrates, with confidence, life beyond the Church (i.e., "whoever is not against us is for us" - Mark 9:40).

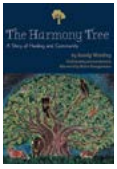
FOR CHILDREN & OLDER ONES



A Coyote Columbus Story (1992)

THOMAS KING

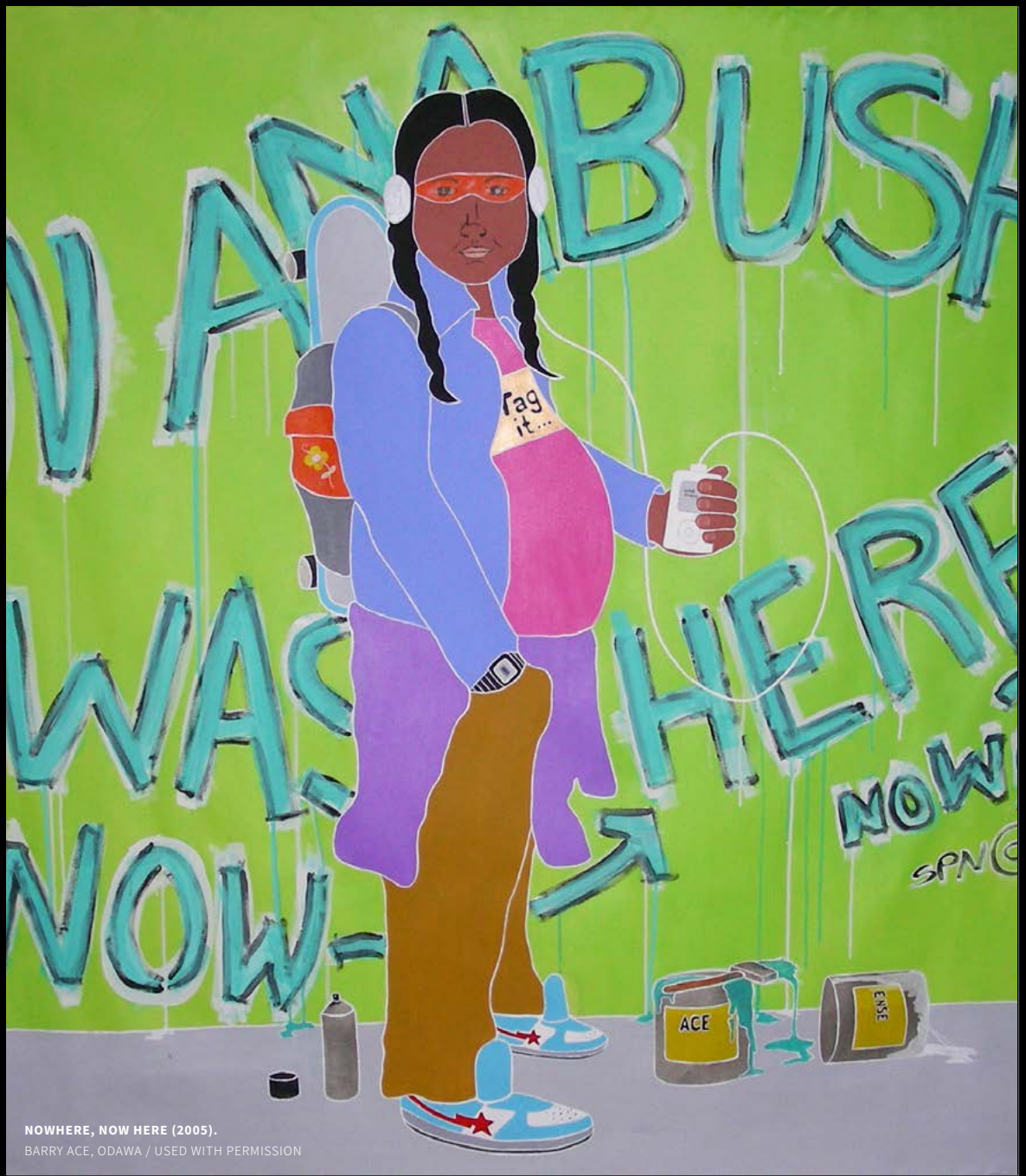
The myths around the supposed discovery of the Americas need to be shattered. Who better to do it than Coyote? Written on the 500th anniversary of Columbus' non-discovery, Thomas King (Cherokee) helps us unravel the stories of first contact through the weapons of laughter and sarcasm. It's a great read for children 9 years and up. The antics of trickster coyote show us how crazy and inhumane the dominant story of discovery really is. One caution, however, for the kids. Watch out for Christopher. He looks scary… like Elvis turned into an angry clown.



The Harmony Tree (2016)

RANDY WOODLEY

There is no shortage of resources for adults who want to learn about settler colonialism. But how about our children? As a result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, significant strides have been made to share with little ones the story of residential schools. Yet that's only a piece of the larger settler-colonial story. We need to talk about the theft of Indigenous lands. *The Harmony Tree* fills a gap, and does it with much sensitivity and compassion. Through the experience of Grandmother Oak, we learn about the impact of dispossession and the first step towards



NOWHERE, NOW HERE (2005).
BARRY ACE, ODAWA / USED WITH PERMISSION

QUEST FOR RESPECT

THE CHURCH AND INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY