

THEME FOUR MISSION AND POWER

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. [Then I, the Lord,] will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act.’ Ezekiel 37:1,3a,4,14 (NRSV)

Preface

In 2008, representatives from approximately twenty Christian organisations in Canada met to identify a Canadian contribution to Edinburgh 2010. An interest emerged in the theme of Mission and Power as expressed in the churches’ relations with indigenous peoples.

An eight-member study team began meeting in December 2008. Challenged by a mandate to reflect on power relations in mission since 1910, the co-chairs proposed an approach featuring information and reflections on Canadian residential schools: a century and a half of Christian mission which has had profound effects on First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples – the Aboriginal peoples of Canada¹ – and their continuing relations with the rest of Canadian society.

The study team wrestled with the subject of the ‘power’ of the pen, recognising that in choosing writers, power would be given to some over the many others who could have contributed. Since indigenous peoples’ voices are underrepresented in the literature, the team invited three indigenous authors to write their stories drawing on material from their personal and families’ experiences of residential schools.

We are grateful to our writers. Terry Leblanc, Eileen Antone and Andrew Wesley submitted thoughtful and deeply moving accounts, illuminating a complex and often difficult history. Ian Morrison, a Canadian of European origin, also wrote from the heart – one voice from the churches which ran the schools. The team received insightful, timely responses to these stories from these individuals from different regions and churches: J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Ghana; Dorcas Gordon, Canada; Dewi Hughes, Wales; Hanna Massad, Gaza; Stan McKay, Canada; Edley J. Moodley, South Africa and USA; Débora García Morales, Nicaragua; Philomena N. Mwaura, Kenya; Dorottya Nagy, Romania and The Netherlands; Tito Paredes, Peru; Philip Siew, Malaysia; and Philip Wingeier-Rayo, Cuba and USA.

These writers compared and contrasted experiences of mission and power in their contexts in rich and revealing ways. Wendy Fletcher produced an instructive theological reflection pointing to lessons learned by the Canadian faith community, and lessons still to be learned. We regret the absence of voices from the Canadian Roman Catholic tradition and francophone community. This is a significant gap: over seventy per cent of residential schools were administered by Roman Catholic entities.

Space constraints demanded that stories be edited and international responses be summarised. The unedited four-part case study, complete international responses – including responses not reflected in this chapter – and full biographical information for writers and study team members are available on the Edinburgh 2010 website.²

Finally, we acknowledge the work of the Mission and Power study team. The co-conveners were Dr Jonathan J. Bonk, Executive Director, Overseas Ministries Study Center, USA and Lori Ransom, Healing and Reconciliation Animator, Justice Ministries, Presbyterian Church in Canada. The members of the group (all in Canada) were Gail Allan, Bob Faris, Charles Fensham, John Franklin, Maylanne Maybee, Thomas Reynolds; and Editor – Anne Saunders.³

1 Introduction*

Christian *mission* has always been associated with *power*. The promise of the risen Christ was that his followers would receive *power* when the Holy Spirit came on them, and that this power would infuse and animate their proclamation of the good news in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and throughout the entire world (Acts 1:8). In the calculus of Roman *realpolitik*, the laughably parochial audience for these words represented the lowest social strata of a thoroughly subjugated populace inhabiting one of the empire's back eddies. Powerless, even against the slack measure of their nation's own powerlessness, the notion that these rag-tag followers of a crucified faith healer could be of political or religious significance would have seemed ludicrous.⁴

But history is full of surprises. In its first three centuries, the early church grew at an estimated forty percent per decade. By the time of Constantine's public accord with Christianity in AD 312, Christians already constituted a demographically significant proportion of the imperial population – perhaps as much as ten percent. This growth, furthermore, occurred in the face of formidable disincentives. Anyone converting to this faith risked social marginalization at best, and extinction at worst.

With the conversion of powerful political leaders – for whom Constantine may serve as a convenient marker of a prolonged, complex and extraordinarily violent process – *Christianity* evolved into *Christendom*, the great-grand sire of what is today known as 'The West'. Between the Edict of Milan in AD 313 and

*By Lori Ransom and Jonathan Bonk.

Justinian's edict of AD 529, Christianity's status in the Empire evolved from being *one religion among several* legitimate options to being *the only* legal public cult in AD 392. With Charlemagne's ascent to power several centuries later, Christendom emerged full-blown, infusing the West's social institutions and self-perception in its violent, five-hundred-year ascent to global hegemony.⁵

The conversion of peoples to Christianity was achieved by a combination of voluntary, social, legal, and violent compulsions. The incumbent populations of North and South America, Australia, Southern Africa, and most recently, Palestine, were overwhelmed, subjugated, and frequently destroyed. Missionaries applied themselves to winning subjugated peoples over to the religion that would set them on the path to 'civilization', now touted as 'development'. This noble end was used to justify almost any means of persuasion and inducement, including military conquest, genocide, assimilation, and proclamation. In the implicit, and sometimes explicit, thinking of missionaries, Christianity was the actual inner élan of Western civilization's lust and will to dominate.

It was the senseless carnage of World War I that applied the final *coup de grace* to Christendom's five-hundred-year claim to moral superiority. The scales fell off. The witness of millions of 'colonized' Africans and Asians pressed into duty as front line cannon fodder proved that such claims merely shrouded a terrifying pathological reality.

This was the 'Christian' world that made possible and even inevitable the Canadian residential schools described in this study. Ecclesiastical complicity in the clumsy application of state power did not occur in a vacuum. Missionaries and churches then, as now, were susceptible to the self-serving myopias of the powerful. Hailed as enlightened in their genesis, the boarding schools turned out to have been savagely effective instruments in the destruction of the very people they purported to save.

Missionaries from Europe came to North America with the first explorers. So the story of Christian mission with the indigenous people of the continent is over five hundred years long. From the earliest days, Christians were interested in providing a European-style education to indigenous children. The idea of taking indigenous children from their home communities to be educated in boarding schools dates back to seventeenth century New France. This first effort was abandoned until after 1828, when Christians opened boarding, or residential schools, for indigenous children in Upper Canada, having learned from watching similar efforts in the United States of America that removing children from parental influence was helpful in the process of 'civilizing' these children.⁶

A political process of treaty making between European powers and indigenous peoples parallels the mission story. The treaties sought to define the "relationship" between these peoples. The indigenous worldview celebrates the sacredness of all of God's Creation, and the inter-relationships between created

beings as sacred. Hence, the treaties have come to be viewed by indigenous peoples as being sacred, as having spirit, the Spirit of the Creator's presence that exists between related beings, because the treaties represent their relationship with the newcomers to their lands.

However, the promise of treaty-making could not compete with colonialism: the drive to acquire power in the 'New World' led to the development of systematic efforts to eradicate the existence of indigenous peoples and cultures. Wendy Fletcher notes⁷ that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 'announced a relationship based on friendship.' But 'a shift' occurred over the ensuing century, as immigration accelerated, and newcomers sought greater access to and ownership of land, both for settlement and economic development. The British colonial government 'announced the need to "civilize the Indian", with the introduction of the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857.' This began the process of creating a legal framework for assimilating indigenous peoples. 'In 1869, Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, announced the abolition of Native self-government, which had been promised in earlier agreements.'

Treaty-making continued but with the clear object of resolving land issues. Together, with the *Indian Act* of 1876, a policy of segregating indigenous peoples on small reserve land bases was pursued, which led to the further dissolution of once thriving indigenous nations. Wendy Fletcher continues,

By 1875 the assimilation project of the new Canadian government took this one step further with the introduction of the residential school policy based on the belief that, 'Aboriginal people were sunk in ignorance and superstitious blindness', and that 'only children taken at an early enough age can be liberated from the depravity of their natural state.'

The result was the development of a residential school model of education which would remove children from their families, forcibly if necessary, such that the 'influence of the wigwam' could not interrupt a process of cultural assimilation. The partnership between government and churches in actualizing this programme led to decades of trauma for indigenous communities. As early as 1907 the Government of Canada received reports depicting the gross neglect of basic sanitation, medical care, nutrition and protection which was running rampant in the schools, even in relation to the standards of the day. This extreme neglect was largely the product of government under-funding. However, despite evidence that significant harm was being done in the schools, the Parliament did not reconsider its support of this assimilationist plan until another half a century had passed. The last school was closed in 1998. The rest, as they say, is history.⁸

While the indigenous peoples of Canada survived these assaults on their very existence, the stories that follow reveal the profound effects on their well-being and sense of identity – as individuals, as communities and as nations. And so, indigenous peoples have found in Ezekiel's prophecy of dry bones

returning to life, a metaphor for their journey of recovering a strong and healthy identity.

Canadian philosopher, John Ralston Saul argues in his book *A Fair Country*⁹ that over the five-hundred-year history of relations, indigenous peoples have deeply and significantly shaped the collective Canadian consciousness in positive ways that are not generally acknowledged. Ralston Saul invites Canadians to deepen their own sense of identity as a people by deepening their knowledge of the influence of indigenous peoples on Canadian society.

The question now is what we – beneficiaries or victims of this destructive power – do? What *should* we do? Neither the case studies nor the responses in this document provide any easy answers. These raw stories raise serious questions about the nature and means of Christian mission, about missionary complicity with power and privilege, about complicated issues of restitution, justice, legality, and forgiveness across generations to the descendants of both victims and beneficiaries of misused power.

2 Canadian Residential Schools Case Study

2.1 Residential schools: Policy, power and mission*

Culture, faith, mission and evangelism have been at the heart of countless disputes dealing with issues of human identity, the purposes and revelation of God, and church polity and doctrine since the church's inception. This discussion centres on the impact of European culture and faith in its expression of mission to Native North America, as represented in the Canadian residential school policy.

Two myths have tended to polarize this discussion. One is the belief that the indigenous peoples of North America lived in an Edenic state prior to the coming of the Europeans, leading to the logical conclusion that the ensuing social, spiritual and moral destruction was almost entirely a consequence of the encounter with 'the other'. We must reject the suggestion that indigenous peoples were without agency, ignorant and devoid of the capacity to engage and decide for themselves, in light of the lives of people like Membertou or Ohiyesa.¹⁰ As Thomas Giles clarifies, at least in the early days of mission in North America,

Christianity was not simply thrust on an uncritical indigenous population. Native Americans viewed Christianity through a variety of experiences. They compared it to their own beliefs...They then made crucial decisions whether to accept the new faith...The fact that Native Americans came to know the Christian

* By Terry LeBlanc, a *Mi'kmaq*/Acadian, from *Listuguj* First Nation, who has served in vocational ministry since 1979 and been active in Native North American affairs for many years.

God...shows...the power of a faith that was able to reach people despite tremendous obstacles – not the least of which were produced by Christians.¹¹

At the other extreme is the myth predicated on European dualistic worldviews like the concepts of *terra nullius* and Manifest Destiny.¹² Dualism created the impression that the land of our forbears was a godless, heathen place, unvisited by the One (i.e. God, *Nisgam, Maheo, Manitou*) who made all things and gave breath to all creation.

Reality lay somewhere between the two extremes, shifting depending upon the specific issue. What weight did these notions have in defining the nature of power in mission in Native North America? What are the implications of these concepts for contemporary mission – Native North American or otherwise?

By 1969 the residential school pact between the Canadian government and four of its churches ended. However, the journey from ‘the middle of a valley’¹³ of despair, created by assimilative mission practice, was just beginning. Residential schools were a sample of ‘the massive changes that indigenous peoples underwent in the century between 1850 and 1950 – years also marked by the creation of the numbered treaties and of reserves.’¹⁴ The schools gave expression to the two-pronged approach felt necessary to deal with the Native problem – Christianization by the churches and civilization by the Canadian government. As the then Archbishop of St. Boniface noted, Aboriginal children were to be ‘caught young to be saved from what is on the whole the degenerating influence of their home environment’.¹⁵ Few in the churches are recorded as having challenged the school policy. The same was true of the government of the day with one noteworthy exception. Indian Affairs official Frank Oliver pointed out the essentially un-Christian implication of the Archbishop’s formative conclusion:

...one of the most important commandments laid upon the human by the divine is love and respect by children for parents. It seems strange that in the name of religion a system of education should have been instituted, the foundation principle of which not only ignored but contradicted this command.¹⁶

Years later, it was observed that for the children who were taken, ‘their parents were, by the light of the [residential school] vision’s compelling logic, unfit’.¹⁷ *Mi’kmaq* elder Isabelle Knockwood described the experience of life at the *Shubenacadie* Indian Residential School in Nova Scotia as, in part, a place where ‘[w]e were being forcibly disconnected from everything our parents and elders had taught us ...’.¹⁸ Stout and Kipling take this one step further as they note that,

In effect, students were made to feel ashamed of their ancestry, while teachers and other authority figures constantly sought to reinforce the innate superiority of ‘white’ society and values. On the one hand, this indoctrination involved the devaluing of parents and all aspects of Aboriginal culture. On the other hand,

schools attempted to disconnect children from their background by prohibiting communication in an Aboriginal language.¹⁹

While the most severe punishments were usually reserved for children who attempted to run away,²⁰ the capricious nature of the discipline administered in residential schools contributed to a generalized climate of fear for students. Further exacerbating this situation was the fact that many punishments were either explicitly or implicitly sexual in nature.

Over the years following the end of church-state collusion, schools were transferred to First Nation control. But when the last school finally closed in 1998,²¹ the end of the era of cultural and social genocide, as Riediger²² made clear, was in actuality far from visible. For as Richardson and Nelson note, ‘Residential schools... provid[ed] intensive and systemic re-socialization and cultural deprogramming for Aboriginal children while inflicting endless grief onto Aboriginal communities.’²³ Making the case even more emphatic, Reidiger says that, ‘...residential schools assaulted the Native’s individual and cultural identity, and left alcoholism, suicide, violence, and ongoing sexual abuse in their wake’.²⁴

The outcome has been decades of continuing social trauma leading to social and cultural degradation. Only handfuls of foresighted, some would say prophetic, traditional Elders managed to keep their cultures from complete annihilation. Stout and Kipling wrote about the profound impact on Canadian Aboriginal peoples that Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged on 11 June 2008:

Like a pebble dropped in a pond, the effects of trauma tend to ripple outwards from victims to touch all those who surround them, whether parents, spouses, children or friends. There is ample evidence to support this view among residential school survivors, where the consequences of emotional, physical and sexual abuse continue to be felt in each subsequent generation.²⁵

While residential schools have long since closed, the after-effects continue to be experienced – and will be for generations to come.

Seemingly in this approach to mission, without conscious assent, the ideas of *terra nullius* and Manifest Destiny had become firmly entrenched, and a sense of the rightness of these actions toward Native peoples had become incontrovertible. Native peoples, in this conception, represented a less-than-civilized aspect of creation that needed to be fully reworked. As a part of the wild, untamed creation,²⁶ Native peoples were subject to manipulation according to European ideas about their best interests. As if Native peoples entirely lacked the image of God, redemption looked like remaking them in the image of Europeans.

Clearly the commodified approach to the land and its resources supported the thinking that Native peoples could be easily assimilated into the mainstream of the emerging North American nations – including into churches. Centuries

before contact, Western Europeans had developed a dualistic understanding of creation, including land. Since physical, material creation was not understood to be spiritual, it was not redeemable; human souls became the essential and only focus of Jesus' work on the cross. In contrast, for Native peoples, the whole of the creation was possessed of a spiritual nature. In keeping with the text of Genesis 1:28-30, they had intuited that the Creator would, by reason of the activity of creation, deposit something of the Creator's self in all of the creation.

Mission to Native peoples necessitated that Native peoples do three things:

1. Adopt European ideas of material value and wealth connected to resources of the land;
2. Accept the growing social-liberal way of life with autonomous personal well-being and individual competitiveness;
3. Sever connection to belief that the totality of creation is possessed of a spiritual nature.

These behaviours became the focus of the application of power in mission – the government's and the churches' – in operating residential schools. In studying the implications of these continued policies, Wade²⁷ describes the existence of 'a very close and mutually supportive relationship between colonialism and the so-called "helping professions"' with the following colonial code of relationship:

- You are deficient. I am proficient;
- I have the right to perform prescribed operations upon you, with or without your consent;
- These operations are undertaken for your own good.

While this colonially-based mission practice had, according to many of the day, 'the best interests of the Native population at heart', it was ignorant of the profound differences in perspective of Native peoples and Europeans. Most significantly, it failed to consider the deep connectedness of Native peoples to the land of their forefathers and mothers, and the understanding that the land was possessed of a spiritual essence.

Mission among Native peoples had little to do with the gospel or the scriptures. Native peoples have historically had little argument with either. In fact, on 24 June 2010, we commemorate the first conversion recorded – of Membertou. His own agency in that decision is indisputable. The imposition of power in historic mission was not rooted in the uniqueness or singularity of the person of Jesus or the message of the gospel. It came from the church's worldview of material and spiritual separation which made the gospel about the salvation of the human soul.

In the historic expressions of the wider mainstream Christian tradition, the focus of the church's work has consistently been in an either/or mission – hardly consistent with the teaching in scripture that all creation is to be redeemed. Even today many people experience a dichotomy in the church's mission: souls and/or service. This continues to apply levers of power in

inappropriate ways to the lives of people who understand the world in more holistic terms. Native peoples assert that we are whole beings, dwelling in lands that are spiritual in essence, living in interconnected contexts and communities.

Therefore, the issue of mission and power confronting us is how do we discuss the nature of the spiritual? Do we continue to embrace forms of dualism as the foundation of our theologies, and therefore, our missiology? Or do we view the world, and our mission in it, in more clearly holistic terms? In light of the nature of creation and its Creator, can we begin to conceive that there is something more spiritually intrinsic to all of creation that frames the lives of the people and, therefore, the conversation about conversion and redemption?

For those of us on the Jesus Way, we encourage others to understand the fullest expression of Native spirituality as being in right relationship with the Creator, with other human beings and with the rest of creation – in the tradition of our ancestors, but only fully embraced in the person, work, life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. I believe this to be an extension of, not a replacement for, who we are and the direction in which we have been journeying. As Jesus claimed to be the fulfilment, not replacement of the Law, Jesus becomes our way of journeying from past-validated, authentic experiences of our people, through present challenges following a devastating period of encounter, to the future fulfilment of our journey.

In the Native context, a complexity in the issues has developed from what have become compound worldviews and convoluted family and social settings. This will be true in most, if not all, of the places a gospel predicated in a dualistic worldview was or is presented. Our challenge for the coming century is to make our worldview comport with the one in scriptures. Such a worldview reflects the *shalom* of the Creator and the desire that all creation be in balance and harmony, as in the opening days of creation in the Genesis narrative when the Creator announced, ‘It is very good!’

2.2 Reflections on intergenerational effects of residential schools*

Residential schools have played a major role in the lives of the Original people in what is now known as Canada. This paper focuses on my experience as a member of the *Onyota'a:ka* Nation, or the *Oneida* Nation of the Thames, located in southwestern Ontario.

The *Onyota'a:ka* people were introduced to the residential school system after settling along the Thames River banks in 1840. During the mid 1840s, *Ojibwa* Methodist minister The Rev. Peter Jones moved to the *Muncey* and *Chippewa* communities across the river from the *Onyota'a:ka*. He had a vision: an educational system teaching Native children to survive as Native people. Rev. Jones wanted all Native children to develop skills for dealing with Europeans to protect what land they had left.²⁸ In a letter to the churches he

* By Eileen Antone, *Oneida* of the Thames First Nation, Director of Aboriginal Studies/Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives, at the University of Toronto.

wrote, 'It is also our intention to select from these schools the most promising boys and girls, with a view to giving them superior advantages, so as to qualify them for missionaries and school teachers among their brethren.'²⁹ Believing a formal institute run by Native people would give Native children a chance of survival, in 1849 he opened Mt. Elgin Residential School on the *Chippewa* of the Thames reserve. But, due to failing health, Rev. Jones was unable to continue. The school was taken over by non-Native Rev. Samuel Rose who had administrative problems because of his 'ignorance of Indians'.³⁰ Instead of Rev. Jones' vision, 'White people fed, clothed, trained, and preached to the students in English'.³¹ Without apology Principal Rose stated, 'they are never left alone, but are constantly under the eye of some of those engaged in this arduous work'.³² Reported a failure in 1858, the school closed in 1864, reopened three years later,³³ but never fulfilled the original vision.

Although Mt. Elgin Residential School was near to the *Onyota'a:ka* community, children were also sent to the *Mohawk* Institute residential school in Brantford in central Ontario which operated from 1834 to 1970.³⁴ After 1892 *Onyota'a:ka* children were also sent to Sault Ste. Marie in northern Ontario, and Brandon in Manitoba.

When collecting data for my doctoral thesis, I interviewed members of the *Onyota'a:ka* community. One participant, an elderly lady, had attended residential school in Brandon during the 1920s. The Indian agent who spoke to her Dad about sending his children to the school had said it was run by Christian people and, therefore, they would be well fed, clothed and educated. 'There was nothing Christian about the school', she commented in the interview; the children were often hungry and punished for speaking their traditional language. She was proud she had not lost her language. She said, 'You know I didn't know how to speak English until I went to that Brandon Manitoba [residential] school. There was E.S. [a friend]. We talked *Oneida*. And if we got caught talking to each other in *Oneida* we would get a strapping.'³⁵ The prevailing belief was that by removing the language, Native children would more easily assimilate into the dominant society. She said she and her friend hid and spoke to each other in *Oneida*. Therefore, when she returned home she was able to speak her mother tongue.

After 1969,³⁶ there was a reclamation of the *Onyota'a:ka* language and culture. Many young *Onyota'a:ka* parents went to this elderly lady for *Onyota'a:ka* names for their babies. Sharing this information she asked me, 'What is your Indian name?' I admitted I did not have one. Both my parents attended residential school at Mt. Elgin and witnessed the violence that many children experienced there. They loved me too much to have me experience punishment for speaking my own language. Teaching me only English, they did not bestow upon me an Indian name. Both my parents, having passed to the spirit world, the woman offered to give me an Indian name. She said, 'Your name will be *Kaliwisaks*', meaning 'She who gathers information'. I use this

name because that is what I do: I gather information to enhance the learning of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal peoples.

After 1925 the United Church of Canada (UCC) administered the Mt. Elgin Residential School and continued Christianizing the Native students in their care, coercing them to get rid of their traditions including the use of their languages, songs and dances which were part of their spirituality. This process of disconnecting Aboriginal peoples from their way of life had a detrimental effect on the identity of many Aboriginal people in Canada. In my journey I have learned that a society's traditional culture ensures its unity and survival. The values, beliefs, history and customs form the basis for attitudes, behaviours and understandings of the heritage that individuals learn. Although a living culture constantly changes and adapts, it still contains principles intrinsic to a particular group of people and to their identity. I have also learned that the relationship to Mother Earth is one manifestation of spirituality. Regardless of what our faith system is, the relationship to everything around us is important to our spiritual well-being and the way we reveal that relationship.

At the 1984 UCC General Council, an Aboriginal woman from British Columbia named Alberta Billy called for an apology from the church for using the Christian message to strip Aboriginal peoples of their traditional way of being. At the next General Council in 1986, moderator Robert Smith made an apology to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. It was a powerful event to witness. Rev. Stan McKay, a *Cree* minister, began with a teaching from the pulpit. He said words to this effect,

Once there was this little old woman and this little old man living in a beautiful house. One day a person from another place came to visit and they welcomed him into their home. He stayed and stayed until one day some of his relatives came also. They stayed. These visitors kept inviting more people to the house until finally the old man and woman were living on the veranda because there was no more room inside. The visitors occupied the whole house. The old man and woman kept saying to themselves 'when are these people going to leave so we can move back into our house?' Then another group of relatives of the first visitors arrived and the old man and woman were pushed off the veranda into the bog surrounding the house.³⁷

Rev. McKay then stated, 'We will go down to the bog to wait.' One by one the Aboriginal people got up, left the gathered assembly, following him to the bog. On the bog was a tepee where the Elders waited for the apology. In the centre of the bog was a sacred fire and beside were the drummers. The atmosphere was quiet. The evening sunset turned to the dark of night. Eventually we saw hundreds of candle lights coming down the hillside to the bog. This contingent of General Council representatives from across Canada, led by the Moderator, proceeded to the tepee and waiting Elders. Then the Moderator read the following communication:

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation, and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich and to be treasured.

We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.

We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the Gospel of Christ.

We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel.

We tried to make you like us and in doing so we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred and we are not what we are meant by God to be.

We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.³⁸

The Elders and the Moderator came out of the tepee where the apology was again read to the Original people. There was joyfulness. Our people, suppressed by the church for so many years, pulled out their shawls and button blankets and danced, crying and singing, around the sacred fire to the beat of the drums. They invited the other people to join in the release from suffocating oppression. Witnessing this event had a powerful influence on me. I had been raised with the belief that our ceremonies, language, stories, songs, dances, and ways of being were the ways of the devil. Hearing this apology released me to learn about our spiritual ways.

Although the last residential school was closed in 1998, the effects of these schools still ripple through the Aboriginal communities. There is still much work to be done to bring healing and reconciliation to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

2.3 A survivor's story: *O Ke che manido**

In my early age I grew up in the hunting ground of my ancestors, the *Omuskagowuk* Nation. My life was good – we lived off the land and everything was provided for us. The hunting ground was located in northern Ontario, about 150 miles southeast of James Bay. In the summer months the family would move to the community of Fort Albany on James Bay until it was time to leave in the fall.

* By Andrew Wesley of *Mushkagowuk* ancestry, who recovered from residential school abuse enabled by traditional elders, and works as an Aboriginal priest for Toronto Anglican Diocese. The unedited version of this article first appeared in the Canadian Council of Church's resource, *Suffering and Hope*.

One fall I never made it back to the hunting ground with my family. Instead I was put on a supply ship going back to Moosonee. This was my first trip away from my family and I didn't even know I was being sent far away to a residential school. I don't remember the trip. I was only about six years old, and there were ten other children on that boat. We left at six in the morning and arrived at Moosonee thirteen hours later and were hustled to the school.

I don't even remember my first day at the school. I must have broken down crying all the way, wanting to be with my parents and grandmother. I must have wondered why I had to be in this place, separated from them and from my home. When I think about it now, I was deprived of the right to a normal family upbringing – the right to have my parents and grandmother to love and enjoy, and be nurtured by.

My number at the residential school was 56 and I was known by that number for many years. I was not considered to be a human being, just a number.

Shortly after I arrived at St. Anne's residential school, I remember being in the dining room having a meal. I got sick and threw up on the floor. Sister Mary Immaculate slapped me many times before she made me eat my vomit. So I did, I ate all of it. And then I threw up again, for the second time. Sister Mary Immaculate slapped me and told me again to eat my vomit. I ate it, half of it, and then I was told to go to the dorm. I felt humiliated, being slapped around in front of my friends and being treated worse than a dog, except you wouldn't even treat a dog like that. I was sick for a few days after that. I managed to eat a little here and there because I was afraid it might happen again, so I used to watch how I ate my food. (This incident today reminds me of Isaiah 50.)

Again I remember being in the dining room when I was twelve years old. I was sitting across the table from my friend who was kicking me under the table to tease me. I caught his leg and pulled off his shoe. Sister Mary Immaculate caught me. She took the shoe, which was a heavy shoe (not like the running shoes of today that children wear), and she hit me on my head with the heavy shoe. She hit me about fifty times. I passed out for a while. I was not allowed to report the incident, and I was not allowed to go to the clinic. The beating left a large lump on the back of my neck, at the top of my spine (which has never gone away). For many, many days I had a hard time walking or playing because it hurt. I had a regular, severe nose bleed that kept coming back for months. (Was this person working for the church and Jesus?)

Seeking sources of hope, I revisited the traditional spiritual teachings of my Elders, especially the Prayer on Wisdom my father used. I would like to share it.

O Ke che manido, give me wisdom....

Help me to understand that life on earth is part of your gift, inspiring to our patterns of life, with man the chief steward. Teach me to appreciate the delicate relationship of all things on earth. The majestic flight of Canada geese. The spring

time promise of the wonderful smell of flowers in bloom. The crystal purity of a dew drop and all that it contains.

O *Ke che manido*, teach me the proper respect of my place. Guide me in doing my part to help solve the many problems that beset us. Let me be dedicated to this task, as a bee gathering pollen.

O *Ke che manido*, show me how to utilize the inspiration from the daily miracles that I witness on my walk in your created earth. Help me to remember that nature's songs and laughter are more in tune with life than any wail or frown. Make me realise that in nature there is both tranquility and power; knowing that makes harmony reside also in me.

O *Ke che manido*, make me humble; please give me humility to see how crude the most spectacular man-made thing is compared with a baby rabbit, the wondrous perfection of a snowflake, or the grandeur of your sculptured tamarack trees in the muskeg. Give me wisdom and knowledge to know that if our environment fails because of our over exploitations, I too am doomed.

O *Ke che manido*, open our eyes.

Help us to understand that we are indeed all God's creatures.

That we are all brothers and sisters after all. So be it.³⁹

2.4 My healing journey in relationship to Aboriginal peoples*

The period from March 1990 to June 1991 was the turning point for me in my relationship with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Recently appointed Associate Secretary for Canada Ministries⁴⁰ of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), I had responsibility for Native Ministries. Three events precipitated a crisis of faith and a reconsideration of my relationship with Aboriginal peoples – indeed, with all people.

The first event began when the mayor of Oka, in Quebec, proposed the extension of a golf course onto land that *Mohawks* claimed was ancestral land. The *Mohawks* responded with a barricade to the land in question. The situation escalated when police attacked and an officer was killed. Only with the involvement of the Canadian Armed Forces did negotiations begin. Finally after almost six months, the stand-off ended.⁴¹

The second event was the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) Consultation in Saskatchewan, held because of breaking awareness of abuses at residential schools run by Roman Catholic Church entities. Aboriginal people at that meeting were invited to tell their stories; I heard, first-hand and for the first time, stories of sexual and physical abuse.⁴²

Lastly, I visited two residential schools run by the PCC: Birtle in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Cecilia Jeffrey in northern Ontario. Having naïvely believed that

* By J.P. Ian Morrison, formerly General Secretary in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, who is the church's representative in the Independent Assessment Process for residential school survivors.

abuses did not happen at Presbyterian schools, I listened to former students detail the abuses they had suffered.

All three experiences, particularly the last, were traumatic. In all my years of ministry, I had never realised how cultural dominance had been so devastating to Aboriginal peoples. And an education model sponsored by my church had led to one of the most horrendous events in Canadian history. This realisation forever changed my life.

Born and raised in Glasgow, Scotland, I grew up with little exposure to Aboriginal peoples (the term used was ‘Indian’, or ‘red Indian’, to avoid confusion with people from India). In cowboy movies, Indians were portrayed as bad guys, with white settlers being good guys to whom, by right of conquest, North America belonged. Any good Indians were supporting whites in their conquest. In history class, good Indians supported the British conquest of Canada. A major cultural image was the world map with the ‘pink bits’ representing countries that were parts of the British Empire.

After immigrating to Canada (Montreal) in 1957, my image of Aboriginal peoples remained unchanged. As a draughtsman, I worked with an Indian who was deemed to have ‘made it’ since he was in a white collar job. At seminary there was one Aboriginal student whose enrolment indicated successful integration into Canadian society. Consistent with the prevailing understanding of Aboriginal peoples in Montreal society in the 1960s, I had a concept of Aboriginal peoples being in the lower Canadian social stratification. As an ordained PCC minister, this concept was juxtaposed with the church’s ministry to Aboriginal peoples, like the work at two residential schools – wonderful Christian charity being done there and on the reserves through the dedication of ordained missionaries sent to their first ministerial charge. As a minister in rural British Columbia, helping those who came to the church in need, I learned of the white community’s prejudice against Aboriginal peoples: a local hotel room I booked was no longer available when staff saw that the person was Aboriginal. I could not fight this prejudice since I did not yet understand the underlying trauma, caused by residential schooling, which contributed to alcoholism. After moving to Vancouver, I saw the high proportion of homeless Aboriginal people in the poor downtown east side, no more than two kilometres from my middle-class congregation.

My growing awareness of Native situations was shaken by the three events in the early 1990s. Suddenly I could not remember those ‘pink’ bits on the world map without thinking how a European understanding of colonial conquest had been imposed on indigenous people on every continent. No longer did I believe that my way was the only way. Learning about the pain and struggle of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada broadened my life and forever changed my worldview.

How did the PCC respond? Despite continuing assertions about good work at residential schools, the church set up a review committee. It recommended how the church should work with Aboriginal peoples, and that the church adopt

a confession to God and Aboriginal peoples, acknowledging the church's complicity in an assimilation policy and recognising that the residential school system was systemically flawed, allowing the possibility of abuse.⁴³ While a confession needed further work, Assembly agreed with recommendations 'That the Church commit itself to listen to the issues as they are named and described by Aboriginal peoples ...support healing processes that arise from Aboriginal peoples themselves...[and] commit itself to seeking ways to work with Aboriginal peoples in calling the Government of Canada to acknowledge that its policies were harmful...'.⁴⁴

Two years later the church adopted *The Confession*⁴⁵ with Moderator the Reverend George Vais presenting it to Grand Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in the fall of 1994 at 'the Forks' in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Accepting the apology, the Grand Chief said he could not yet forgive the church (he attended and was abused in a school run by an order in the Roman Catholic Church).⁴⁶

By this time a growing number of claims made against the Government of Canada and the churches required resolution. Participating in the challenge of trying to resolve the impact of these claims included working with colleagues from the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as Government of Canada representatives and Aboriginal people. The ecumenical effort was frustrating as we dealt with each denomination's structure. The greatest challenge came with recognition that the Roman Catholic Church had more than fifty different entities involved in running residential schools, and each bore their own responsibility according to their mandate.

Equally challenging were the meetings with Canadian government representatives. More than once, government negotiators disappointed church and Aboriginal representatives, despite efforts to have a common understanding and promise that we were part of a shared enterprise. For healing and reconciliation to succeed, the Government of Canada must accept that Canadians share this land with Aboriginal peoples who were here long before us.

The many meetings with Aboriginal people gave us opportunities to become acquainted and to know each other by name.⁴⁷ While anger was often expressed, there was also forgiveness as the church recognised its complicity in the government's assimilation policy. From Aboriginal people, I have learned that there is another way of thinking about life and its challenges. I am eternally grateful to them for teaching me.

My most difficult and rewarding responsibility has been as PCC representative at the individual assessment programme hearings.⁴⁸ The claimant, their lawyer, the adjudicator, a government representative, a health worker if the claimant desires, and a church representative (*if* the claimant agrees) attend. The adjudicator invites the claimant to tell their story – often a difficult task (sometimes this is the first time the person has told anyone of the

abuse suffered). A skilful adjudicator elicits the information required to assess the level of abuse and to decide the compensation. After the claimant's lawyer and the government representative speak, the church representative addresses the claimant. I speak of how I became involved with the PCC, how I learned only of the good things that happened at the schools, and how shocked I was to learn that my church was no different from the others. Then I speak of my healing journey and the church's struggle to adopt a confession to God and Aboriginal peoples. I usually read aloud *The Confession*, sections 5–7 and say that the church asked me to share this confession, to apologise for any hurt that the claimant has experienced through the neglect of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and to ask for the claimant's forgiveness.

At one hearing after I spoke, the claimant stood up opposite me, walked around the table, passed his lawyer and the health worker until he reached me. He reached out and gave me a firm handshake and hug, saying that the church was forgiven. He returned to his seat and stated, with tears in his eyes, 'this is the happiest day of my life' because the church admitted what it did was wrong. At another hearing when something similar happened, in closing, the adjudicator asked the elder accompanying the claimant if he had anything to say. He replied that he was moved by what had happened, that he was sorry he had not had the same opportunity at his hearing. It is a reminder that healing and reconciliation cannot take place without personal contact.

Where do we go from here? The church must be involved wherever and whenever it can in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The church must continue to pressure the Canadian government to deal with outstanding issues about land and indigenous rights, and revive the recommendations in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*.⁴⁹ The hardest job will be convincing the people of Canada to accept that the Aboriginal peoples of Canada have a unique relationship with those of us who have come to these shores, regardless of how long ago or how recent.

3 International Responses to Canadian Case Study

Moved by the power of the Canadian stories, international readers expressed heartfelt sorrow. For some these stories were new; for all they resonated with personal experiences and the global perspective. The following edited extracts provide a glimpse of how the misuse of power has touched, and continues to affect, the lives of people and communities worldwide.

Dewi Hughes, Wales: While I was not beaten for speaking Welsh, my high school education left me in no doubt about the inferiority of my native culture... Abuse of power in our case...was English imperial power not wanting to be inconvenienced by linguistic diversity. There was collusion from the Church of England in Wales in the nineteenth century ... Christian faith has played a very

important part in our resistance to the abuse of power – in leading us to adopt pacifist methods and in giving us a strong intellectual foundation to persevere.

Hanna Massad, Gaza: What makes the Palestinian story and this conflict more complicated [is that] many Jews, Christians and Muslims cover it with the clothes of religion and in the name of religion we oppress people and persecute each other. [And] as Terry LeBlanc said ‘[the Europeans] failed...to consider the deep connectedness of Native people to the land of their forefathers and mothers; the understanding that the land was possessed of a spiritual essence.’ ...We see this where the British government...did not understand how much the land meant to the Muslims and to the Christian...where the land is part of their faith tradition and belonging...

Stan McKay, Canada: There is complexity in conversations about mission because the church is tempted to declare that it possesses ‘the truth’. ...studies at theological schools often programme students to assume the church has resolved historic injustice. ...Many churches and the government have made apologies... Statements of apology do not change the impact of historic injustice when there is not significant change in the society and its institutions.

Philomena N. Mwaura, Kenya: I have come to understand that the way churches interpret scripture and understand social dynamics influences the way power is exercised in church and society. Images of a ‘powerful’ God have been utilised...to justify colonisation, oppression and marginalisation. ...My faith has convinced me that cherishing such notions in contexts where the majority of people are victims of power is a theological aberration. I also see the need to redefine power and reclaim the images of God in the scriptures that affirm the life-enhancing attributes of God... These are the resources that provide sites for resisting abusive power and reconstructing liberating perspectives.

Philip Wingeier-Rayo, Cuba and USA: One result of the European colonization methods in...South America was the creation of the *mestizo* race – neither purely European, nor purely indigenous – due to the conquest strategy...of sending mostly single men soldiers. ... Upon reflecting on the Canadian stories and the growth of the US Hispanic population and the conquest of the Incas in Peru, I find...culture is a battle ground. There is a struggle over who has the power to educate... Will young people [e.g., Latino children in the US, *mestizo* children in Peru] be raised into the dominant culture or will they learn their native language, history, foods and culture? This is not a new question in the history of conquest.

Débora García Morales, Nicaragua: To read these texts...from my Nicaraguan reality, suggests reflection on the relations of equity from difference. The reflection on power that is made from conditions of subalternity⁵⁰ can help. ...Faith is the expression of the commitment with God who is in solidarity with those who are subordinated... This criterion has helped me: What does God demand of those who have power? (Micah 6:8) In reading the text, and its context...I find an attempt to justify themselves by those who have not done what God asks.

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Ghana: A majority of African leaders...received their education ...through missionary schools... Indeed the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan and one of Africa's most illustrious theologians, Kwame Bediako, were both educated at the oldest Wesleyan mission residential school in Ghana, Mfantshipim School in Cape Coast. ...Unfortunately the strong link between education and mission led to cerebral Christianity devoid of the experiential aspects of the encounter with the Spirit of God...familiar in African religion.

Dorottya Nagy, Romania and The Netherlands: Both the cases – the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and Hungarians in Romania – provide examples of how the land is being viewed as the sacred creature of the Creator. The idea of the sacredness of the land is relevant for the emerging theologies of environment. Yet, there is one mistake...in the Hungarian discourses on land. Land is still being viewed as the property of the community; and it is thought that being first on a given territory...gives the right to own the land. ...How rich the myths on settlement, God-given guidance to the land... How they all sustain the idea of the property! When influenced by Christianity this idea can develop in much positive direction but it can also shape negative and destructive ideologies...

Philip Siew, Malaysia: In reading the case studies, my heart is saddened by the destructive nature of power being misused, especially in the context of mission endeavour. I have come across the alarming mistakes of power being wrongly used in abusive manner, especially in the context of doing mission. This has caused me to be extra careful of how I hold and use power. ...All cultures can be redeemed to manifest God's glory!

Dorcus Gordon, Canada: Antone's case study reminds me how easily a vision, perfect yet imperfect at the same time, can be subverted into something more flawed. ... LeBlanc calls us to view the world as one of balance and harmony in which all are brothers and sisters. I see this as the essence of a sacred living out of power. It is a reminder that not only are we made by our culture, but that the potential is within us to transform culture.

Edley J. Moodley, South Africa and USA: The psychological trauma and damage that occurred as a result of apartheid...cannot be overstated. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee...exposed atrocities experienced by those opposed to apartheid in South Africa, but...more empirical evidence of apartheid crimes surfaces each day... The counterpoint to the abuse of power...came for me via a measured response by people in the Colored, Indian, and African churches. Not least among them was the minority ethnic group of Indian Christians affiliated with the Bethesda Movement.⁵¹ ... This group, suffering disenfranchisement at the hands of [both] the black majority and the minority white race..., actively participated in the Bethesda Temple where all races were welcome...

Tito Paredes, Peru: It resonates with our historical and present situation of indigenous peoples of the Andean Countries. Although we did not have the...widespread practice of the residential schools for native peoples, the

attitudes toward native cultures and peoples were similar. LeBlanc does a good job in describing the problem of Western missions among indigenous peoples as one of confusing culture with the Gospel... The Western church, in our case the Spanish-speaking churches, would do well in siding with the indigenous peoples...

4 Theological Reflection: A Time for Healing*

Reading the stories of Aboriginal people journeying through the residential school experience moves us deeply toward the suffering of the other. The mission of the church, conceived as a colonial undertaking, caused harm. The marriage of political and economic colonization with religion formed a socialization project that devastated generations of indigenous people from many communities across Canada. For decades, no corner of the nation was left untouched by the colonizing reach of the residential school experiment.

Despite the intention to promote well-being, partnering the gospel with the imposition of culture meant stripping away the culture of the other. The assumption of the racial and cultural inferiority of Aboriginal peoples, set in juxtaposition to the presumed superiority of European culture, meant the practical dehumanization of the other. When Christian leaders of an earlier generation formed a partnership with the government based on the view that only the assimilated indigenous person was worthy of citizenship and recognition as a person under the law, a trajectory of harm unfolded that wrapped countless children and their families in trauma and dislocation. To replace one culture with another meant that the ‘inferior’ culture must be stripped away. To accomplish that goal, children were forcibly removed from their families, severed from their kinship groups and the traditional wisdoms which had sustained them as a people.

The structure of the residential school system meant that children taken into care by the government were subject to both structural and capricious harm. Grossly under-funded by the Canadian government, schools often providing inadequate nutrition, housing, clothing and care were even less likely to provide effective education. It also meant that, in many circumstances, poorly supervised children were left vulnerable to the abuses of violence and humiliation by their caregivers. By its very structure, the residential school system created a world in which its own objectives could never be achieved. Rather than empowering children to fully engage the opportunities of European culture, residential schools left countless children emotionally crippled, effectively illiterate, and sitting on the sidelines of Canadian society. Yet, a Canadian Anglican Bishop writing in 1967 protested to the Department of

* By Wendy Fletcher, Principal and Dean, and Professor of Church History at Vancouver School of Theology, a researcher of ecclesiastical and women’s history.

Indian Affairs (DIA) that residential schools, even as the department prepared to close them as a failed experiment, should be left open:

We must continue our efforts among the Indians. Although there is no hope for this generation, if we persist, perhaps we will be able to raise up their grandchildren to the level of a servant class.⁵²

The missiology underpinning the residential school system was malformed. It assumed that the good news of the gospel could be shared through force and coercion. In the context of triumphalist, liberal Christianity, the church enthusiastically embraced social reconstruction as religious work. In our effort to remake the world in our own image, we fell. We know from the lessons of history that North American colonization is just another configuration of the relationship between gospel and power which has led to acts of enormous evil perpetrated against the innocent. We know that in every instance the use of power for forcible conversion has given way to destructive outcomes; force does not teach a gospel of love.

In response to these stories, partners from around the globe sound a similar note. In each case, the writers move to their own context, where the misuse of power – power over the other – has led to harm, sin and alienation. All can readily identify the effects of such abuse in their own worlds. Several name the devastating effects which eradication of culture left behind, like loss of ethnic identity, social cohesion and meaning. All resonate with the implicit harm that a legacy of colonization (whether based on race, gender or class) leaves behind for the next generation to clean up.

That's us. We are the generation who must formulate our own theory of mission and its right relation to power. We are the ones asked to move forward after the fall. Where do we go from here? The stories point the way. In each case, the place of moving forward is rooted in mutual release. As joint actors in the residential school drama, each name their story, one of harm and the other of repentance, and a stark truth becomes palpable: no justice is possible in this situation. There is no compensation which can adequately make right the loss of childhood, culture and freedom for several generations and multiple cultures. A childhood cannot be given back.

If not justice, then what can make sense of, and move beyond, the harm of colonization? The stories shared lend themselves to the motif of reconciliation woven from a genuine accounting of the harm and a sincere plea of repentance. Release of harms received by those injured is the next movement in the unfolding dance of reconciliation, as those injured literally open their arms wide in an embrace of welcome, very like the embrace of the cross. As kinship-based cultures, indigenous communities, prior to our government's assimilation policies, welcomed the gospel as communities. Now as communities, indigenous people are beginning the journey of communal forgiveness and release. There is no reason why such welcome and forgiveness should be

possible. For some, it may be inconceivable to imagine; and yet, the generosity of spirit expressed by many of those harmed, as they move toward the other in welcome, is opening the way for a transfiguration of this old story into a new day. Perhaps if I had not experienced this opening into transfiguration, I would not understand.

On 9 October 2008, I travelled to the *Nisga'a* village of *Laxgalts'ap*. I made the journey to attend the funeral of Bradley Martin, son of Willard Martin, Vancouver School of Theology alumnus and *Nisga'a* hereditary chief. Bradley had ended his own life. Over a century before, Christian missionaries, bringing their own worldview to this community, had insisted there be no proper burials when death is by suicide. The *Nisga'a* adopted and followed that teaching ever since, even as the church changed its thinking and practice. Willard insisted on giving his son the dignity of a Christian burial and settlement feast; I went to support him in his courage and his wisdom, and to honour the life of his son. Willard, as with many of his people, has survived the trauma of residential schooling and all the dislocation it engendered for so many. I carried with me the weight of our history, a colonizing church, a legacy of harm. I felt shame.

When I arrived, Willard cautioned that likely very few would attend the funeral, as it was breaking with cultural practice. He then asked me to participate in the liturgy which would honour his son. Surprisingly, hundreds of *Nisga'a* came. When the Eucharist was celebrated, every single person came forward to receive. When the *Nisga'a* priest, James, asked me to walk with him ahead of the casket to the graveside, I looked back. Ten young *Nisga'a* men carried their friend, refusing to put him down until the grave was reached. With tears streaming down their faces they walked and walked; behind them hundreds of Bradley's people walked with him his last mile. We stood around the open grave and then James turned and handed me his prayer book, 'You commit him to God for us', he said. As I said the words of committal, and we all stood there suffering and hoping together past the stain of an incredibly wounding history, I saw the healing of God begin. I saw the healing water of God's grace pour out to all corners of the earth and understood that nothing was beyond its reach.

With such moments, a beginning place is framed. By grace and the opportunity which repentance and release offers, we are invited to reformulate our understanding of mission and its relationship to power. If we are able to deconstruct our earlier assumptions about the relationship between gospel and culture, we can begin again. While apparently we have understood that religion always reflects culture, we have not always understood that transposing our assumptions about normative culture onto the other, as a necessary dimension of transmission of the gospel, destroys the gospel's intent. If there is no space for cultural accommodation of the other, then the gospel becomes an agent of hegemonic discourse rather than the liberating word of God's welcome and mercy. A gospel engaged with, but not normalizing, culture is an appropriate

vehicle for the transmission of a unitive vision of community which empowers rather than disempowers the other.

Perhaps in the final instance we in this generation are invited to see that the gospel we carry to the world is itself an act of mercy and reconciliation enfleshed. We are disciples of a Reconciler who came to bind up the wounds of all those who have been hurt – perhaps firstly by those who have been hurt at the hands of those who thought they were right. A missiology which will carry us forward onto new ground is not the proclamation of any dogmatism, any set of moral imperatives, or any culturally embedded values as necessary companions to the gospel. It is not a project grounded in a notion of power over another. Rather it is the enfleshment of radical love, which by its practice encircles rather than divides, lifts up rather than steps on, and heals rather than harms.

As we attempt to live into new partnerships in church and world, 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 is a suitable companion for us. With his image of the body, Paul speaks to the community at Corinth drawing on an ancient wisdom of how communities configure themselves. However, Paul takes Aristotle's image of the body and literally turns it on its head. In this passage he insists that the members of the body which are least honoured should be the most honoured; that the least valued be the most cherished. Such an inversion of the power images familiar in Paul's day clarifies his intention for the early community of the followers of Jesus. The least among us, the children, will lead us.

When Paul addressed the community at Corinth, his message was radical. In the face of all our hopes of glory, the glory the world might give, or even the church – in its own limited way, Paul speaks. He says each member of the body is most beloved, and the least among us most beloved of all. He summons us to see ourselves in a new way, not as neo-empire rebuilding wannabes, not as saviours who will fix the world or save the church, but as committed disciples of the Word of Life who will love the world, who will live as love in the world by seeing, by understanding that we, beloved children of God, community of the faithful, we are a community of diverse people. Blessed be. By a gospel of humility and compassion, and only by grace, we will renew the world.

It appears that the witness of the Canadian church in this generation is that there is no harm beyond the reach of God's healing grace. All around us in these hours, the signs of a new world struggling to be born paint themselves across the backdrop of former desolations. Perhaps struggle is another word for hope. Mercy abounds and deliverance remakes us.

5 Afterword: The Story of Residential Schools Continues*

The Anglican Church of Canada, The United Church of Canada, and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, in the late twentieth century, issued apologies and confessions to God and to the First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples concerning the churches' complicity in the residential school system.⁵³ Some Canadian Roman Catholic entities and individual bishops have made similar apologies. His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, issued an important statement of regret over residential schools in April 2009.

These four denominations entered into a settlement agreement with the Government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and representatives of residential school survivors who had sought legal redress for the physical, sexual, psychological and spiritual abuse suffered as a result of their experience in residential schools. The agreement provides financial compensation to the over 80,000 survivors still living in Canada, and an independent adjudicative process for awarding compensation for substantiated physical and sexual abuse claims. Some 13,000 such claims have already been filed.

The Agreement, effective September 2007, also provides for a Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission, which began its work in July 2009, has a five-year mandate to examine the legacy of residential schools; document and preserve the story for future generations; and make recommendations to the churches, the government, the indigenous community, and Canadian society at large – recommendations to support the journey of healing and the building of healthy relationships in communities throughout Canada. Significant funding will be available to support community-level events that bring people together on the road towards reconciliation.

More than twenty years ago, a more broadly representative Canadian Christian community committed to supporting the indigenous community's struggle for justice by issuing a pastoral statement called *A New Covenant*,⁵⁴ to which they re-committed themselves in 2007. Partnerships between the churches and the indigenous community are growing. The road ahead is long. As some Aboriginal people have said, 'We walk backwards on the long road into the future together, looking to our past to shape our journey forward.'⁵⁵

6 Study Questions

1. It is difficult to understand why we must repent for the sins of a previous generation.
 - i. What calls us into repentance and reconciliation?
 - ii. How could living out confession/apology (accepted or not) shape the way the church does mission?

* By Lori Ransom.

- iii. What would ‘reconciliation’ mean in the contexts described in the case study?
 - iv. What does ‘repentance’ look like, practically and theologically, in such contexts?
 - v. What will sustain journeys of repentance and reconciliation?
2. Power has generally been understood as power *over*.
- i. What alternative models of power are in scripture?
 - ii. What strategies could move the power relationships in mission from domination/submission to relationships of mutuality and justice?
 - iii. How do we resist moving back into relationships of power *over*?
3. The residential school case study exposes the damaging impact when one culture imposes itself on another. Despite *cross*-cultural and *multi*-cultural approaches, a hierarchical understanding of cultural differences persists in mission praxis.
- i. How can we move to inter-cultural relationship models where power with gives people the capacity to accept from and to embrace the other; to be transformed in relationship with the other; to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the gift of the other?
4. Political, economic and religious powers perpetrate evil and seek to redress evil within legal structures which the powers themselves have defined. As a result legal remedies often do not meet the demands of justice in the biblical sense of building right relationship.
- i. What theologies move us beyond legal frameworks to practices of justice?
 - ii. What is justice to those whose lives have been deeply scarred and lost through injustice? How can we support victims of injustice in claiming their rightful role in determining what is just?
5. Indigenous Christians suggest that a biblical metaphor for the restoration of the identities destroyed by colonization experiences is the prophetic call of Ezekiel 37, the restoration to life of dry bones.
- i. How can indigenous theologies and biblical scholarship inform journeys of justice and reconciliation and practices of mission?
 - ii. What is the role of the recovery of indigenous spiritualities in transforming abusive relations of power?
 - iii. How does Ezekiel 37 speak to you concerning issues of mission and power?

7 Priorities

1. Repentance and atonement involve the powerful...

...listening and learning, giving up place of power, giving power to those harmed by past mission

to tell us how they feel, to help us see the impact of past actions;
to offer, or not offer, as they see fit, suggestions

for where we go from here,
 or what needs to happen,
 before we can move forward together.

...learning patience in waiting for forgiveness,
 which is *not* the first step;
 neither is reconciliation work linear.

...recognising these stages:
 opening oneself to the other,
 confession, repentance,
 atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation;
 stages that go back and forth
 and recur as relationships deepen.

2. Restorative justice involves processes...

...upholding alternative ways
 to seek justice and reconciliation.

...emphasising truth telling and restoring relationship,
 and *not* attributing guilt and assigning punishment.

...seeking justice between churches and communities
 that have been abused by them
 or that seek restoration of relationship
 between an individual and a community.

...used in criminal justice systems and formal commissions of truth and reconciliation.

...of learning from restorative justice traditions in indigenous communities.

3. Anti-racism and inter-culturalism involve...

...recognising how our understanding of the gospel
 has been culturally informed.

...learning ways to avoid giving power and authority
 to Christianity as expressed by some cultures,
over Christianity as expressed by others.

...challenging cultural dominance that brings opportunity
 to see God's truth revealed
 by sharing insights across cultures.

...embracing *inter*-culturality in mission as
 openness to engaging differences,
 being transformed in encounters with the other.

4. Lifting up the voices of marginalized and subjugated peoples means...

...those with monetary power and relational power can support the powerless
 in documenting, recording,
 sharing their stories, experiences, insights, knowledge, arts.

...integrating the voices of the powerless in all aspects of mission and ministry,
 including decision-making structures
 and theological education and formation.

...requiring the powerful to maintain a self-critical stance

about continuing complicity in empire
and structures of domination in church and society.

5. Transforming the meaning of mission means that...

- ...God's mission calls all people
 - to work together for healing and justice
 - in partnerships of mutuality and respect.
- ...we need new models of mission
 - emphasising
 - sharing the work of defining mission
 - and sharing the exercise of power.
- ...God's mission is
 - a gift to all those engaged in that mission,
 - an opportunity to be transformed by others,
 - to receive their gifts,
 - and to become a witness to the gifts of others.

Endnotes

¹ 'Aboriginal peoples' is a collective name used in Canada for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nation peoples), Métis and Inuit. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. More than one million people in Canada (almost four percent of the population) identify themselves as an Aboriginal person, according to the 2006 Census. Fifty-three percent are registered Indians, thirty percent are Métis, eleven percent are non-status Indians and four percent are Inuit. Over half (54 percent) of Aboriginal peoples live in urban areas.

'First Nation peoples' typically refers to what are still described in Canadian law as the 'Indian' peoples of Canada. The term 'Indian', applied to these people by European explorers, is no longer favoured among indigenous peoples who prefer to be identified by their indigenous nationality, e.g. *Cree, Iroquois, Haida, Mik'maw*. Many communities of indigenous peoples also use the term 'First Nation' in the name of their community, e.g. the Fort Albany First Nation. Currently, there are 615 First Nation communities, which represent more than fifty nations or cultural groups, where fifty Aboriginal languages are spoken.

'Inuit' are the Aboriginal people of Arctic Canada. About 45,000 Inuit live in 53 communities in: *Nunatsiavut* (Labrador), *Nunavik* (Quebec), *Nunavut*, and the *Inuvialuit* Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories. The word Inuit means 'the people' in their language (Inuktitut) and is the term by which they refer to themselves. The term 'Eskimo', applied to Inuit by European explorers, is no longer used in Canada.

'Métis' are officially recognized as among the indigenous peoples of Canada. They developed a unique culture as a people who lived in distinct communities as descendants of French settlers and various First Nation peoples, located particularly in western Canada.

² Significant work on the theme of 'Mission and Power' relating to Edinburgh 2010 is also being done in Latin America by the Latin American Theological Fellowship which

held conferences in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Chile on 2009. This will be included in the report of the Edinburgh 2010 conference, June 2010.

³ Jon and Lori wish to express their delight at this opportunity to work with Bob, Charles, Gail, John, Maylanne and Tom whose knowledge, experience, judgment and good humour guided every step of the work.

⁴ We are aware that the themes of power and powerlessness alluded to in this paragraph, and so integral to our identities as followers of Jesus and as members of the Community that he referred to as his body, cannot be adequately dealt with in this short chapter. A slightly more fulsome exploration of the theme may be found in chapter seven of Jonathan Bonk's book, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem ... Revisited* (in the revised and expanded edition, New York: Orbis Books, 2006, 182–188). An adaptation of this material may be found on the Edinburgh 2010 website: www.edinburgh2010.org. It must be noted that many of the most potent and spiritually dynamic churches in the world today are identified as 'Pentecostal' or 'charismatic – comprised of men and women who experience, acknowledge, and celebrate the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and congregations. That these dynamic congregations tend to thrive among the so-called 'wretched of the earth' is no surprise to any student of the New Testament or mission history.

⁵ A majority of merchants, armies, and migrants to the Americas, South Africa, and Macronesia represented the theological posterity of Latin Christendom. Christendom remains deeply divided into six parts: Roman Catholic and Arian in the West; Syrian or Assyrian (Nestorian) of the East and the Coptic Orthodox with the Greek or Melkite, and the Syrian Orthodox or Antiochene or Jacobite or Monophysite. See Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 279–285.

⁶ J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

⁷ For the detailed story see John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

⁸ Milloy, *A National Crime*.

⁹ John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008).

¹⁰ Henri Membertou (1510-1611), a *Mi'kmaq* sagamou in Acadia (Nova Scotia), defended French colonists from other threatening Indians. Charles Eastman Ohiyesa (1858-1939), a *Lakota* raised in Manitoba, attended university and became a physician, storyteller, historian.

¹¹ Thomas S. Giles in *Christian History*, 35, Vol. XI, No. 3 (1992). I strongly disagree with much the author writes that upholds the stereotypical history of mission bringing civilization to the Indians, devoid of harm. But his comments here on agency are accurate.

¹² In international law, *terra nullius* refers to land never subjected to the sovereignty of any state; and sovereignty may be acquired through occupation. While 'Manifest Destiny' was birthed in the 1800s in America, its philosophical roots were evident in the actions of colonial powers from the earliest point of modernity. I believe churches understood this to be true.

¹³ From Ezekiel 37:1b (NRSV).

- ¹⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group Publishing 1996), 171.
- ¹⁵ Milloy, *A National Crime*, 27.
- ¹⁶ From 1905 until 1911 Frank Oliver was appointed and served as the Minister of the Interior and Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs.
- ¹⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission*, 231.
- ¹⁸ I. Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia* (Lockeport: Roseway, 1992), 50.
- ¹⁹ Knockwood, *Out of the Depths*, 31.
- ²⁰ Knockwood, *Out of the Depths*, 33.
- ²¹ The exact dating of school closures varies depending on what is used for the benchmark. 1998 is the date on which the last facility, originally constructed as a residential school, closed.
- ²² J. McDonald, 'The Schools that Failed', *The Edmonton Journal* (2 June 1991), G1–G3, 23.
- ²³ Cathy Richardson and Bill Nelson, 'A Change of Residence: Government Schools and Foster Homes as Sites of Forced Aboriginal Assimilation – A paper Designed to Provoke Thought and Systemic Change', *First People's Child and Family Review*, 3/2 (2007; Special Issue), 78.
- ²⁴ McDonald, 'The Schools that Failed', 22.
- ²⁵ Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory Kipling, *Aboriginal People, Resilience and the Residential School Legacy* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003), 33.
- ²⁶ John Gast's famous painting, *American Progress* makes clear that all that lay before the advance of civilization, including Indians and wild creatures, was to be expunged or brought under subjugation.
- ²⁷ A. Wade, 'Resistance Knowledges: Therapy with Aboriginal Persons Who Have Experienced Violence', *Canadian Western Geographical Series*, 31 (1995), 167-206.
- ²⁸ D.B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 193.
- ²⁹ S.R. McVitty, 'The Story of Seventy Years of Progress', *The Missionary Bulletin* 16/2 (1920), 160-208.
- ³⁰ Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 214.
- ³¹ Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 214.
- ³² Smith, *Sacred Feathers*, 214.
- ³³ McVitty, *The Missionary Bulletin*, 176.
- ³⁴ E. Graham, *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Waterloo, ON: Heffle Publishing, 1997).
- ³⁵ E. Antone, *In Search of Voice: A Collaborative Investigation on Learning Experiences of All Onyota'a:ka*, unpublished thesis (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto, 1997).
- ³⁶ The 1969 White Paper was a government policy proposal to abolish the Indian Act, reject land claims and assimilate Native people with the status of other ethnic minorities rather than as a distinct group. It was strongly opposed by Native people and never implemented.
- ³⁷ E. Antone, 'A Citizenship Dilemma: Aboriginal Peoples and Identity Questions', in Karsten Mundel and Daniel Schugurensky (eds), *Lifelong Citizenship Learning*,

Participatory Democracy and Social Change (Toronto: Transformative Learning Centre, OISE/University of Toronto), 2004.

³⁸ Antone, 'A Citizenship Dilemma'.

³⁹ Translated from *Omushkago Cree* of James Bay.

⁴⁰ Canada Ministries was a department of the Board of World Missions which was amalgamated in 1992 with other boards to become the Life and Mission Agency.

⁴¹ For a summary of the *Oka* crisis see www.histori.ca/peace/page.do?pageID=343.

⁴² The CCCB decided that local entities would be responsible for responding to the claims. This decision became significant in dealing with the Government of Canada around the matter of legal liability since the CCCB indicated it was the individual entities that ran the schools that were responsible.

⁴³ *Acts and Proceedings*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, 1992, 562-565.

⁴⁴ *Acts and Proceedings*, 1992, 562-565.

⁴⁵ *Acts and Proceedings*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, 1994, 365-377, www.presbyterian.ca/webfm_send/1510.

⁴⁶ It was heartening to learn that at a recent meeting between the Grand Chief and the Pope in Rome that the Grand Chief forgave his church for the abuse he had experienced.

⁴⁷ People like Maggie, Bobby, TJ, Mike, Bob, Yvonne, Phil, Ted, Garnett, Margaret, Vivian and numerous other Aboriginal people, too many to name individually.

⁴⁸ Formerly known as the alternate dispute resolution hearings.

⁴⁹ *Report of the Royal Commission*.

⁵⁰ This is a theme in postcolonial studies: from subaltern (subordinate, marginal, or 'sub-otherness').

⁵¹ John Francis Rowlands, son of a British Quaker turned Pentecostal who came to South Africa in 1925, led the Bethesda Movement.

⁵² Bishop of Huron to the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1967.

⁵³ For apologies from the churches see www.rememberingthechildren.ca/partners/documents/ApologiesfromChurches.pdf.

⁵⁴ *A New Covenant: Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada*, www.presbyterian.ca/ministry/justice/healing/newcovenant.

⁵⁵ Terry Leblanc, at a Mission and Power study group meeting, September 2009.