



**mosaic**

A publication of Canadian Baptist Ministries

Spring 2016

**Becoming Human:  
From Recognition  
to Reconciliation**

In this issue

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## TERRY TALKS

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**I WAS LIVID!** Mustapha and I were colleagues in youth work in inner city Paris back in the 1990s. One day, as we walked around the corner in a subway station, a group of policemen stopped us and asked to see Mustapha’s ID card. I pulled out my wallet and offered my ID card to the police. They flicked my hand away. But they stood there, with menacing posture, waiting for Mustapha to provide his. He reluctantly complied, telling me, “not to worry,” it happened to him all the time. Why him and not me? Because he is dark-skinned, I am light-skinned. But he and I were both ‘immigrants’ - he was from Algeria, and I was from Canada. I asked him afterwards if it made him angry. He smiled and said to me, “Terry, Liberté, égalité et fraternité [freedom, equality and brotherhood] only count if you’re white.”

Mustapha’s experience continues to be the reality for many others today, including Canada’s Indigenous peoples. The articles in this issue of *mosaic* present us with a deeper understanding of some of the past wrongs they have faced. It’s a first step in an on-going journey of reconciliation.

I have been asked to bring a formal apology on behalf of Canadian Baptist churches in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to be held this fall, October 2016. I covet your prayers for wisdom and grace. My first reaction when asked, as Mark Buchanan points out in our feature article was, “Hey, I didn’t do anything.” But this is precisely the point. What are we called to do? Or, more importantly, who are we called to become in the light of the ministry of reconciliation to which we have been co-missioned? I remember hearing theologian Paolo Ricca profoundly speak on this role that we have: “We cannot be God’s agents of reconciliation if we refuse to change. For to reconcile, *Kattalasso* in Greek, and to be reconciled, means ‘to become other.’ God became other – he became a man – to reconcile us to himself in Christ. And if we are to be everything God calls us to be, we must accept to become fully other.”

This issue of *mosaic* is a clarion call to our Canadian Baptist church family to become other. We, who have been reconciled to God, have been entrusted with the mandate of being reconcilers, (2 Cor. 5:18), bringing together that which was previously separated, uniting divided pieces of the fabric of God’s plan. But too often, our refusal to ‘become something other’, to be totally changed, is, in itself, our greatest obstacle to the restoration of ruptured relations.



**CBM**

embracing a broken world  
through word & deed

As partners in the Canadian Baptist family we exist to serve the local church in its grassroots mission. Together we impact our communities and beyond through the love of Christ.

## Spring 2016

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“ For to reconcile, *Kattallasso* in Greek, and to be reconciled, means ‘to become other’. God became other – he became a man – to reconcile us to himself in Christ. And if we are to be everything God calls us to be, we must accept to become fully other.”

We welcome back to *mosaic*, after a few years of inklessness on these pages, our dear friend Mark Buchanan. Mark and Cheryl have modelled ‘becoming other’ in many ways and within different communities. We have asked Mark to be a Global Ambassador for CBM through his writing, speaking and leadership.

Across Canada, dozens of our churches are modelling this same largesse as they welcome Syrian and Iraqi refugees through our denominations’ sponsorship agreement program. And as they demonstrate the true meaning of hospitality, we are all learning to ‘become other’.



Terry Smith  
 CBM Executive Director

## ON THE FRONT COVER

Do you recognize this man? God became other – he became a man – to reconcile us to himself in Christ. As His people, we too are called to “become the other”. A first step in this journey is to listen to each other; to gain a deeper understanding of the pain and brokenness.

Artwork by Canadian artist Roy Henry Vickers, well known around the world for his limited edition prints. He is a recognized leader in the First Nations community, and a tireless spokesperson for recovery from addictions and abuse. [www.royhenryvickers.com](http://www.royhenryvickers.com)

*mosaic is a community forum of local and global voices united by a shared mission. mosaic will serve as a catalyst to stimulate and encourage passionate discipleship among Canadian Baptists and their partners.*

# GUILTY ROOTS

## OWNING OUR EVER-PRESENT PAST

by Terry LeBlanc, *Executive Director,  
Indigenous Pathways*

**WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY**, my grandfather, father and I travelled some distance from our home community to go fishing at a spot known only to my grandfather. We soon found ourselves in the middle of deep woods, making our way along a narrow trail. With each passing step, the way ahead and behind became less and less perceptible. Twice I expressed my concern to my grandfather; twice he sought to reassure me. Finally, unable to hold in my anxiety, fearful about what lay ahead of us, I tugged frantically on my grandfather's arm. "Grandfather, grandfather," I called. "We'll be lost, we'll be lost!"

Sensing the rising fear in me, my grandfather knelt down and, after calming me, taught me a lesson in guidance. He told me that each new trail we take could seem like it leads along an uncertain path; the way back can seem unclear. But, he said, "When you set out on a new trail, if you spend twice as much time looking over your shoulder at where you have come from as you do where you are going – if you fix the landmarks behind you in your mind the way they will appear to you when you turn to take the trail back – you will never become lost, you will always be able to find your way home." My grandfather gave me the ability that day to find my way to and from all of the various destinations in life that would lie before me; all of which, as I set out on each new trail, were initially unknown.

“Contemporary societies – not just North American – are no longer used to looking at where they have come from.”



Contemporary societies – not just North American – are no longer used to looking at where they have come from. They are far more fixated on an as yet unknown future – and on the present only inasmuch as it helps them determine what will come next. Rather than use the past to help determine where they are in relation to where they started, they plunge ahead, often blindly, expecting that any mistakes made will be corrected in that unknown future.

As far back as 1973, Dr. Karl Menninger said of North American society that, “We have lost our sense of history...lost our traditional respect for the wisdom of ancestors and the culture of kindred nations...we haunt ourselves with [an] illusory ideal.” It is an observation he could justifiably make concerning Canadian immigrant societies and the unwillingness to take seriously their history with Indigenous peoples, with the multiple generations of injustice to which Indigenous peoples have been subjected. Today, however, it is more likely we would hear this attitude expressed as, “That happened in the past. We are not personally responsible.”

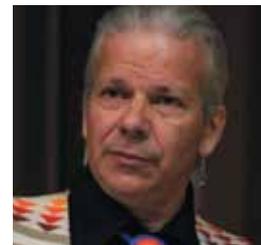
Indigenous people regularly hear these words, or ones to their effect, in discussions about multi-generational prejudicial social policies, treaty rights, wrongs committed against them (over successive generations), and about the possibility of reconciliation from this point forward. These words are, more often than not, offered by people who, while acknowledging past wrongs, want or need to find personal distance from responsibility for having maintained the environment in which these wrongs originally, and now continue to, take place.

These are words of personal exoneration, which, while they may seem reasonable and even justifiable, give voice to the idea that while they enjoy privileges provided them by the decisions of their forebears, they hold no personal responsibility for the actions that created those privileges.

On the surface, this way of thinking would appear to be reasonable and understandable. After all, they weren’t alive when this all started. True, true! When we look below the surface, however, we find that the same ideas that gave rise to the original wrongs and injustice still exist today, albeit in modified form. Often, in the day-to-day behaviours these very same people engage in, we continue to find wilful ignorance, and apathy, judgment and stereotyping, expectations of cultural assimilation, and the election and maintenance of governments that at best ignore, at worst further degrade, First Nations peoples’ lives, homes, and communities with policies of assimilation. These ideas about the lack of personal responsibility for decisions made 50, 75, 100, or 150 years ago prevail as the foundation upon which contemporary racial prejudice is maintained.

In order for us to actually make progress on reconciliation, these ideas must be acknowledged, extricated from our policies, and forced out of the legislative isolation that has maintained Canadian Indigenous peoples as third and fourth class citizens for well over 150 years. I say third and fourth because immigrant populations, while often looked upon with varying levels of disdain have, more often than not, been treated better than this land’s original inhabitants.

In 1995, Elijah Harper called for, and then convened, the “Sacred Assembly.” Indigenous leaders and elders, Catholic, mainline, and evangelical leaders of Canada, participated in multi-day conversations about what it would take to be reconciled in this land, to live together in peaceful relationship. Together with a representative of the Canadian Conference of Catholic bishops, a member of the Citizens for Public Justice, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada’s Bruce Clemenger, I co-authored two documents titled “Principles and Priorities for a New Relationship”, and “Proclamation of Reconciliation.”



#### **TERRY LEBLANC:**

*Terry is Mi'kmaq/Acadian and has served in ordained ministry with the Indigenous community across the globe for 38 years. In addition to his current work as Executive Director of Indigenous Pathways, he is also the founding Chair and current Director of NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community. Terry also serves as faculty and/or adjunct faculty at Acadia Divinity College, George Fox Seminary, Providence University College and Seminary, Tyndale University College and Seminary and William Carey International University.*

Convened on the heels of the release of the RCAP (if you do not recognize this acronym, that says something about why you might feel no responsibility), the Assembly acknowledged the fact that the situation in which Canada found itself – and, to a significant extent, still finds itself today – rests in an unwillingness to stop doing what was done to Indigenous peoples that created the situation in the first place. Hence, the suggestion, “That was then, this is now, therefore I have no responsibility,” is vacuous. The RCAP began 25 years ago; the Sacred Assembly was 20 years ago; all major traditions of the church were invited and/or were participants. Most of you reading this were alive at that time.

Here, in part, is some of what we wrote that was embraced by that Assembly:

### **We share the recognition**

- The sins of injustice which have historically divided Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples remain active in our society today;
- Concrete actions must be taken by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples alike to overcome these injustices and to bind up the wounds of those who have suffered.

### **We share an understanding**

- While change must take place at all levels of society, it must be rooted most firmly in the communities;
- Relations based on justice will require respect for past treaties, a fair settlement of land rights disputes, the implementation of the inherent right of self-government and the creation of economic development opportunities and other institutions to support it.

If we are to create a new climate of respect and cooperation in Canada, the idea that reconciliation is an event – like the one that was held in 2008 on Parliament Hill presided over by then Prime Minister Stephen Harper – must be set aside in favour of not simply an idea, but the attitudes, activities and policies of reconciliation that recognize the need for an on-going journey. We must also shed the idea that “this did not happen on my watch.”

It did – because it still does. 



“ Hence, the suggestion, “That was then, this is now, therefore I have no responsibility,” is vacuous. ”

# A CALL TO RECONCILIATION IN OUR LAND

**AS PART OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S** Calls to Action, Step #48 calls for the faith community's public response "to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." The following is the collective response of the Canadian Interfaith Conversation of which CBM is one of 39 participating faith communities and faith-based organizations.

## STATEMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



March 28, 2016

**T**HE CANADIAN INTERFAITH CONVERSATION gathers faith community representatives who believe that people of faith can contribute positively to the benefit of all people in Canadian society. We advocate for religion in a pluralistic society and in Canadian public life, believing that conversation is essential to doing so effectively.

The goal of bringing about a society where people of any or no faith can flourish together is a primary orienting concern of this interfaith conversation. Reconciliation with people of the First Nations has also been a core value of our Charter Vision since we first came together under that Vision in 2012.

Specifically, our vision states that "We want to promote harmony and spiritual insight among religions and religious communities in Canada, strengthen our society's moral foundations, and work for greater realization of the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion for the sake of the common good and an engaged citizenship.... We also recognize the particular moment we are in, one of working for greater truth and reconciliation between aboriginal peoples in Canada and later arrivals. This situation calls us to deeper understanding of past wrongs and shared future hopes for living in harmony together. Reconciliation is, fundamentally, a spiritual process that needs to be accomplished first in the hearts of Canadians."

Among non-Indigenous people in the land, some faith communities have been part of the Canadian fabric as it has unfolded since first contact with Europeans, while others are newly arrived. Faith communities also include Indigenous peoples from this land and from other parts of the world. This sets peoples and groups at different places along the path to

reconciliation, while also offering shared opportunities through education and relationship building.

Recognizing that the Government of Canada has endorsed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People and that our Charter Vision refers to Article 12(1) of the Declaration as a key principle, the participant groups in the Canadian Interfaith Conversation are committed to developing understanding of the Declaration as a framework for reconciliation.

All persons in Canada, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, whether living on treaty or unceded land, have a mutual relationship to uphold and develop. We realize that healing is a process requiring listening and learning, and building relationships over time. As an interfaith group in pursuit of active and meaningful participation in the ongoing healing process of truth and reconciliation, we commit to studying the Calls to Action, beginning with Call 48, "a framework for reconciliation." We commit to devoting time at each of our meetings to speak with one another and with Indigenous brothers and sisters, to encourage our members to pursue the Calls to Action in their own communities, and to speak publicly as occasions arise.

We recognize that conversation, like reconciliation, requires good listening practice and a willingness to work for good through mutual dialogue. The members of the Canadian Interfaith Conversation publicly support the work of truth and reconciliation, and commit to an ongoing implementation of it in our individual and collective hearts, lives, and practice.

# RED BROTHER RED SISTER

A reflection by Steve Bell

“ I honestly didn’t know it was so bad. All I could do, really, was cry with her. ”



Steve Bell is an acclaimed Canadian singer-songwriter and an advocate of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and other work on behalf of the poor and marginalized.

**I WAS EIGHT OR NINE YEARS OLD** the day I just came out and asked my dad if there was something wrong with Indians. He stopped what he was doing, looked at me for a few seconds and then said, “Now why on earth would you ask that question?”

My dad was a prison chaplain at Drumheller Federal Penitentiary at the time, and it was common for my sisters and I to go into the chapel with him and mom for weekly services and other social events. In fact, it was there that I learned to play the guitar as a group of inmates who used the chapel for jam sessions noticed I had some musical capacity, and invited me into their circle. I loved those guys. Most were First Nations.

I explained to Dad that I noticed there were a disproportionate amount of First Nations men on the inside of prison than on the outside and wondered why that would be. My dad just looked at me and eventually responded with, “You need to be asking questions like that for the rest of your life.”

Only a few months ago I had coffee with my foster daughter. She came to us when she was six and is now 32 and the mother of three. There is a whole lot of story in between those years. Jenny is First Nations. It wasn’t long into our conversation before she suddenly began to weep saying she didn’t know how she could continue to manage, to push down the trauma and pain of racism she constantly faces. She then listed a litany of recent situations, some cruel, some frightening, many that happened on the street and in front of her young daughters, that no one of white skin ever has to deal with. I honestly didn’t know it was so bad. All I could do, really, was cry with her.

More recently, my young friend Christy and I were having coffee. The fresh, red cut marks – newly added to the ones that run up and down her arms like railway ties – indicated she had come off of a few bad days. The previous night she had been with friends who started cutting together; a fellowship of sorts. Yes...First Nations.

I’m not sure just how aware she is of the legacy of dehumanizing cruelty that exists between settler and First Nations people. But she sure knows its legacy in her body.

Honestly? I don’t know what to say. “Woe is me... for I am a man of unclean lips, and come from a people of unclean lips,” (Is: 6:5) comes to mind. As does “Lord, have mercy.”

The lyrics of Bruce Cockburn’s haunting song *Red Brother Red Sister* also come to mind; an aching lament from a man who knows in his bones what Andy Reimer (Biblical Studies Professor, NAIITS) has written so succinctly: “While the [European] invaders may have had crosses on their shields, the one who actually hung on that cross was the Creator experiencing the worst of what it means to be human, not a conquering war hero.”



## RED BROTHER RED SISTER

Written by: **Bruce Cockburn**

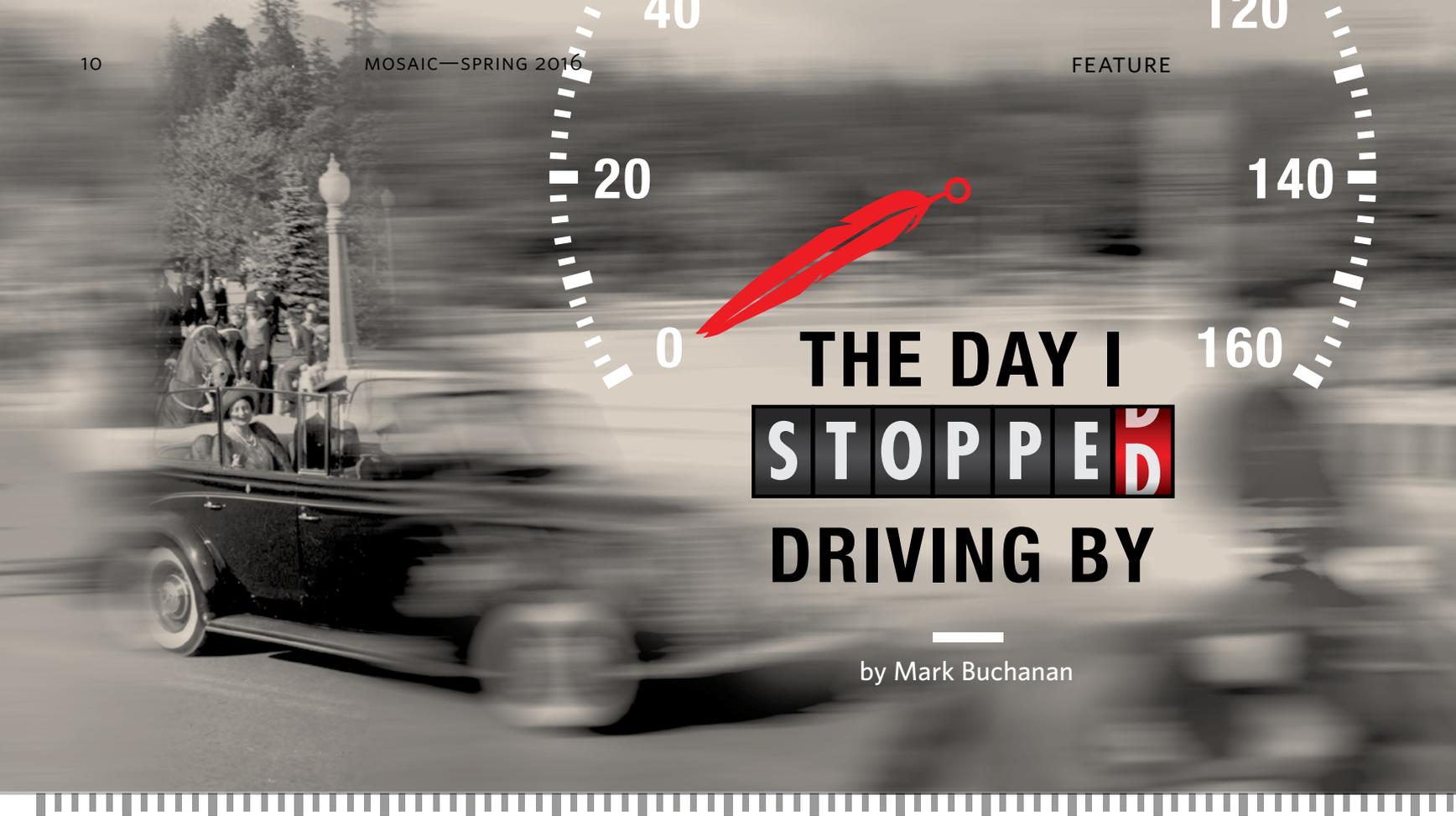
Published by: **Spoiled Rotten Kiddies Music LLC (BMI)**

Went to the museum, red brother  
 Saw your ancient bloom cut, pressed and dried  
 A sign said wasn't it clever what they used to do  
 But it never did say how they died  
     Hey hey hey  
     Hey hey hey  
 Went to Regina, red sister  
 Heard a cab driver say what he'd seen  
 "There's a grand place to eat out on Number One  
 All white ladies if you know what I mean"  
     Hey hey hey  
     Hey hey hey  
 Went to a pow wow, red brother  
 Felt the people's love/joy flow around  
 It left me crying just thinking about it  
 How they used my Saviour's name to keep you down  
     Hey hey hey  
     Hey hey hey

Hear Steve Bell sing  
*Red Brother Red Sister* at  
[www.soundcloud.com/  
 steve\\_bell/red-brother-  
 red-sister](http://www.soundcloud.com/steve_bell/red-brother-red-sister)



*This time-lapsed image was taken in  
 Totem Hall at the central exhibit in the  
 First Peoples gallery of the Royal British  
 Columbia Museum, Victoria, B.C. Photo:  
 Gordon Brew*



# THE DAY I STOPPED DRIVING BY

by Mark Buchanan

“ We are assured that the Majesties took particular pains to acknowledge the homage of their Indian subjects, and that in passing them the rate of speed was considerably lowered. ”

**IN ALLAN TWIGG'S BOOK ABORIGINALITY**, he tells of a meeting between three sovereigns – a king and two queens – that never happened. It was missed by inches.

The year was 1939. The place, Vancouver. The occasion, England's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth's visit to Canada. A year earlier, the Lion's Gate Bridge, joining Stanley Park to West Vancouver, had opened. The King and Queen and their entourage were to drive over the bridge to “honour it.”

The lands needed to build the bridge had been transferred in 1936 from Indian Reserve lands to the First Narrows Bridge Company “without consultation and little compensation.” But the Squamish people, at least, bore no ill-will. Instead, they officially requested a meeting between their Queen, Mary Agnes, and the English royals. The Squamish wished to exchange gifts and greetings. Queen Mary dressed for the occasion in full ceremonial regalia. Alongside her was her son, Chief Joe Mathais, who had actually sailed to England in 1911 to attend the coronation of King George. Here's what happened: “The royals didn't stop. Nobody from the Squamish Band was invited to take part in the honouring ceremony. ‘This was the only time we could present my grandmother to the Queen,’ recalled Chief Simon Baker, ‘but the car drove past us.... It was terrible for my grandmother.’”

Later, The Honorary Secretary of the Vancouver Committee for the Reception of Their Majesties sent a letter to the Squamish people. Besides assuring the Squamish people that their gifts had been received and sent to Buckingham Palace, it contained an explanation about the matter of the drive-by:

“We can assure you that every effort was made to fulfill the wishes of Their Majesties and had they desired to stop, it would have, of course, been done. We are assured that the Majesties took particular pains to acknowledge the homage of their Indian subjects, and that in passing them the rate of speed was considerably lowered.”

**ARCHIVE PHOTOS:** *The Royal Visit 1939; Queen Mary Agnes; Stanley Park Bridge, Vancouver, B.C.*



*In passing them the rate of speed was considerably lowered.*

A line like that, so cavalier, so breezy, so condescending, reflects the ethos of an epoch. In 1939, attitudes of official racism were everywhere - fascism in many European nations, anti-Semitism in most, Jim Crow in the American south, apartheid in South Africa. 1942 would see the beginning of the roundup, property-confiscation, and internment of Japanese Canadians. These are only a few of the better-known examples of attitudes, assumptions and actions pervading the air everyone breathed.

And then there were Canada's First Nations people. We had begun to organize official prejudice toward Native peoples many decades earlier, in the late 1800s. It was embodied in the growing presence of Indian Residential Schools across the land. It was reflected and made into legal code in the ever-expanding reach of the federal Indian Act. It was expressed in government appropriation of Native lands and retraction of Native resource rights, and in the legal pettifogging and stonewalling over treaty settlements. A history that began, largely, full of mutual honour and promise was swiftly becoming rife with betrayal and resentment.

White Canadians are heirs of all this. We're beneficiaries. I know most of us are not directly implicated in any of it. We are, after all, innocent of any personal wrongdoing. We didn't draft or enforce the oppressive measures of the Indian Act. We didn't remove Native children from their families and communities and abuse them, verbally, emotionally, physically, sexually, in Residential Schools.

We didn't start the fire.

But the majority of white Canadians grew up in a culture and an economy that, at least in part, has been built on the backs of the land's first inhabitants. We may not have committed any overt acts of injustice, but most of us have been beneficiaries of, and bystanders to, such acts. Our forebearers took much from the people, and didn't say thanks, and didn't say sorry, and rarely looked back. And we, for the most part, have been happy to reap the windfall, or at least remain uninformed and uninvolved.

And many of us still carry, dormant perhaps but ready to awake with little stimulation, the very racism that marked out our forbearers. Why would I make such a bold and sweeping indictment?

Because most of us are still just driving by, and often not even at reduced speed.



#### **MARK BUCHANAN**

serves as CBM's Global Ambassador. He is an Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at Ambrose Seminary in Calgary and was formerly the Lead Pastor of New Life Community Church in Duncan, B.C. He is also the author of *Your God Is Too Safe, Things Unseen, The Holy Wild, The Rest of God, Hidden in Plain Sight, and Spiritual Rhythm.*



## MY JOURNEY

That was me for most my life. And then it got personal.

In 1995, I moved to Duncan, a small community on Vancouver Island, and stayed 18 years. Everywhere I had lived before made it easy to avoid First Nations people, and therefore easy to avoid my real attitude toward the people. In every other place I lived, the Native reserve was at a distance from the municipality. I rarely saw a real live Indian.

That changed when I moved to Duncan. The reserve, geographically and demographically, intersects the municipality at several points. The two are woven together tight as a wampum belt. Many of the area's place names - Mount Tzouhalem, Penelekut Island, Sansum Narrows, Cowichan River - reflect this. Duncan is 1/8 First Nation, and that percentage of population is visible everywhere. Native people are impossible to ignore or avoid.

I managed it anyhow for almost a decade.

The church I pastored met on Tzouhalem Road, named after a 19th Century hereditary chief. Across from our church building stood, until it burned down in 2010, the old offices for the Cowichan Band. If I turned left from the church parking lot, I skirted the edge of the reserve and then, about a kilometer down, crossed into reserve lands. I always knew where the boundary line fell, though no sign marked it: the houses told me. Most were dilapidated, with flaking paint, caked on moss, grimy and sometimes broken windows, collapsing stairs. Garbage and rusty cars littered the yards.

Later, I found out why many homes on reserves look this way. There are two main factors. One is the legal nature of reserve lands, which can never be sold on the open market. The effect of this is that reserve lands never increase in value (unless turned into leased land, but that's another story). This means that a house on the municipal side of Tzouhalem Road might, over five years, increase in value from \$300,000 to \$400,000. But a similar house on the reserve side of

the road might only be worth \$30,000. Forever. Its value never increases, and usually decreases, as does all aging things. This kills all incentive for doing home improvements.

The second reason is that entire extended families live in many of these houses. A house designed to hold, say, five people comfortably might have 10, 15, 20 people living in it at various times. That's because Native people generally have a deep value for sharing: it's uncommon for a First Nation's person with a house to turn away even a distant relative in need of a place to stay. Yet a house built to hold five people can't handle 10+ people living in it any more than a car designed to seat five people can handle 10+ people regularly cramming into it. Things break down much faster.

But I knew none of this at the time. All I saw were disheveled yards and ill-kempt houses and rusting jalopies. And I made a judgment about the people who lived there. The judgment distilled to a single word: typical.

Because I had no real relationships with First Nations people - I knew a few to nod at in passing - there was nothing to disturb either my facile judgment or my illusion that I held no prejudices. I just kept driving by.

“ Because I had no real relationships with First Nations people...there was nothing to disturb either my facile judgment or my illusion that I held no prejudices. ”



## EAT WHATEVER THEY PUT BEFORE YOU

Then I met Tal.

Tal James is Penelekt, a band from an island close to Duncan. Tal had, in his early 20s, become a Christian. Today he works with North American Indigenous Missions, a mission agency dedicated to sharing the gospel – in all its dimensions – with First peoples.

Tal has become a good friend. He has let me ask, and patiently answered, many stupid questions. He has taught me much about his culture, and helped me get past my uninformed reactions to indigenous practices, places, legends, artifacts – powwows, sweet grass ceremonies, totem poles, long houses, wampum, thunderbird stories – things I once knew nothing about, but held opinions and made judgments about anyhow.

And sometimes Tal, along with his German wife Christina, have gently but firmly rebuked me for my subtle but clear racism. An example will help.

Tal and I are at a restaurant in Nanaimo not long after I have announced to the church in Duncan my intention to “reach First Nations people for Christ.” We’ve just ordered lunch. I turn to Tal and ask what many of the people in the church are asking me: “What should we do about the dark side of Native spirituality? Many in the church feel that they cannot have fellowship with a First Nations people before they have figured this out.”

Tal falls silent. He looks around. He leans forward.

“Mark,” he says, “why did you come into this restaurant, take a seat, order a meal, without once asking or worrying about the spiritual beliefs and practices of the people who own the restaurant, manage it, or work in it? You’re about to eat food

prepared by someone you don’t know but who, more likely than not, does not share your beliefs or morals. You don’t seem the least bothered by that. But you do seem bothered by the idea of sitting and eating with my people unless first you approve of our spirituality – which, by the way, you know little about.”

I was stung. But he was right. And that day began for me a fourfold journey: one, facing my prejudices without illusion or justification; two, forsaking them; three, learning First Nations culture from First Nations people; and four, committing to loving my neighbour as myself. It has been a slow walk, sometimes agonizing, but deeply liberating. I still have a ways to go. But I am thankful that I have made a beginning.

About a year after this conversation with Tal, I was at a meeting with several people who were helping a friend and I plan an event called “Understanding the Nations.” It was to be a 5-hour workshop educating churches about local First Nations history and culture, and challenging them to engage in practical acts of reconciliation. One of the people we’d invited was Dan Marshall. Dan is a university professor who had written a superb history of our local tribe, the Cowichan people. We hoped Dan would present at the workshop on Cowichan history. But he was wary of my motives. He deeply loved and respected the Cowichans and, as he said, didn’t want to be part of a “new colonial, imperial, paternalistic effort to impose the Christian religion on First Nations people.” Then he asked me outright: “Is your intention with these workshops to try to convert the Cowichans to Christianity?”

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NAKAI

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STOP

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STOP



BRAKE

“More and more of us began to see our entrenched racism, to repent of it, and to begin a journey toward real change.”

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L

God had now, for a year, been excavating me, exposing me, burning things out of me, pounding things into me. I said to Dan (who later became a good friend), “I admit, my dream is mass conversion. I would love to see everyone – all nations, all people of whatever ethnic identity in this community, and you also, Dan – I’d love to see all come to know Jesus Christ. But you are asking about my intention for these workshops. That’s simple: I want to convert the church.”

For two years, we ran the workshops in over 10 venues – mostly churches. Around 1,000 people attended in all. And it happened: though several Cowichans got curious about the church, and some ventured near, and a few put their faith in Christ, the majority of conversions were among white Christians. More and more of us began to see our entrenched racism, to repent of it, and to begin a journey toward real change.

More and more of us chose to no longer just drive by. We slowed. We stopped. We got out of the car. And most of us have never been the same.



“  
We’ve  
heard  
enough of  
the old story  
to feel some  
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guilt and  
shame and  
heartbreak.  
But what use  
in getting  
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Let’s resolve  
to create a  
different  
future.”

## PRAYING WITH SMOKE

Ray Aldred is a Cree storyteller and Christian theologian, and a dear friend and colleague. Recently, we both spoke at a church conference on missions. We decided on the final evening of the conference to weave our talks together, back and forth, circling each other’s stories, building off each other’s insights. It was like a tribal dance. Obviously, we had to choreograph it.

“I think you should invite me up right at the start,” Ray said. “I will honour the traditional occupants of the land and thank them for allowing us to be here. And then I will pray with smoke.”

Praying with smoke is a Cree tradition (shared by many Plains Tribes) of burning sage or sweet grass (the fragrance of which bears an unnerving resemblance to cannabis) in an abalone shell, snuffing out the fire, and wafting the smoke, with an eagle feather, until its fragrance pervades the room, all the while inviting the Spirit to come from all four corners of the earth and, like the fragrance, fill the room.

“Um, ok. You know people will freak out?”

“I know.”

“I’m good then. Let’s do it.”

So we did. And people freaked out.

I was up next. “I sense,” I said, “that many, if not most of you, are deeply uncomfortable with what just happened. I’m going to ask you to do something with that: neither reject it nor embrace it. I’m inviting you, instead, to hold it in open, upturned, outstretched hands” - I modeled this as I said it. “And I’m asking that you give both Ray and I an honest hearing.”

That seemed to settle things down, and so Ray and I spoke, back and forth, moving in and out of each other’s space, doing our dance. We talked about the broad sweep of the Canadian church and government relations with First Nations people throughout our shared history. We talked about the tribal, ceremonial, and storytelling roots of biblical faith. We talked about how the church had repeatedly missed opportunities with First peoples to share the full gospel in all its wild, profuse, subversive, scandalizing, extravagant beauty and potency; had failed to incarnate the wide-open arms of God, and yet every once in a while had got it right.”

By the end, I sensed a new readiness and openness among those present. I stood on the platform and held out my open, upheld, outstretched hands.

“Some of you,” I said, “still aren’t sure what to do with what you saw earlier. But I’m sensing that most of us - maybe all - want to be part of a new story. We’ve heard enough of the old story to feel some appropriate guilt and shame and heartbreak. But what use in getting stuck there? Let’s resolve to create a different future. I’m not even sure what the next step is, other than it involves a fierce ‘Yes’ to that different future, an unswerving commitment to write a new story. If you want to be part of that, would you stand, and with open, upturned, outstretched hands, say to God, ‘Yes.’”

As far as I could tell, the whole congregation stood.

A year later, Ray was speaking at a chapel service at Ambrose University, where Ray and I are colleagues. He began by praying with smoke, wafting the smoke with an eagle feather so that the fragrance of the sweet grass pervaded the auditorium. And then he invited me up.

Ray gave me the eagle feather. He said it was his gift to me, to honour my love for, and my work with, First Peoples.

I was overwhelmed. And felt unworthy. Really, I haven’t done much. I just stopped driving by. **m**

## HOME AND NATIVE LAND

It's time to face the harsh reality.  
Canada has a racism problem as great  
as our neighbour to the south.



	Unemployment rate	<b>14%</b>	<b>11%</b>
	Unemployment rate vs. The national rate	<b>2.1 times</b>	<b>1.9 times</b>
	Median income	<b>\$22,344</b>	<b>\$23,738</b>
	Median income vs. The national rate	<b>60%</b>	<b>74%</b>
	Incarceration rate (per 100,000 population)	<b>1,400</b>	<b>2,207</b>
	Incarceration rate vs. The national rate	<b>10 times</b>	<b>3 times</b>
	Homicide rate (per 100,000 population)	<b>8.8</b>	<b>17.3</b>
	Homicide rate vs. The national rate	<b>6.1 times</b>	<b>3.7 times</b>
	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	<b>11.7</b>	<b>12.4</b>
	Infant mortality rate vs. The national rate	<b>2.3 times</b>	<b>2 times</b>
	Life expectancy (in years)	<b>72.8</b>	<b>74.9</b>
	Life expectancy vs. The national rate	<b>91%</b>	<b>95%</b>
	Dropout rate*	<b>23%</b>	<b>8%</b>
	Dropout rate vs. The national rate	<b>2.7 times</b>	<b>1.1 times</b>
<i>*20- to 24-year-olds without a high school diploma, and not in school</i>			

**SOURCES:** Statistics Canada; Office of the Correctional Investigator; The Lancet; Health Canada; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Department of Justice; U.S. Department of Health; Centers of Disease Control; National Center of Education Statistics (Maclean's Magazine. Jan 22, 2015)





# SILENCED STORIES

You put your hand up in the classroom and the teacher never seems to pick you until you eventually stop putting up your hand but your report card says that you refuse to participate in class discussions. *“That’s not racist,”* you are told, *“maybe the teacher just didn’t see you and you should try harder.”*



## A LOOK AT RACISM FACED BY CANADIAN BLACK YOUTH TODAY

by Rev. Denise Gillard

### IN MY ROLE AS A PASTOR AND EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR of *The HopeWorks*

*Connection*, a Christian non-profit organization dedicated to empowering youth through the performing arts, academics and relieving poverty, I have been working with racialized children and youth and the people who love them for over 30 years. It is in this setting I have called youth to live and move and claim their being in the context of a church that many times fails to address or otherwise admit to the complex and challenging realities they face, most especially when it comes to dealing with racism. The subject of racism is a touchy one for Canadians as a whole, taboo for the Christian community and therefore, in the church the intricate psychological, sociological, cultural and spiritual dynamics of their stories are silenced.

First of all, the racism that youth in Canada face is most commonly the “civilized” kind. You can’t always prove it exists – something happens but it is subtle, quiet, reserved, and you can’t easily prove it. It causes you to second guess yourself. It is underneath the surface with an invisibility that weighs heavy on the spirit:



When you try to make suggestions you are told, *“Our church is multicultural; we don’t favour one over the other; we don’t need to do the Black history thing; we are beyond that, all people are welcome. We don’t even see colour.”* But when you look around, the real leadership doesn’t reflect anything about your culture and you can’t envision a call of God on your life. *“That’s not racist. Most people, especially church people, are nice. You’re the one with the problem; you’re doing something wrong. You are paranoid!”*

“...the racism that youth in Canada face is most commonly the “civilized” kind. You can’t always prove it exists...”



You wear your hair in a natural style and someone you have never seen before reaches out and touches it, asks if it is real or if you actually wash it. *“That’s not racist,”* you are told, *“it’s just curiosity.”*

The youth pastor always asks you to carry things, help with the clean-up and serve at the dinners but you are never invited to serve on the leadership team or allowed to take part in the planning. *“That’s not racist,”* you are told, *“it’s just that no one can understand your accent and we don’t know if you have enough experience to plan well.”*

Sons coming home from sports matches carrying gym bags can still be randomly stopped by police; daughters showing passion for a topic are still told they are too loud or pushy. *“That’s not racist, you just stand out.”*



“ I also believe that the silence around complex issues such as racism only serves the privileged, allowing folk to hide under the guise of “niceness” while maintaining the status quo. ”



These simple stories and others have been shared with me by young people over the years – same stories, different formats, males and females—time and time again. They are not dramatic. They are seemingly harmless. Yet, I know them by heart and can finish their sentences from my own experience as an 11th generation Canadian Black woman. This is the matrix of powerful yet camouflaged forces racialized Canadian youth try to navigate on a daily basis. These are the so-called harmless experiences that threaten to shake up, shred, anesthetize, dismantle, disempower, dismember, and tear them apart. This is why so many are dropping out, turning off and leaving our mainstream churches.

I believe there are solutions that can lead us all through these challenges. First, church leaders must be willing to authentically engage racialized youth by listening to their stories, validating their experiences and offering them relevant opportunities. I also believe that the silence around complex issues such as racism only serves the privileged, allowing folk to hide under the guise of “niceness” while maintaining the status quo.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Imagine with me the things that will change when we all begin to see these young people as God’s handiwork. Each of us could support them as they discover the good works God has prepared in advance for them to do. We could then fearlessly hold each other accountable to overcoming the bias that devalues, disempowers and isolates us, one from another. This has radical theological implications in combatting systematic racism however, and perhaps more importantly, it is a strong foundation for empowering youth to develop the resiliency they need to thrive in spite of it. **m**



Rev. Denise Gillard is an ordained CBOQ pastor and for the past 15 years has served as the Executive Artistic Director of *The HopeWorks Connection* ([hopeworksconnection.ca](http://hopeworksconnection.ca)) a not-for-profit organization best known for its premier program, *The Toronto Children’s Concert Choir & Performing Arts Company* ([www.tc3.ca](http://www.tc3.ca)).

# DISPLACED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

CARING FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

by *Laurena Zondo, Editor of mosaic*



**WHILE MARIA\* AND HER HUSBAND** have always been among the poorer population in Syria, there were still joys in life – they were blessed with children, purchased a small apartment, saw the marriage of grown children, and the birth of grandchildren. But then fighting erupted. Five years later, the brutal civil war rages on with no end in sight.

Maria's youngest, an 11-year-old daughter, stopped going to school at the mosque because "armed groups started coming into the neighbourhood and kidnapping children." Bombs started to drop, leaving rubble and bodies in the streets – someone's aunt killed while hanging out the laundry; someone's nephew killed while playing football.

Traumatized children started to run and hide when they heard airplanes, and they wet their beds at night. One day a bomb falls on Maria's building, destroying what precious little they had. "The apartment, the furniture, everything that we have is gone." They fled to Lebanon with nothing, "just the clothes we had on, that's it." Their journey to the border was precarious as they passed through intense shelling and clashes between armed forces.

When they arrived in Lebanon, they faced new hazards. "We felt a lot of injustice, severe injustice. During our first five months we couldn't find bread to eat...most of the days we were sleeping hungry."



Maria's husband and sons looked for work but it was hard to find - jobs for refugees were restricted, and mostly temporary, low-paying ones such as summer work in fields and markets.

They have lived here now for two years. "It's very difficult being away from Syria. We live like dogs here...It's very humiliating." Maria's husband is sick and unable to find work. "No one wants to hire an old man." Most of the money her son now earns at a restaurant goes to pay the rent - two unfinished rooms in the shell of a building shared by the extended family of parents, children, sons and daughter-in-laws, and grandchildren. They are fortunate. Many others are forced to move from place to place when the rent is hiked up (which happens a lot) or a temporary job ends. An estimated two-thirds of refugees instead live in clusters of camps - small communities of makeshift tents of canvas, plastic, boards and anything else families can salvage. Even here they have to pay a small amount of rent to the landowner.

Adding to family misery is lack of school and activities for their children. Like Maria's young daughter, many remain at home with nothing to do. They long to return to Syria and miss things like riding their bicycle, playing in the park, visiting grandfather and other relatives. They are becoming a lost generation.

Maria worries a lot about family and friends who remained behind in Syria. Every day there is news of bombings and killings. At the same time, she feels unwelcome in Lebanon. Some locals who resent the presence of refugees say things to them too cruel to repeat. Years ago, Syria was the hated enemy.

So today Maria is stateless, trapped between two countries - unable to live safely in one, unwanted and without rights in the other. She is overwhelmed, but so too is her host country. Lebanon, a small country of approximately 4 million, struggles to accommodate over 1 million Syrian refugees now in its midst.

But God is working a miracle in the crisis. He's placed a big burden on a small group of believers who walk through streets and camps to look for, and help, refugees in need. They are supported by CBM and its partners, Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"Through God's grace and thanks to the church we were able to find some food, and to see doctors," says Maria, who also suffers from debilitating diseases. Her family now gets two boxes of food basics to carry them through the month. Volunteer doctors give medical checkups. The sick receive medicine. An educational program and fun activities are available for children. Women meet to pray and share their troubles.

Last winter the church gave heaters and fuel to help families like Maria's survive the cold. They continue to visit her and countless numbers of others. These visits are "nicer than honey," says Maria. "No one else visits us."

It's one thing Maria does enjoy in Lebanon. "I like what is coming from the church, from the believers...the warmth and love in their hearts."

A group of families living in another building share similar sentiments: "We were besieged by fighting and warring parties, we left...We were so hateful and resentful of everyone around us...The church taught us that we are all equal before God, it's not about being Lebanese or Syrian...to forgive, love one another."

Every soul matters to God and he is reaching deep into the despair to restore. M

*\*name has been changed*

[Top Left] Large numbers of Syrian refugees live in the Bekaa Valley, near the Syrian border. [Middle] Life continues. A new grandchild, born in Lebanon, brings joy to Maria. [Bottom] A visit with Maria includes tea and prayer for healing in Maria's family and in her country, Syria. Photos (middle and bottom): Randy Vanderveen



## WELCOME TO CANADA

Within four months (Nov. 2015 - Mar. 2016), over 26,000 Syrian refugees have been welcomed to Canada! We congratulate all of the Canadian Baptist churches across the country that have been a part of this amazing effort, in so many different ways. One such church, Lancaster Baptist in Saint John, New Brunswick, shares a little of their experience:

*In December 2015, Lancaster Baptist had the opportunity to partner with Newcomer Connections (YMCA) and their Syrian Refugee Response in Saint John. We became the depot for furniture and household goods. Through social media, websites and great media coverage we called upon the folks of Saint John and surrounding communities to drop-off gently used items at the church's Christian Education Centre. The response from the community was, and continues to be, tremendous. Newcomer families, along with their Welcome Teams, come to the CE Centre by appointment to "shop" for everything they need to begin life in our wonderful city.*

*Early in January we began holding weekly drop-offs as families continued arriving in Saint John. Goods seem to move out just as quickly as they come in! At present, we've seen 75 families come through our depot (and we're expecting 20+ more). This ministry has done more than just fill practical needs. It has fostered community within our church and engaged committed volunteers. We've also had the privilege of connecting with many generous people from our region and welcomed practically every Syrian family that has come to Saint John.*

Rev. Wayne Murphy  
Lancaster Baptist Church



## THE VIEW

## NEW FRIENDS IN THE NORTH

Living in the North, in Goose Bay, Labrador, one of the groups our church interacts with on a regular basis is the Aboriginal community. It's a connection that often begins with someone looking for food and water or transportation. For one middle-aged woman, it eventually led to her accepting invitations to potluck at our church and has merged into an ongoing friendship. Her name is Susanne.

by Jonathan Beers  
Lead Pastor, Northern Cross Community Church,  
Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador



### **Jonathan: Can you share a little of what your life is like on a daily basis?**

**Susanne:** Life here is some good and some bad. It's not always easy. Sometimes you are just hungry and need something to eat...sometimes you just try and find a dry place so sometimes I stay with my aunt or cousins and sometimes I don't know where I am going to stay, but that's ok, it usually works out.

### **J: What is some of the grief that you carry with you?**

**S:** I have five children but one of my boys drowned when he was out fishing. I miss him very much. Thinking about him makes me sad and I think about him every day. He was my son you know...sometimes it makes me very sad to think about that. I try to just keep going and not think too much about it.

### **J: What is a question that you would like to ask God?**

**S:** I wonder sometimes why life can be so hard...I trust God, I do, I know he's there. But sometimes I wonder. I don't always feel him as close as I'd like, but when I do, I know he's there walking with me each day. I know whether it's a good day or not, he is there and that helps. I try to believe in what God tells me every day, but it's not always easy.

### **J: What is one of your biggest challenges that you face day to day?**

**S:** People think they know you. They see you around town, how you dress and assume they know you. The truth is there is more to people than you think...you know, it's seeing past how someone looks to who they really are...not thinking you know that person all figured out when you don't, that's really important to me...sometimes as Innu we need to be reminded that we come from a good history. Traditions and family are important and it's important to always remember that every day.

### **J: What do you think about Northern Cross Community Church?**

**S:** The people at church I call friends. As Innu, we are taught to share with those around us. They practice that and remind me that God loves me, and I need to be reminded of that a lot. I know I can go there and get water or food, but most of all I know they will listen and that is really important to me. When I was very upset one day the Pastor told me that God is with me, that Jesus' love is deeper than any trouble I might have, that gave me hope. Everybody needs hope, every day to get them through. 

*A treasured photo: Susanne and friends*

# DOES SHE MATTER IN CANADA?



The statistics about missing and murdered Indigenous women are stark and staggering.

A 2015 United Nations report found that young Aboriginal women are

**five times more likely to die under violent circumstances,**

as compared with their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

It also reported that Indigenous women report

**rates of violence 3.5 times higher**

than non-Aboriginal women.

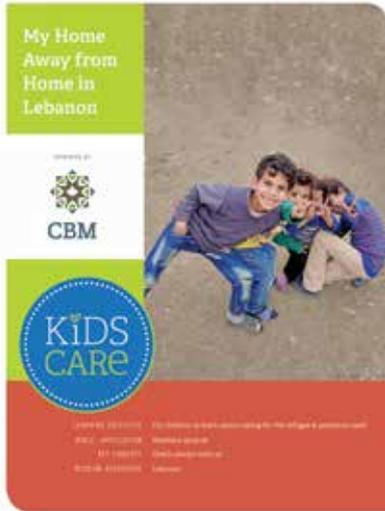
The UN report called for a national inquiry.

## ***Take Action.***

Learn more about Canada's Missing Aboriginal Women.

Watch *Finding Dawn* by Metis filmmaker Christine Welch at [http://www.nfb.ca/film/finding\\_dawn/](http://www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn/) with accompanying study guide.

SOURCE: [www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/](http://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/)



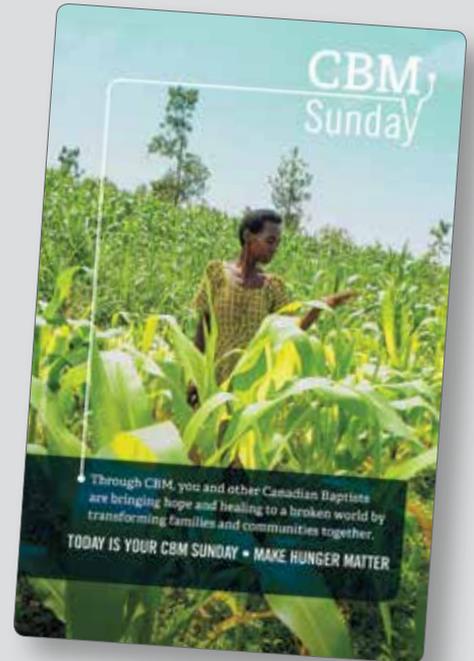
**KIDS CARE:**

**My Home Away From Home**

CBM's new resource helps children to learn more about God's heart for the refugee and others in great need in our world through real-life stories from refugee families and vulnerable children in Bolivia, Kenya, Lebanon and Canada. You and your children will be inspired to respond with God's love and care.

Download your copy today at [www.cbmin.org](http://www.cbmin.org) or email [communications@cbmin.org](mailto:communications@cbmin.org).

**Now Available from CBM:**  
An Opportunity to Respond to Global Hunger with **CBM Sunday**.



Today 1 in every 9 people is "officially" hungry and undernourished. Most live in the Global South, in rural areas where food is produced. CBM invites Canadian Baptist churches to stand in solidarity with those who go hungry. Pick a Sunday, any Sunday, any time of the year, to raise awareness and support for CBM food programs.

Your special offering on your CBM Sunday will support vital food projects such as:

- Food assistance to Syrian refugees and displaced people
- Farming with families in rural areas of Rwanda, Kenya, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo
- Innovative conservation agriculture and nutrition projects in rural areas of India

*Together, let's feed the world!*

Plan to participate today. Learn more and/or order your materials at [cbmin.org](http://cbmin.org).

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