

◀ healing words ▶

*An instrument for honouring Survivors of Canada's Indian Residential School System,
as well as Survivors' descendants and their communities.*



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Legacy of Hope's Journey to Hopedale, Labrador

By Jackie Miller

Working with the Nunatsiavut Government in Hopedale, Labrador, the Legacy of Hope hosted a three-day workshop and sharing circle for Survivors of the residential schools. The gathering was an incredible time of sharing stories, expressing emotions, and gathering strength and healing through the support of other Survivors. Several people expressed that they had never discussed their experiences and emotions related to their residential school years. As in so many gatherings before, the Survivors were surprised and relieved to hear that the thoughts and emotions they experienced were similar to those of other Survivors. It was a positive experience, and one participant commented that it was an opportunity to have a great weight lifted off of his shoulders and to begin as a new man.

The Survivors were also very grateful for the opportunity to share their stories, because they

were excluded from the apology by Prime Minister Steven Harper. Even though these children were removed from their homes and attended schools outside of the communities, because of jurisdictional issues around the funding of the school, they have not formally been recognized as Residential School Survivors.

The final day of the event was spent out on the land gathering berries in the peaceful surroundings. There is a real sense of grounding one receives from the special connection with the land. The Nunatsiavut Government's Department of Health and Social Development also runs a family program that spends the final days out on the land connecting families to their roots and the healing energy of the land. For more information on their program please contact Marjorie Flowers at (709)922-2942.

You can send your articles, letters, pictures, or other contributions by fax, mail, or email to:

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The fax number is (613) 237-4442 and the email address is wspear@ahf.ca. Please include a short biography with your submission as well as a return address and phone number. Healing Words may need to contact you about your submission.

The AHF does not pay for published submissions, but contributors get free copies of the newsletter. The views expressed by contributors to Healing Words do not necessarily reflect the views of the AHF. All submissions are subject to the approval of the editorial team and may be edited for spelling, grammar, and length. Thanks!

Thank-you to all our contributors!

Healing Words Production Schedule

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Healing Words is a free publication of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Dedicated exclusively to Indian residential school stories and to sharing resources for healing, this newsletter is your place to share your thoughts and experiences related to residential school (including hostels, industrial schools, boarding schools, and day schools). To receive Healing Words, write to us at Suite 801, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5E7 or phone 1-888-725-8886. (In Ottawa, phone 237-4441). Keep in mind that the newsletter is available in French and English and is free. Also available on-line! <http://www.ahf.ca>

The purpose of Healing Words is to be an instrument for honouring the Foundation's commitments to survivors, their descendants, and their communities. It is one of the means by which we demonstrate our respect for the agreements the Foundation has signed. It is also a vehicle for supporting the mission, vision and objectives of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as well as the goals of the Foundation's Communications Strategy.

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Photo (above): Aboriginal Healing Foundation staff pictured at a recent Project Gathering Workshop

Sturgeon Lake Youth Initiatives Program

By Jackie Miller

Sturgeon Lake is located in central Saskatchewan and has a population of 2,300 people. All of the residents over forty years of age have attended residential school. The community was divided and even families were divided as some attended the Catholic residential school in Duck Lake and others attended the Anglican residential school in Prince Albert.

There are also four languages in the community: Cree, English, French – which was spoken between the Priests and the Nuns, – and Latin, which was used during Mass.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation funded project was started in September, 2004 to address the issues in the community resulting from the legacy of the residential schools. Sturgeon Lake Youth Initiatives Program started with a very broad work plan: to assist Survivors, deal with the intergenerational impacts, and bring back the traditional culture. The program was started by gathering one member from each family grouping and hosting a planning meeting.

The initial direction given was that rather than bring in outside facilitators, they should train community members so that the expertise would remain in the community and be there to support the community. The Elders advisory committee directed the activity of the project, with input from the Health Board as well as the Chief and Council.

The committee examined the loss of language, loss of parent-

ing skills, and the overall loss of culture due to the removals of children from the community and their placement in the residential schools. The first step in addressing these issues was staff development and capacity building within the community. Training took place in the areas of grief support, suicide prevention and cultural training, including the medicine wheel. Sharing circles were held to build inner strength within the community. The community began to help each other with the support of the circle. Those who were struggling learned to rely on each other for strength and understanding. The key component was the development of the local facilitators, and community support. Building capacity within the community created community strength.

The project also hosted 3 day retreats where cultural activities, sharing circles, ceremonies and training took place. The key component to the success of these retreats was that two and sometimes three generations would attend together to do healing work as an entire family. The roles of men and women were addressed. The importance of respect, sharing and helping each other as a community was highlighted. It was also a time of fun, storytelling and games. As well, it was an opportunity for Elders to talk with the youth and provide teachings.

Thank you to Wilma Schreder for sharing the successful activities of the Sturgeon Lake Project. If you have any further question please contact her at 306-764-9352.

Canada's Apology for Indian Residential Schools

Prime Minister Harper offers full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system
11 June 2008
Ottawa, Ontario

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches.

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools. Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.



The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former

Canada's Apology for Indian Residential Schools continued

students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the Government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for

failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

Nous le regrettons
We are sorry
Nimitataynan
Niminchinowesamin
Mamiattugut

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian Residential Schools, implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement began on September 19, 2007. Years of work by survivors, communities, and Aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the Settlement Agreement is the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This Commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian Residential Schools system. It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

Stolen Generations Alliance

Australians for Healing
Truth and Justice

Australians for Healing, Truth and Justice

The election of the Rudd Government last November offers the chance for a desperately-needed change of direction in Indigenous policy.

The eleven years of the conservative Howard Government have seen a tragic regression of Indigenous participation in our national life. There are fewer Indigenous people in the public service, and fewer in our universities. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy has remained almost unchanged at a horrifying 18-20 years. The elected body which represented Indigenous Australians has been abolished. Policies affecting Indigenous people have been implemented with almost no consultation. And when in 1997 the tragic effects of the removal policies came to light – policies which took thousands of Indigenous children from their families to assimilate them into non-Indigenous Australian culture – the Prime Minister refused to apologise.

The new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has committed himself to close the gap in life expectancy, and has committed substantial funds to this purpose. He has said that his Government will establish elected representation of Indigenous Australians, and will apologise to the Stolen Generations – as those who were removed as children are now known.

The immediate challenge is to work out how to apologise. Indigenous leaders have called for compensation, and the Government has responded that it does not intend to pay individual compensation. The best compensation, it says, is to close the gap in health standards.

This is unlikely to be the final position. If they will not pay individual compensation, they will face pressure to put funds into communal compensation, perhaps along the lines of Canada's Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

But above all, the challenge confronting the Government is to commit themselves to transform the conditions in which most Aboriginal people live. Canada, the USA and New Zealand have all made great progress in recent decades in advancing Indigenous wellbeing. There is no reason why Australia cannot make the same advances, if it allocated the necessary resources. Canada's Federal Government spends twice as much per Indigenous person as Australia's.

However, Government action alone will not overcome Indigenous disadvantage. Most Australian Indigenous people live in towns and city suburbs, widely dispersed among the majority non-Indigenous population. In the late 1990s, thanks to the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation – and probably in reaction to the cold-heartedness of the Howard Government – over a million people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, became active in a people's movement for reconciliation. Friendships grew across the racial boundaries. Nearly a million people signed Sorry Books, apologising for past cruelties, and committing themselves to end racism and improve conditions for Indigenous Australians. Many Indigenous people have experienced in their neighbourhood the sense of support which we all need if we are to flourish, and have found new hope and confidence.

If the Government can put programmes in place to improve Indigenous health, housing and education, while also encouraging the Australian community to maintain and increase their involvement, we could see the living conditions of Indigenous Australians transformed during the next 10 years.

- John Bond
Stolen Generations Alliance
Australians for Healing, Truth and Justice

Sorry is More Than Just a Word

Anniversary of Apology – Sorry is more than just a word exhibition

[Editor's Note: This speech was delivered February 13, 2009 in Australia by Jenny Macklin, the Government's Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs]

Australian Parliament House, Canberra

"I would like to thank Aunty Matilda for another inspiring Welcome to Country, and to pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land on which we stand.

As you know, the Prime Minister was determined to be here today.

But the catastrophic events of the past days mean he is focused on the bushfire emergency.

The first Anniversary of the Apology is immensely important to him.

He has asked me to pass on his deep regret that he cannot be here and deliver this speech on his behalf.

Over the last few days the Prime Minister and I have spoken to people affected by the fires - survivors, fire fighters, emergency workers, volunteers.

We've heard some extraordinary stories of escape and heroism.

Among them, the story of an Aboriginal mother and her three young children trying to escape the fires.

She drove to a creek bed, grabbed the children and hid in a wombat hole as the fire roared over them. All four survived.

Just as uplifting, the remarkable outpouring of sympathy and generosity uniting our country to do all we can to help.

In the most remote parts of Australia, the Red Cross says people are lining up to give blood.

As I said, the Prime Minister regrets that he cannot be here but his thoughts are here with us.

It's a great privilege to launch this terrific exhibition ... "Sorry – more than just a word" — featuring the work of the celebrated Indigenous photographers, Wayne Quilliam and Merv Bishop.

Merv Bishop is perhaps best known for the iconic photograph of Gough Whitlam pouring soil into the hand of Gurindji traditional owner, Vincent Lingiari, at the handover of the deeds to Gurindji country at Wattie Creek.

Wayne Quilliam, featured in the permanent Bayagul exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

He recently won the 2008 Human Rights Award for Print Media in partnership with Koori Mail, for the National Apology commemorative lift out.

Their photographs of the Apology in Parliament House one year ago today are a superb record of that momentous day.

When the Prime Minister made an Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples on behalf of the Government and Parliament of Australia.

Kevin Rudd said sorry for the laws and policies that inflicted such profound grief, suffering and loss on our fellow Australians.

In particular, he said sorry to the Stolen Generations.

Those who suffered the hurt, the humiliation, the cruelty and the sheer brutality of being taken away from their parents, their families and their people.

The Apology was based on an exercise of the imagination that is so simple.

And that is to ask ourselves: How would I feel if it had been done to me?

The Australian Government offered this Apology because it was unfinished business for our nation.

Because unless we acknowledge and become fully reconciled to the past, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians cannot come together to build a better future.

Because the past cannot be denied - it is what we inherit, what shapes us, what we live every day - as individuals, as a people and as a nation.

Just this week Reconciliation Australia released the findings of its first Reconciliation Barometer – looking at changes in attitudes since the Apology.

It shows there is still much to be done to build trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

But there is also much cause for hope.

More than three-quarters of Australians say they would like to have more contact with Indigenous people.

However only 20 per cent of Australians say they know what they can do to help disadvantaged Indigenous people.

To me, this shows that although there is much goodwill, we still need to find ways to get to know each other better.

I think the Apology gave us the impetus to make that happen.

But as the Prime Minister said then, the great symbolism of the Apology must be followed by the even greater substance of action.

The practical, determined action to close the gap in Indigenous life expectancy, health, housing, education and employment.

In the year since the Apology was delivered in this parliament, we have supported a range of projects for the Stolen Generations:

- National Sorry Day commemorations.
- More Bringing Them Home counsellors and case workers.
- The further collection and publication of Stolen Generations' oral histories; and

- The Indigenous Healing Forum launched here in Canberra in September. This was an important step – a formal recognition of the impact of grieving and trauma on Indigenous people.

Today I am pleased to announce that the Government will establish a Foundation to provide practical and innovative healing services.

Including training and research, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially Stolen Generation members and their families.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the establishment of this Foundation will be led by an interim group headed by Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue and Mr Greg Phillips.

Dr O'Donoghue is with us today. She is a senior Stolen Generation member and a former Australian of the Year.

Mr Phillips is also with us today. He has standout expertise in the area of Indigenous peoples' healing and trauma.

These community leaders will bring sensitivity, compassion and direction to this important work.

We hope crucial partnerships will be forged to draw on the important contributions of the Stolen Generations Alliance and National Sorry Day Committee, and others who participated in the Healing forum.

I am also pleased to announce on behalf of Minister Nicola Roxon a further expansion of the Link Up program.

This will create positions for 11 more Link Up Caseworkers and five more Link Up administration staff.

Through this we aim to bring more people together through individual reunions and around 100 'Return to Country' reunions.

I'm also determined that the significance of the apology lives on in our children and their children.

As a start, to commemorate the first anniversary of the Apology and to encourage schools to participate, I have written to every school in Australia and sent them a copy of the Apology Calligraphy Manuscript.

Across Australia today, apology breakfasts, school ceremonies, special sporting matches and barbeques are happening to mark the anniversary.

This exhibition matters because we need to keep telling the stories of the Stolen Generation and of our history.

They are Australian stories.

They tell us who we have been and who we are.

And how great a people we can be when we make our journey together.

Manitoba Métis Federation Survivor Family Wellness Program

By Jackie Miller

The Métis Survivor Family Wellness Program is a wellness and healing program developed by the Manitoba Métis Federation and four of its regions: The Pas, Thompson, Dauphin and Southeast. Funding is provided by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

The goals are to implement practices that will provide healing for Métis Survivors and their descendants who have experienced the legacy of the Canadian Residential School System and to work towards the restoration of wellness and balance in Métis families according to Métis culture and tradition. The program has been in operation since December 2000.

The MSFWP held a Provincial Information Gathering in March of this

year where presentations were provided on the application process, and updated information was given on schools that are recognized. There was also an opportunity for those willing to share their experiences of residential schools. The program is also in the process of collecting affidavits from Métis students who attended other residential schools which are not on the list, in hopes of having those schools added. The team is preparing to host a Métis School Survivor commemoration event in the province. It is their hope to ensure that the Métis students are not the "Forgotten People" that attended the "Forgotten Schools."

I met up with Ernie Blais, the Past Director of the MMF, at the 40th Annual General Assembly in Brandon

this September. We talked about the importance of healing in the communities. He said that it is important to know where we came from in order to plot where we are going, a point made by the current Director, Paul Chartrand, in his opening speech.

Healing is about the wholeness of a person, and not just about the past but, most important, about the future. It is also about gathering together as a community and supporting each other and remembering the importance of enjoying each other's company. Laughter is said to be the best medicine!

THE HEALING GARDEN



BY CHARLES WAGAMESE

They call her Strawberry. She loved plants and always asked questions about them.

One day as they paddled Strawberry noticed something.

'Gokum,' she asked, "how comes it looks like there are chunks cut out of the tree line there?"

"Oh," gokum replied, "that is where the People used to make their gardens."

Gokum swept an open hand out.

"Along the islands, the lake shore, they would plant corn, potatoes, peas. The water kept the frosts away long enough for these precious things to ripen."

She told how the people planted, left for the summer to return in the autumn to harvest and store.

She explained that every family used to have a big garden.

Strawberry could see the old time ones bending over their deer antler hoes. She could hear them laughing and playfully grumbling as they worked.

One young girl waved. Strawberry waved back.

Gokum smiled.

Strawberry asked her grandmother where all the gardens had gone.

Gokum swallowed her throat a little like the words there were dry and hard.

"Because when the kids came back from residential schools, they pulled them all out..."

When Strawberry asked why, Gokum just turned her thumb over her paddle to get them moving again.

When she got back to the reserve, Strawberry asked her mother why she had done that.

"Because they forced us to make gardens at the school," her mom answered. Her eyes got angry.

"We were hungry all the time there. We even tried to steal enough to eat." Her mother said.

"Did you ever tell Gokum this?"

"No."

"Did she ever ask you why you ruined her gardens?"

"No."

Strawberry knew when to stop talking to adults, especially in her family.

But Strawberry wasn't called Strawberry for no reason.

She intended to have a garden again. And to have her gokum and mom help her get one started.

Strawberries are called heart berries in the Ojibway language. Strawberry showed heart all the time. She was the first one to feed others, just like the plant she was named after ripens first each year.

She was also tiny as the odin flower and could be just as sweet.

She sat in a wild strawberry patch to ask and to be told how her family's garden might grow once again. This is what those berries said and this is what that young girl did.

She found her mom and gokum watching tv. Together but not together.

"Gokum, why did you let my mom go to that place?"

Gokum and her Mother both tried to say nothing.

Strawberry always included shy people in everything. Her mishomish who gave her the name Strawberry said it because she would always be that way. Like the runners the strawberry plant use to

travel and plant its goodness elsewhere. "She would be tough about it too," he said.

"So there will never be gardens here again," the young girl said.

The bird songs of late spring filled that little room. The tv just kept making noise.

"Why didn't you protect me Mom?", her mother asked as those her words came just from her lips, hardly moving.

A tear slip down gokum's cheek. "because my heart was broken when my parent's put me on that train."

"And they stopped growing gardens all over our land for so many reasons. But mostly because they couldn't raise their children there like they used to. And when you kids came back so silent and angry...when they would spoil the planting...we didn't know what to say to them.. because our parents couldn't help us understand it all either."

Tears flowed. Many tears. Before the three took each other in their arms.

Strawberry than asked. "Why don't we make a tiny garden. Just two rows. Of strawberries maybe."

And that is what they did. In their healing garden all the reasons for not having gardens get weeded out. They got help from therapists and elders but mostly it was the plants, the time spent together that did it.

When they tasted the big strawberries they had grown together...a sweetness had been planted where hurt has once grown.

Thanks to Strawberry, her love of plants, why her shomish named her that name, we have gardens all over our reserve again and even some on the islands too.

Do Residential School Kids Owe Apologies Too?

By Charles Wagamese

Actually maybe two apologies: one to us foster home kids and another to our urban cousins.

Our parents can't really be held to account for forgetting the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People's report. Everyone else has.

That 25 million dollar attempt at wisdom says three factors fractured our social-ness: residential schools, child welfare kidnappings and this shift from pine lined addresses to the ghettos bright lights.

When the National Chief would speak about his losses and not mention foster home kids it hit me like a flash back at first.

In foster care that's how we got treated when real family matters were brought up. "You aren't really one of us. Go wait over there. We will deal with you when we are ready."

My adult self got mad and issued a press release saying important kids groups were being left out. Those feelings were loudly ignored.

As a person already in recovery the tools of that work helped me. It helped me to understand that as wounded kids themselves, and collectively as wounded adults, how could they possibly tend to their wounded children?

I decided to participate somehow. Residential school survivors proposed an association. They asked me to be their co-ordinator.

We guided my family and others through the early stages of litigation. Attending survivor conferences over the years helped me get over that left out feeling.

To see a seventy-five year old man turn to a hurt twelve year old. To hear another simply seeking equal wages for the work he did along side adults. Another who said it was not being able to use his mind fully that bothered him the most.

And to tread carefully amongst the shallow graves of children who never made it home again.

One part of an apology might be required of residential school kids now acting as leaders.

They must have forgotten the native studies history they were taught by nuns in those half day classes at St. Mary's.

To me this was never about education. This was about a deliberate cold blooded attack on our legal, political and economic identity as a People. This was about ripping us from our lands using the bodies, minds, emotions and spirits of our kids to do it.

Accepting the language of compensation is to allow Canadians to believe that this was all an accident which only created a monetary liability.

Canada's aboriginal policy has therefore not changed a bit. Forcing the indigenous from their traditional lands to Selkirk Ave is still what land negotiations are about.

Another element of an apology might be caused by labeling us other kids as an 'intergenerational impact'. As though the atrocities we endured are made more explicable and less toxic somehow by calling us that.

An Aboriginal Healing Foundation research study says we need to look even deeper at our wounded collectiveness than we are looking now. On that basis we are all 'igi's' ...so there.

As far as Harper's apology goes... well his lips moved. But did the rest of him?

To me, having untreated victimizers decide and approve a healing process that doesn't also include themselves is down right scary.

Even so I hope the ones who longed to hear the Prime Minister apologize get everything they hoped for from his words. They more than deserve it

Hearing native politicians brag that this apology is the start of a new relationship means new handcuffs for the thirty people arrested for protecting their land based cultures around here.

As a foster home kid, when we move with our issues, my feeling is we insist only on what we negotiated in the treaties. Nothing more. Nothing less. We then design our own recovery work healings. A feature of that must include treating Canadians wounded by their collective treatment of indigenous children.

This might prevent us foster kids from having to apologize to the urban kids. To read the Winnipeg paper is to witness their murders by the forces of dispossession.

So do the residential school kids owe an apology? Of course not. They are helping to lead the way to healing. Words are only the tiniest physical start. These need to be followed by positive action – over an extended period of time, in order that trust is restored.

How can you have a collective relationship with Canadians without it?

A Stoney elder said in Edmonton that the Cree owed him an apology. Especially, he said, the young woman who ran off with his heart. That old man and this land need that heart back.

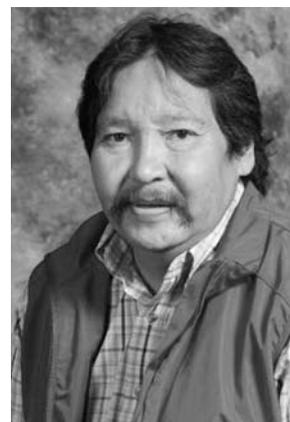
As a citizen of war torn Palestine said, "we shall only have peace when we love our enemy's children as much as we love our own." Oh wah.

Meegwetch to all brave kids on this healing road and prayers for the ones who will join them soon....

From Truth To Reconciliation: An Interview



Georges Erasmus



Garnet Angeconeb

By Jackie Miller

Recently, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation released a major publication, which expressed the perspective of twenty-three authors and their vision of truth telling and paths to reconciliation.

I had the wonderful opportunity to speak with Georges Erasmus, President of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, about the new research publication.

Georges commented that one interesting point of the publication is that it offers a diversity of viewpoints on what reconciliation means. Reconciliation can include a wide range of issues, such as the examination of the loss of land and the serious impact that assimilation policy and the residential schools had on culture, language and the social systems of First Nation, Inuit and Métis people.

There are a tremendous amount of issues to deal with. Therefore, people can't heal until they are ready and they can't reconcile until they are ready. The legacy of assimilation and the residential schools is difficult because it created bigger issues in Aboriginal societies.

Garnet Angeconeb, a Board member of the AHF, wrote an article in this publication. In the article Garnet talks about personal growth and his healing journey. His journey included the ability to forgive the person who abused him. Georges commented that many people are not at that place in their own journey yet.

It has been very clear that the formal apology from the Federal Government will allow people to move forward in their healing journeys, because it is an act of admitting a wrong was done and that tremendous harm was caused to Aboriginal people. Through this acknowledgement, Aboriginal people can forgive and move forward.

During the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the clear message that came forth was a question: Why did this happen to Aboriginal children? Churches had apologized, and so the Federal Government needed to do the same.

Georges also stated that there is a lack

of awareness in the general public of what really happened to Aboriginal people through the assimilation policy of the residential schools, as well as the physical, mental and sexual abuse suffered by the residential school survivors. Public education is extremely important.

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Georges has great hopes for this Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a further opportunity for the Survivors to tell their stories. It will create an opportunity for serious public education and for healing for the Survivors, as they will be validated.

Georges believes that, once this process has been carried out, the hard work of reconciliation between the nations can begin. Once people are truly ready, then we can have individuals, families and communities heal. We can then see the larger society begin to reconcile as partners with Aboriginal people.

Gary Fjellgaard: "I Apologize"

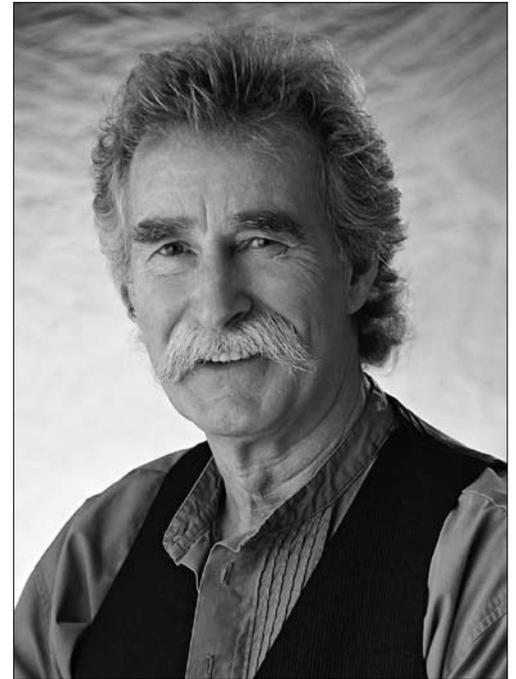
[Editor's Note: the following is taken from Gary Fjellgaard's website.]

Gary Fjellgaard's Song, "I Apologize"

"I Apologize" is dedicated to the First Nation's victims and survivors of the cultural genocide which occurred in Canada for over a century. No apology can heal the wounds caused by the far reaching effects of the residential school system. I can only add my voice as a member of the generation who allowed this abuse to take place.

We were driving and listening to CBC radio and we started hearing some of the accounts from survivors, victims and their families. There was no bitterness from these people telling these stories but it was absolutely gut wrenching. We had to pull over. It was really, really moving. And I thought, damn it, I was part of that generation. I knew about it, we were aware of residential schools.

The song is available for free download at:
<http://www.fjellgaard.bc.ca/>



"I Apologize" Lyrics

Written by Gary Fjellgaard June 2008 © Socan
Published by Slim Creek Music July 2008 © Socan

I have this guilt / I have this shame
I have a conscience / So I have to take the blame
I stood back / I watched it all
I even helped imprison you / Behind those walls

No excuse / Is good enough
We never let you speak / Unless you mimicked us
I can't run / I can't hide
Why I can't even / Look you in the eye

No hollow prayer / No silent shout
No more empty words / Spilling from my mouth
You stripped away / My thin disguise
Now all that I can do is say / I'm sorry
I apologize

I thought that God / Was on my side
And with my righteousness / I'd tame the savage
child

I would not have them / Running free
If they assimilate / They could be like me

How many can / The wagons hold
Another thousand children / I suppose
It must have seemed / Like judgement day
The anguish / As the wagons rolled away

I can't begin / To know your pain
You can't forgive / As long as memory remains
Through it all / You still survive
And all that I can do is say / I'm sorry
Choking on the words that say / I'm sorry
I apologize

Roderick Gould Sr. and Marry Morris

By Jackie Miller

I had the great fortune of chatting with Roderick Gould Sr., from Ebiquite First Nation, Prince Edward Island, and Mary Morris of Lennox Island First Nation, Prince Edward Island. We met the day after the official apology in the House of Commons. Both Roderick and Mary were in Ottawa for the apology and were seated in the survivors section of the house.

We had a very thoughtful conversation after they both had time to think about the apology and what it meant to each of them personally. Roderick was pleased that the apology took place because it brought the issue into the consciousness of all Canadians.

“Now that all Canadians are aware of what took place in the residential schools, true changes can take place for survivors, survivors’ families, and between Canadian citizens and Aboriginal people,” he stated. On a personal level

Roderick was overwhelmed yet also experienced an inner sense of happiness. He believes that the true healing will come when he can share with his family and the other survivors in the community because they will share their thoughts and feelings and then support each other.

Mary wished that all of the survivors could have been in attendance to witness the apology personally. She also believed that the most important part of the event was that the apology was made, and therefore people can now move forward to encourage healing and forgiveness. It is truly important for survivors to travel and attend workshops. It is important to gather together and support each other. “Even though there have been lots of mixed emotions, it is an important step in the healing process; it is the acknowledgement of what took place that will help

people move forward,” she added. The fact that the apology was televised nationally also made Mary feel that her experiences were validated and acknowledged as truth.

Mary and Roderick found the speakers to be sincere. The survivors all felt that before the speech they were in a place of caution – carefully watching and listening to not only what was being said but how it was being said. They both felt that once the Aboriginal leaders accepted the apology and were allowed to respond to the apology, it brought the event to full circle. It was also significant that the Aboriginal leaders were in the center of the circle. Mary felt that it was particularly great to see Prime Minister Steven Harper hug Mary Simon, President of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Association, as well as Beverley Jacobs, President of the Native Women’s Association of Canada, and some of the attending survivors. The respect was present and demonstrated to the Aboriginal people, therefore we can all move forward in this collective consciousness.

Roderick left me with the vision of survivors now being in control of their destiny. He said he feels for the first time that “he was given the driver’s seat in the healing journey.” They both were looking forward to going back to their home communities and celebrating with their families and friends and continue the healing work. Roderick said he had, “walked like a turkey through all of this until now, so when he goes home he will fly like an Eagle.”

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me on this important historical event.

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