

TRC Response Paper - Tricia Fink

Over the course of 130 years, the Governments in Canada and the United States launched and implemented a system of 'education' aimed at forcing the First Nations of North America to assimilate into white society (become civilized). During this period of time, children were forcibly taken from their homes and families and moved to Residential Schools - which were often run by churches. At these schools, children were indoctrinated in such a way as to erase any trace of their culture of origin: language, history, religion, social structure, identity. There were often horrible physical, sexual, and psychological abuses perpetrated on them, and many died as a direct result of the treatment in these 'schools.'

With this in mind, the First Nations people of North America might be considered one of the most 'mis-reached' cultures of the world when it comes to the Great Commission and sharing the love of Jesus and the good news of salvation. As Christ followers, in the interest of 'doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly' it becomes our responsibility to pay attention to the truth of history and to the stories that are being told by survivors; Acknowledge the pain and destruction that was wrought and retell (or make room for survivors to retell) what took place and the far reaching effects. (our local church recently hosted a 'blanket exercise' for this very purpose) These events must never be repeated!

As we take in and process these stories of destruction it's important not to deflect or downplay what happened (it wasn't me). Instead, with all humility, we need to be in prayer as we listen; asking the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance as to how we can be part of the healing and restoration process. This will look different in each situation, but as we seek our Heavenly Father (who alone has the power to regenerate hearts) He has promised to grant wisdom to anyone who asks. I firmly believe He will make the path forward clear. It's His will that none should perish; it's His will that the Body of Christ act in Love; and it's ultimately His will to redeem what He has created.