NAIM - Professional Development 2017
Theme: Truth and Reconciliation Commission / TRC

Over the “few” years (8 by now) that we are living in Canada now, I’ve heard something here and there about the TRC. The last years I saw and heard more in the news and social media. But honestly I never really grasped the whole idea neither got the whole picture. I always put it away as being something where the big organizations (big churches in this case) get together with the government, they come together on round tables and talk a lot and spend most of the money in bureaucracy instead of sending it to the people and causes where it is supposed to go to, to do something good.

So I’m thankful that I could learn more deeply and new and positive things about the TRC through this NAIM PD-Assignment.

It was good to be reminded, that what had happened in the Canadian history, or better what was done to the Aboriginal people through the white dominant culture wasn’t just an accident but that intentionally laws were put together by the Canadian society and government to round up aboriginal children and to “civilize”, “christianize” with the goal to totally assimilate Aboriginal people in the Canadian society.

Hearing of those terrible stories that have been done to these children is heart wrenching again and again when ever I hear about it. And again and again it is unbelievable that it could happen and been done through the government in cooperation with different christian denominations / churches.

It was new and important to learn for me that the TRC isn’t something that came about, because some churches and the government felt some guilt and thought they had to do some repairs and trying to do things right again. And it is shocking for me to hear one speaker explaining: Hon. Steven Point (Former Ltn. Governor of BC), that **the church didn't come to them, the First Nations people, to apologies or to ask for forgiveness, BUT that the First Nations had to go to court about many wrongs and crimes that had been done to them.**

So I learned that the **TRC of Canada is unique of all TRCs.** Because it is the first that has been **created because of the actions of the victims of harms, former students,** and for many years the parents hadn’t had a voice either, because of the indian agents that had threatened the parents to put them to jail.
And that later then the **Aboriginal survivors formed a massive class action law suite.** The largest class action law suite in Canadian history, that came before the court and they said what happened to the Aboriginal people was not right and the court / government need to redress that.

I learned that one of the provisions of a massive out of court settlement, involving the federal government, four national churches, several of the catholic entities, Anglican church of CND, United church of CND, the Presbyterian Church of CND, Assembly of FN, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and legal representatives of the survivors themselves, *Agreed to a massive out of court settlement, and one of the provisions that the survivors themselves fought very hard for, was the creation of the Truth And Reconciliation Commission*.

They realized, that with an out of court settlement **they would never have their day in court**, so **that means there would never be a public recognition and record of their side of the story. about what had happened to them.**

So the **Aboriginal party mandated The TRC** and with that first and foremost created a v**ehicle for the children** that had to go to the Residential Schools, that now had become adults, **to tell us and teach us the truthful story and history from their perspective of what had happened to them as little children,** what the residential schools had meant to them and their families, and their own families there after, and the kind of connection between what had happened to them historically and the reality that we see in so much of Canada today, about the **challenges** we are facing today, so many **individuals that we see on the streets** of our urban settings, so many community that are living so much in the **absents of some of the basic and fundamental needs, housing, water and certainly educational needs and outcomes.**
But also to provide a platform for demonstrating unbelievable courage, and bravery with which people have come forward, and have spoken from the depth of their heart and sometimes extremely terrible experiences.
The TRC gives Aboriginal survivors a voice to say today, this is what I have done, this is how I have reclaimed my life, this is how I am reclaiming my life, and **this is what I want our country and our world to learn from this experience.**

For me an important part of reconciliation is that the party that asked for forgiveness not only says "I'm sorry" for what we have done and for what had happened, **but also recognizes its mistakes and wrongs, shows responsibility, and does amends**.
I feel that on many levels it is difficult to forgive on the Aboriginal side, because it doesn't sees change on the side of the government, like how Aboriginal Rights are recognized etc, and also on the church side and in the way how many Aboriginal people still feel racism against them from the "general white population".

Suggestions of how NAIM as an organization and staff members can address "Call to Action":
I personally made it a habit to take "all" my German visitors and the SMIers I had so far in Salmon Arm to the Kamloops Secwepemc Museum, the old " Indian Residential School - Kamloops" to pass on some important education about the history, past and tragedies of the Residential School System. I also try to show them the "Fallen Feather" documentary that talks and educates about the same School and includes many Shuswap First Nations from Salmon Arm and Chase.
One time we had the Hummingbird Ministries from the Vancouver area at the ALIB in Salmon Arm that had some education and also a Talking Circle and was very well received from some of the ALIB Community.
I thought about inviting some of the My People International staff to do one of their ministry in one of our Reserves to have one of their healing events (healing circles, I don't know at this point what they are calling their week ends again) that brings up the Residential School.

What could NAIM do, as an organization?
Once in a while or at specific points NAIM could get kinda "politically" involved where injustice is obvious and not many voices are raised about it (Articles?). To further righteousness in Canada / our Country where it is not done or given in view of Aboriginal peoples that we are involved with and then act about it? I don't know, might be difficult, might be worth it? ???

- Educate: - in churches / - as we do with SMIers, - else where?

- Funding Aboriginal-controlled Projects. I think in a way we are doing that (sometimes)!?

Some Statements I want to remember

"This is not an Aboriginal event just as this is not Aboriginal history, BUT this is a Canadian event just as it has been Canadian history.
And the invitation is for those that have not yet had a chance to learn first hand and to probe more deeply in to all of this, fist of all to learn."

"Be a witness and bear witness and bring forward of what you have learned and spread the learning and education"

Video, In my own words, Hope:
Noel Starblanket, Chief Assembly of First Nations, 1976 - 1980
There is no innocence now that you have heard it and now that you have seen it. you can't make it unheard and you can't make it unseen.

Video: Ottawa Closing Event:
Hon. Steven Point (Former Ltn. Governor of BC) - **It was shocking to hear from him saying *that the church didn't come to them, the FN to apologies to ask for forgiveness, but that the FNs had to go to court about that.***

Dr Marie Wilson, Commissioner @ TRC,
"We fed our experiences to our children" = Intergenerational survivors

Rt. Hon. Paul Martin (former Prime Minister of Canada)
"What happened at the Residential schools was the use of Education for cultural genocide"

Audrey Desvents:
"By forgiving the church, by forgiving the abusers and not carrying all of that garbage with us wherever we go, we invest in our own healing.

Isabelle Knockwood:
I am helping other survivors and thats why I'm happy.
"My Happiness is my revenge"

Kim Quinney, TRC Regional Liaison, SK
"Forgiveness is not for the weak, when you forgive you grow you heal, but most of all you free your heart and you free yourself of anger, grief, shame, guilt, blame, because anger is a spiritual sickness, but when you forgive, you actually live.

Education days:
Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair TRC
Reconciliation starts with 3 things "You must watch, you must listen and you must show respect."

Reconciliation:

- respect one another, that reconciliation has to come from the government and the churches and **when it comes from the heart, that is when its gonna mean something to all of us**
- acknowledgement, expressing to be sorry, making amends and taking responsibility
- it is important to the Aboriginal community, that the dialog and conversation is actually not one sided, but that they are part of this conversation. That they are willing to work towards reconciliation, They are the government and the churches, and that they are part of the circle
- **Regret and apology is not enough, the test will be our actions,**
- the country needs to embrace this experience as theirs as well,
- reconciliation needs changes in the relationships

Something I didn't get / I didn't understand this (How can that be?):

In the Ottawa Closing Event they had a Metis and a Inuit speaker that expressed, that they were not part / that they were excluded from the settlement agreement.

Clem Chartier, President, Metis National Council
We are as Metis "… e**xcluded from the settlement agreement**, and therefor excluded from the June 11, 2008 **Apology by Canada**, excluded from the **common experiments payment**, excluded from the **compensation from harms and abuses** inflicted on them, and finally excluded from the mandate of this commission itself.
Why? That is actually my question then as well.
And it seems to me that it makes the Apology and the Reconciliation towards Aboriginal peoples halfhearted.
"**Why** after a historical and unprecedented outpouring of regret from Canada's leaders, from millions of Canadians, **why are the Metis left out?**

William H. Flowers / Inuit community in Labrador
"It distresses me, to hear the government say, **despite the fact, that your experiences were similar to that of the Indian Residential schools**, sorry, you don't count. your grievance are not legitimate. You have to go to court to be heard."
An other lady said:
"Inuit are aboriginals. treated with the same intent of cultural genocide, so the apology should be the same."
= Seems to make sense to me.
==> So do you / anyone (within NAIM) have an explanation for that?
It wasn't given in the parts that I listened to. And I haven't had the time to look into it yet. Thanks!

Sorry, it got a bit longer, but we were given a lot of material to go through :)

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"Serving with First Nations to Reach All Nations"