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Reaction to the TRC Professional Development Material

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I would say at the outset that while I did not learn much new facts, this was an excellent exercise. I am going to write my outcomes and general thoughts relating to the material and in particular the 94 Calls to Action

1. I think it is of upmost importance that we hear the heart's desire behind the 94 Calls to Action, even if the largest number of them do not directly relate to us. My takeaway is that what First Nations people want more than anything else is an acknowledgement of their being the original inhabitants of the land and be shown respect for that. Beyond that they want their stories to be heard by the Church and larger society. This is only reasonable and we should do all we can to listen with patience and compassion as well as ears to hear what we can do better from their perspective.
2. We should do what we can to facilitate educating our constituency by speaking to the history as well as TRC. We should also facilitate avenues for them to tell their own stories such as through the website, NAIM News, speaking in churches, etc.
3. We should remain committed to modeling a compassionate and loving version of Christianity and Christ rather than the one Native people historically experienced. It will take many years to undo the damage of the Residential School experiences as well as other negative interactions. I believe that as we model the Christ of Scriptures, this will happen. I believe NAIM has been doing this for a long time but we must remain committed to a long term effort here. As the newer generations of First Nations children learn about Residential School and the role the Church played in it, they understandably become upset, angry and disenchanted with the Church and Christ. It will only be through the living out of healthy respectful relationships that this dynamic will change. This was driven home recently when Tiffany from Klemtu relayed to us a story about when her daughter came home from school after learning about Residential School and announced "I hate Christians." Tiff's response was that "not all Christians were/are like that. Look at Scott and Karen and the Portland group." That softened her daughter's heart. We will need a lot of this.
4. Above all, we should remain committed to Biblical reconciliation. In particular as found in 2 Corinthians 5. We carry the true message of reconciliation, the message that should have been brought from the beginning. In dealing with the sins of the past, we must not abandon or dilute this message. It's our and their great hope. There are a great many things that we could be involved in but they must never divert us from our Gospel ministry. Social justice is important, very important. But at the end of the day, all the social justice in the world will not change their eternal destiny nor their relationship with God. Only the Gospel of Jesus can do that and we must remain committed and focused on that.

5. We should dance very lightly on cultural issues that we don't agree with. We should be quick to listen and slow to speak (or condemn) as was done all too frequently in the past. Redeem what we can, celebrate what we should, dance lightly on the rest unless necessary to respond to.
6. Finally, pray, pray, pray. There are thousands of reasons why people don't want to come to Christ. The Residential School experience is just one of them. But the human heart will always find reasons to not turn to Christ. Unless the Lord works in First Nations hearts, like any people anywhere, they won't become Jesus Followers.

First Nations people have a lot of valid reasons to be upset with the Church. We need to remember and acknowledge that. But they also have things to celebrate with us. One of the things that amaze me as I've lived among Native people, read and watched the material (and other resources) as well as attending a recent Reconciliation event with Ron is how much First Nations people want the relationship to move forward in a healthy and mutually respectful way. It's more grace than we deserve.

Just my thoughts tonight. I have and will have more later. But I think I'll stop here.