

June 1, 2017

These realities are what first drew me to Native ministry. Particularly heartbreaking for me has always been the church's involvement in what can only be termed atrocities. I believe that as Christians, as members of this same body and part of that church, we do not have the option of sticking our heads in the sand. We do not have the luxury of pretending this did not happen. We have to be willing to do the messy, hard work of acknowledging a painful reality, engaging well as listeners, and then be diligent in finding ways to step into that story. There are many layers of healing and restoration that need to take place: education, socio-political, economics, the list is long....but again the most painful area for me is spiritual. Some of these devastating acts were done in the name of who I know to be a good and loving God. A God whom I believe with all my heart would not have signed His name to a cultural genocide of a people He created with loving care. But that damage has already been done, so we are left to try to gently live out the Gospel as we know it, to be a living example of this "different" Christianity. To live in such a way among our First Nations neighbors that people who have sworn to have nothing to do with this god and his people begin to ask us questions, begin to trust, begin to desire to enter into relationship with us and ultimately engage with faith. A large part of this is being respectful and culturally aware and educated. (Call to Action #60) We need to be aware that historically Native culture and spirituality was shamed, and in our ignorance of things that are different than our own cultural upbringing we need to be careful to not deem "different" as "wrong." Contextualization is a complex undertaking to be done with great humility, no haste, prayer, and Biblical study.

Our other responsibility, in addition to being good neighbors within First Nations communities, is to bring this education to our mainstream churches (Call to Action #59). Every person whom I have had the opportunity to engage with around this has been horrified....I have yet to encounter someone who says "Oh yeah, I think that was right." Yet if we aren't the ones bridging that gap and providing information and education, who will? And who will then walk alongside other Christians trying to figure out how to process this and then decide how they might be able to step into reconciliation, what piece of the puzzle they might have to offer.

I appreciate that the TRC acknowledges that this whole process was initiated by First Nations, this is not white culture doing something "good." This is First Nations fighting hard to be heard by a reluctant majority. I also appreciate the speaker, Dr. Marie Wilson's, comment "How people feel is really only relevant in that it determines how people act." It's easy to just say oh that's too bad and move on with our lives, or to become so focused on our own emotions that we can be of no use to those who actually did live through this. So many are paralyzed. I think she hits the nail on the head "Now that we know, what do we do about it?" It's so easy to say, well I would have never done that and it's not my fault that others did. Her

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recap of high school students is so similar to my own experience of anger at having never been taught and immediate desire to go and educate myself.

I am thankful that Canada has taken these steps, and hope that the country as a whole, and the church in particular, can step into this journey.