

Creating a New Family: A Circle of Conversation on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery



“Creating a New Family”
from *Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin*
(*The Creator’s Sacrifice*)

—Ovide Bighetty, 2002;
copyright © Indian Metis Christian Fellowship

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

—Colossians 1:15-20, NIV

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

—John 17:20-23, NIV

Outline of the report

I. Preface—creating a new family

- A. *Some terms used in this report*
- B. *The origins and mandate of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force*

II. The Doctrine of Christian Discovery: A North American history

III. The Fall, Part 1: Theological dissonance

- A. *The Doctrine of Christian Discovery and the family of God*
- B. *Drinking downstream, turning from fallen thinking*

IV. The Fall, Part 2: A mirror—U.S. CRC history in the Southwest

A. *Archival research*

B. *Historical and settler trauma resulting from the CRC missions in the Southwest (an Indigenous perspective)*

V. The Fall, Part 3: CRC history and the Doctrine of Christian Discovery in Canada

VI. The journey from the Fall toward reconciliation: Building common memory by sharing stories

A. *Voices missing from official narratives*

B. *Additional perspectives*

VII. Reconciling all things

VIII. Recommendations

Appendices

Appendix A: Mandate for the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

Appendix B: Timeline of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery

* * * * *

“We are meant all, all to belong to this family, this human family, God’s Family.”
—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

I. Preface—creating a new family

Jesus, as the firstborn over all creation, lived and died and rose again to create a new, reconciled, and unified family of God—indeed, to reconcile *all things* to himself. This *already, but not yet* promise, is the hope of the world and a call of the church as collaborators with Christ in a broken world. In the course of our work as a task force, we have seen, felt, and struggled deeply with manifestations of brokenness in the long arch of the history—and present reality—that is the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD). As people of Reformed faith, we articulate an understanding of both the depths of sin in the human heart and Christ’s power to reconcile all things. Fully living that articulated theology is a journey—a commitment of generations of the church—to discern and act upon brokenness and sin in our collective history. Therefore, we hope that the reflections and recommendations in this report serve as an invitation to an ongoing circle of conversation, discernment, and action for reconciliation and justice, recognizing that the Doctrine of Christian Discovery has made an impact on us all—Indigenous people and settlers. In this journey of reconciliation, Christ is indeed creating a new family that honors diversity and the need for the healing of broken relationships.

In the pages that follow, we trace the history of the DOCD in North America. The DOCD is part of a thread of systemic evil and *fallen thinking* in church and society. Fallen thinking was present in the dark heritage of colonialism, assimilation, and *cultural genocide*.¹ Fallen thinking accepts the

¹ *Cultural genocide* is the term used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to describe the results of the Indian Residential Schools system in Canada.

historical lies that before the fifteenth-century arrival of Europeans the lands of North America were *terra nullius* (“empty land”) and the people sub-human. Fallen thinking has made settler and majority cultures deaf to the truth and beauty that are alive in Indigenous peoples and cultures, and deaf to the truth that Creator God’s common grace was present with the Peoples of the Land before European missionaries arrived.

A. *Some terms used in this report*

1. Why a circle of conversation?

First of all, this report is written and outlined as a circle of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Reconciliation, and it reflects our journey as a task force. Thus we try in these pages to reflect that journey by incorporating diverse voices and stories. On the title page we begin with Christ’s re-creational mission of reconciliation and unity, calling the church to be a new family. Following that, we provide historical background on the DOCD in North America and then probe, from several perspectives, the Fall and *fallen thinking* in processing the theological dissonances of this history and its ministry implications. We transition out of our Fall section with the telling of stories on the impacts of the DOCD because in coming to know our common story in its full truth, we become a real family. We then return—full circle—to Christ’s call to unity and reconciliation.

But now to a fuller explanation about the importance of the circle. One of the results of the DOCD is broken relationships, misunderstandings, and deafness toward each other. Our task force has been blessed with a diverse mix of Indigenous people, settlers from minority communities, and settlers of European origin. Over the course of our mandate, we have learned to hear each other as kin, as relatives in Christ. But learning to hear and know each other has been a challenge fraught with tension.

Our early agendas as a group were standard fare for a CRCNA study task force: opening in prayer, brief personal updates, focusing in on our tasks, and then closing in prayer. This was a clear-cut linear approach that focused on tasks and deadlines. The early results were, to be charitable, a little flat. In our standard, Euro-settler-defined process, we were not fully hearing all the voices and stories at the table. The result was stagnant momentum and tension among us as a group of imperfect people. Our story began turning around when we stepped away from a process and task orientation and employed a *circle* of conversation in which every voice and story is important and sought out. These circles helped us hear each other, and particularly Indigenous voices, much more clearly. The circle has been for us a powerful tool to begin crossing cultural barriers and uncovering the reality of our historically rooted brokenness. This journey has included raw tensions and, by God’s grace in the circle, growing trust and kinship.

As the CRCNA grapples with the legacy of the DOCD, we expect there will be tension and difficulty. Learning and adopting the practice of “the circle” from our Indigenous members has been critical to the outcome of our task force deliberations. We believe the wider church will also find this to be a wise and useful practice.

2. Why Doctrine of Christian Discovery?

We have chosen to use the term *Doctrine of Christian Discovery* deliberately. The more common term is *Doctrine of Discovery*. Referring to this doctrine as *Christian* discovery is a recognition of its theological and Christian roots. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues explains:

We maintain, that the principle declared in the fifteenth century as the law of Christendom, that discovery gave title to assume sovereignty over, and to govern the unconverted natives of Africa, Asia, and North and South America, has been recognized as a part of the national law [Law of Nations], for nearly four centuries, and that it is now so recognized by every Christian power, in its political department and its judicial.²

Policies of colonialism have undeniable roots in a Christian worldview of fifteenth-century Europe. Using the term *Doctrine of Christian Discovery* reminds us of its foundations in a worldview within Christendom.

3. Vocabulary old and new

The history that we have worked with comes with a staggering array of vocabulary to refer to the people who lived in North America before colonization. Some of the terms we have encountered are *savage*, *Indian*, *Pagan Native*, *Native American*, *First Nations*, *Aboriginal*, *Indigenous*, *People of the Land*. In any quotations that follow, you will see some of this vocabulary. However, in an effort to be as respectful as possible in our writing, we will use the following terms: *Native American*, *Indigenous peoples*, and *Peoples of the Land*, and, where applicable, the legal terms *Tribal* (U.S. law) and *Aboriginal* (Canadian law). Non-Indigenous people in North America are part of a five-century pattern of migration. In recognition of this, throughout this document, we refer to non-Indigenous people as *settlers*.

B. *The origins and mandate of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force*

1. The origins

In June 2010, synod requested the formation of a Creation Stewardship Task Force in response to debates concerning climate change. As this task force was being formed, a number of CRC members and staff from Canada suggested that Indigenous Christian perspectives on creation care would be an important element of any study.

Ultimately the Creation Stewardship Task Force would include scientists, educators, theologians, and an Indigenous person. In the course of their work, the task force was introduced to the Doctrine of Discovery. The question, gently and persistently raised, went something like this:

Why do we—human beings and all created things—find ourselves in growing crisis of environmental degradation and a warming climate? Please consider that it may be, at root, because the dominant cultural and religious values that have shaped our modern world (Western European)—in spite of

² Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Ninth Session. Preliminary study of the impact on Indigenous peoples of the international legal construct known as the Doctrine of Discovery, www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/E.C.19.2010.13%20EN.pdf (accessed 18 June 2015).

having many good results—harbor a fatal flaw: The belief that we—as the highest expression of God’s creation—are called to dominate, use, and “save” all other created things—including people who have not yet seen this light. The papal bulls of the age of exploration that codified the Doctrine of Discovery are the clearest example of this fatal flaw. It is this doctrine that underpins our (the dominant culture’s) attitudes toward and treatment of Indigenous peoples and the earth. It is experienced by Indigenous peoples and by other created things as predatory. Until we confront this flaw, we cannot be transformed into proper stewards of creation.³

Once the task force more clearly understood the potential implications of the Doctrine of Discovery, it included in its report to synod a section briefly describing the doctrine and its effects. But it was clear that a serious analysis of and response to this new information was outside of the task force’s scope. Consequently, the Creation Stewardship Task Force recommended that synod authorize a subsequent task force to more adequately explore this issue. The recommendation passed unanimously by the delegates to Synod 2012.

In September 2012, the Board of Trustees (BOT) approved a mandate and a core group of three persons to select additional members for an appropriate Doctrine of Discovery Task Force. The group was given several years to work and was asked to submit its report for consideration to Synod 2015.

2. The mandate

In summary⁴ form, the task force’s mandate is to “facilitate a discovery process—a learning process of the following questions in order to come to a shared understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery and its consequences.”

The mandate’s specific questions are as follows:

- How and why did the Doctrine of Discovery come to be, and what was the role of the church and European social/cultural attitudes in its creation and propagation?
- What were its principal effects on Indigenous peoples during the age of conquest, particularly in what is now Canada and the United States?
- What, if any, are the continuing effects of the Doctrine of Discovery and its legacies (such as related legal instruments or cultural attitudes) on Indigenous peoples, and do these effects vary in cause and manifestation in different locations in the United States and Canada?
- Has the Doctrine of Discovery and related instruments both expressed and shaped the dominant (European) culture in the United States and Canada and affected our ways of relating and ministering to each other in ways that may not be well understood or acknowledged? If so, how?

³ A summary of Ted Charles’s contributions on the Doctrine of Discovery to the Creation Stewardship Task Force.

⁴ For the full mandate, please see Appendix A.

The mandate continues with suggestions on ways to make its work as participatory as possible by including “testimony from native and aboriginal peoples in the United States and Canada regarding questions posed in the mandate.” The task force was also asked to “take into consideration the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.”

Finally, the task force was asked to “report to the BOT by September 2014,” and then on “to Synod 2015.” The BOT later extended that deadline to 2016.

II. The Doctrine of Christian Discovery: A North American history

This section provides a summary of the history of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD) and its effects and consequences in North America. The doctrine set forth a principle that justified colonization and codified racial hierarchies in the law, placing European, Christian nations in the position of power. The doctrine began with a series of papal bulls that granted dominion of Catholic nations over non-Christian peoples and lands. It evolved as a legal construct alongside colonial history, was encoded in the judiciary of settler nations,⁵ and continues to influence legal and policy decisions today. It provided the intellectual framework that dictated how non-Natives interacted with Indigenous peoples, and it became the basis of international law, effectively legalizing colonization.⁶ We remain mindful that no single experience of the doctrine from a Native perspective exists and that Native peoples have been active participants in their history while living in a context that included the doctrine. We also acknowledge that to analyze the doctrine’s full effects would require scrutinizing the entire history of the Church in a global context (for example, its effects on African slave trade and colonization), which is beyond the scope of this project. Our focus here is limited to the historical dynamics of the doctrine in North America.

A. Origins of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery

The DOCD’s roots spring from centuries of European interactions with racialized “others” through religious conflict. The language of “discovery” in the context of the Americas evolved in a worldview forged in the Crusades, which then evolved into conquest and colonization. Medieval Europe was governed by a number of Christian states under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope. Monarchs went to war with the Pope’s blessing, and papal bulls governed the ways Christian states interacted with non-Christians in these conflicts. The Crusades arguably established a mental framework hierarchizing humanity: Muslim Moors were considered less human than soldiers of Christ. In 1452, Pope Nicolas V, in the papal bull *Dum Diversas*, established the dominion of Christian nations over non-Christian by authorizing Portugal to conquer and enslave “Saracens and pagans and any other unbelievers and enemies of Christ.” Three years later, in *Romanus Pontifex*, he extended this dominion to specific lands and reaffirmed the enslavement

⁵ These include the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, notably the nations that initially refused to sign on to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

⁶ An extended documentation of the legal aspects of this chronology (with full citations) can be found in the literary review by Seth Adema, accessible at www2.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/cpd/Lit%20Review%20final2.pdf.

of non-Christians. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued the *Inter Caetera*, which delineated ownership of newly discovered lands in the Americas and established the sovereignty of Christian nations over those continents and peoples.

Together, these papal bulls ushered in the Age of Imperialism by authorizing the taking of land and labor by Christian nations from non-Christians. By building a theological justification of dominance over “the other,” Westerners easily rationalized the oppression of non-European peoples in the Americas. Ironically, those who developed the doctrine knew so little at that time about the peoples it victimized that they are in no way accurately reflected in the papal bulls.

Defining the Indigenous peoples of North America was one of the most important intellectual projects underlying colonization. Before substantive encounters with Natives, Europeans could follow the ancient Greek tradition, encoded in mythology, of imagining the “other” as a monstrous, nonhuman being (e.g., cyclops, minotaurs, gorgons, sirens). (This derisive othering contrasts with the way many Indigenous peoples tended to view those who were different from themselves: as deities.) Encountering instead very unmonstrous humans raised difficulties for the Europeans: if settlers accepted that the Indigenous peoples were fully human, the logic of discovery would have fallen apart, since all the land in question had already been discovered by Natives.

Europeans relied instead on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD) and the principle of *terra nullius* (Latin for “unused or empty land”), a legal construct that assumed Indigenous peoples occupied the land not in a European sense (ownership) but rather in a way like fish occupy water or birds occupy air. European lawyers, philosophers, and theologians expanded the notion of *terra nullius* to apply to lands not farmed or land ownership not governed according to European standards. This notion ignored the fact that Native cultures comprised complex social, political, and economic structures based on collective ownership of land. Europeans asserted that “pagan” Aboriginals could not hold rights to the land in the same manner as Europeans. This assertion became the origin of the term “Aboriginal Title,” which invariably included fewer rights than the rights of dominion asserted by Western powers.

B. The Doctrine of Christian Discovery in the early colonial period

During the European race for empire, economic motives fueled colonization, and the principles of the papal franchise evolved as a secular tool of land acquisition and possession of laborers in the form of slavery. The doctrine was applied unevenly because it was subject to competing European powers and was challenged by personal encounters between Indigenous peoples and European settlers. The practical implications of the DOCD lay in wait until the European states mustered political, military, economic, and social capital to marginalize Indigenous peoples.

In the meantime, subcultures developed in the fur trading hinterlands that were inconsistent with the rationale of the DOCD. Many European men married Indigenous women following Native rituals and practices (marriage *à la façon du pays*, or “in the custom of the country”). These marital unions were treated without prejudice, causing consternation among European clergy.

Another area of cultural convergence involved *voyageurs*, French-Canadian adventurers who traded in the interior on a seasonal or multiyear basis, and their Indigenous colleagues in the fur trade. The Métis constitute an entire culture based on this dynamic interaction between settler and Indigenous peoples. In the American West, among the Spanish settlers, and on the East Coast, similar interactions with Natives occurred on the margins of the early colonies. Those who interacted with Indigenous peoples on a daily basis recognized fully the humanity of Native peoples, contradicting the assumptions of the DOCD.

Protestant monarchies moving away from Catholic rule retained the intellectual paradigm in which Western religion, civilization, and knowledge were superior to non-Western. King Henry VIII affirmed the DOCD and applied its principles to England's early North American colonization. Nevertheless, early Dutch settlers apparently recognized the rights and humanity of the Haudenosaunee enough to enter into a Two Row Wampum treaty in 1613 based on covenantal principles, solemnized through ceremony, and witnessed by the parties and the Creator. The Two Row Wampum had deep significance in Indigenous-Settler relationships: white belts with two purple rows running parallel, representing two canoes traveling alongside each other, neither interfering with the other. The Dutch did not ultimately honor this treaty, but the Haudenosaunee still do.

The writings of New England Separatists and Puritans and their dealings with the Natives clearly reflect a theology reinforcing the ideologies of the DOCD. Separatist leader William Bradford's journals outline the belief that divine providence ordained their colonialism. He refers to the Natives as "savage barbarians" despite recounting stories of help received from, and a treaty made with, the Wampanoags. The Puritans likewise claimed possession of the land as an inheritance predestined for them. They believed they were a New Testament Israel and the New England colony the New Jerusalem. Puritan leader John Winthrop, in his 1630 speech "A Model of Christian Charity," exhorted his fellow settlers in their colonial project to love God and one another, to be a "city on a hill." He prays that they may follow God's ordinances so that "we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it." He ends by (mis)quoting Deuteronomy, specifically identifying his fellow Puritans with Israel by connecting their voyage across the "vast sea" to Israel's crossing of the Jordan River to enter the promised land: "[if our hearts turn away from God] we shall surely perish out of the good land whither we pass over this vast sea [river] to possess it."

A poignant example of the devastating effects of these beliefs during the Puritan era can be seen in the Pequot War, and specifically in the massacre at Mystic, which historians argue set the pattern for America's approach to Indian relations. In 1637, the British colonial militia, on its way to engage with the Pequot warriors at Pequot Harbor, instead detoured to the settlement at Mystic. While the mostly noncombatant Pequots slept, the British burned their huts and killed 600-700 Pequots as they fled from the flames. The Native allies of the British were so shocked by this bloody slaughter that many of them abandoned the English troops. Captain John Mason, in his account of the war, quotes Psalm 44:1-3: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our Fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in

the times of old: how Thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how Thou did afflict the people and cast them out. . . .” He ends his account by noting, “Thus we may see, how the face of God is set against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. . . .”⁷ Some Christian colonists apparently condemned this violence because Captain John Underhill responded to accusations of brutality in his own narrative:

It may be demanded, Why should you be so furious? Should not Christians have more mercy and compassion? Sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents. Sometimes the case alters, but we will not dispute it now. We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings.

Historian Alfred Cave notes that the Pequot War “cast a long shadow” on U.S. history:

The images of brutal and untrustworthy savages plotting the extermination of those who would do the work of God in the wilderness became a vital part of the mythology of the American frontier. Celebration of victory over Indians as the triumph of light over darkness, civilization over savagery, for many generations our central historical myth, finds its earliest full expression in the contemporary chronicles of this little war.⁸



Figure 1 John Gast, “American Progress” (1872)

In this “mythology,” Native Americans were cast in the role of the biblical Canaanites who were to be destroyed or driven from the promised land. American exceptionalism and the concept of Manifest Destiny grew naturally from Puritan typology and rationalized the violent subjugation of Natives. This worldview extended to other colonial enterprises with long-term effects, most notably, slavery and the slave trade.

C. *The Royal Proclamation of 1763*

As settlement expanded and Europeans continued to rely on Indigenous peoples for daily survival in the colonies, the British government, at the close of the Seven Years (French and Indian) War, issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The proclamation’s purpose, as the British interpreted it, was to secure their acquisitions from the French in the war and to normalize the settlement of the frontier while it reserved preemptive land rights for the British crown. It did this by demarcating a border along the Appalachian Mountains (the “Proclamation Line”) to the west of which no prospectors could acquire Indigenous lands. King George of England claimed exclusive authority in

⁷ John Mason, *A Brief History of the Pequot War* (New York: Kneeland and Green, 1736). E-text digitalcommons.unl.edu/ (accessed 21 July 2015).

⁸ Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 168.

land acquisition and trade with Natives. The Royal Proclamation referred to these lands as “our dominion” and under the protection of the crown. A confederacy of Indigenous nations resisted this new “dominion” in what is known as the Pontiac Rebellion.

Dissatisfied American settlers considered the proclamation a betrayal that surrendered vast tracts of potential settlement land, interfering with their ambitions. From a British perspective, the proclamation helped manage the conflict with Aboriginal nations and the colonies as they moved toward independence. From the colonists’ perspective, however, the Royal Proclamation was so abhorrent that the Declaration of Independence refers to it twice as cause for the revolution, first citing, in the seventh justification, that King George has been “raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands”; and, second, in the final justification, citing how King George’s actions have “excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the *merciless Indian savages*, whose known rule of warfare, is undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions” (emphasis added). The tensions between Britain and the newly formed United States of America relating to the Royal Proclamation were only fully settled in the drawing of borders after the War of 1812. Unsettled, however, were the rights of Indigenous peoples, who remain encoded in the United States’ founding document as “merciless savages.”

Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows argues that the Royal Proclamation was the documentary copy of a treaty between the First Nations of North America and the British Crown. It secured British territories while the First Nations could maintain their sovereignty. Borrows specifically notes that the treaty was sealed by Wampum Belts, the sacred mechanism used in the early 1613 treaty with the Dutch. Many experts argue that the Royal Proclamation was and remains the basis for Aboriginal self-government.

D. Nineteenth-century codification of the doctrine in North American law

In the spirit of the Royal Proclamation, the new United States passed trade and intercourse acts granting the federal government the right to govern all Native American relations. The U.S. Supreme Court specifically encoded the DOCD in a secular court through three decisions between 1823 and 1832 by Supreme Court Justice John Marshall, now termed the “Marshall Trilogy.” The principles of the Marshall Trilogy remain the basis for U.S. Federal Indian policies. In these decisions, Marshall borrowed language from previously articulated Indian policies that included rhetoric about “Indian savagery” to establish the legal framework supporting colonial practices. Although the Supreme Court has recanted other racially charged decisions, this language has persisted. Constant reference to these decisions has led to the problematic assumption that American Indian policy has been a straightforward application of the doctrines set out in the Marshall Trilogy, but the decisions’ inconsistencies and variability in interpretation has come to characterize Indian law in general.

The first and most influential case in the Marshall Trilogy, *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823), codified the notion that the United States inherited the right of discovery from the British and had an absolute right to the land. At stake in the case was whether Piankeshaw Natives had sovereign rights over the land they sold (contrary to the Royal Proclamation) in 1773 and 1775.

The purchasers then ceded this land to the government during various military actions or by treaty. In 1818 the federal government sold some of the lands to defendant William M'Intosh. This sale was contested on the basis that the Piankeshaw did not have title over their land and therefore could not sell it to private parties in the first place. The court found that "discovery gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession."⁹ Another result of this ruling was that it created a single-buyer market, guaranteeing the acquisition of Native American land at the lowest cost.¹⁰

Considering the many personal interests involved in the case, the court viewed its decision as a procedural act, but the case took on a meaning far beyond the imaginings and intent of the court. By codifying the fifteenth-century papal bulls into federal case law, *Johnson v. M'Intosh* became the basis for legal and policy decisions in the United States and Canada and was referenced by the U.S. Supreme Court as recently as 2005 in *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*.¹¹ The case addressed the problem of European claims to land in North America, and it also determined Native American rights to the land and made it possible to eliminate those rights. Asserting the principles of the DOCD transformed Indigenous occupants from owners to tenants, while the U.S. government claimed the rights of a landlord, including the right to eviction. This distinction marginalized Indigenous societies, denied the existence of their natural rights, and contributed to an attempt to eliminate them culturally without waging outright war or explicitly stating government goals.

The state of Georgia acted soon after the decision in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* by passing legislation that culminated in the Indian Removal Act. In 1828, Georgia suspended the rights of the Cherokee under state law and seized their lands in the hope that they would be forced to leave. In 1830, the federal government passed the Indian Removal Act authorizing the U.S. president to negotiate the removal of Native Americans from the Southern states on to federal land west of the Mississippi. These actions were legalized in the subsequent Supreme Court decisions of the Marshall Trilogy.

In 1831, John Marshall's court reinforced the principle of U.S. jurisdiction over Native lands in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* but then tried to mitigate its repercussions in *Worcester v. Georgia* the following year.¹² In *Cherokee*, Marshall found that the Cherokee nation, seeking relief from restrictive Georgia state laws, did not have the jurisdiction to sue as a "foreign" or sovereign nation. He declared them a "domestic dependent nation" and described their relationship to the federal government as a "ward to its guardians." Marshall attempted to mitigate these repercussions in *Worcester v. Georgia* by recognizing Indian nations' sovereignty. This case involved the missionary Samuel

⁹ *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, 21 U.S. 543, 573 (1823, emphasis added).

¹⁰ Details of the case reveal many troubling realities besides the ethnocentrism and racism reflected in the decision. Historical records reveal that power, greed, political rivalries, and religious bigotry all played a part in the decision. See a detailed summary of this matter in the comprehensive literary review by Seth Adema, accessible at www2.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/cpd/Lit%20Review%20final2.pdf.

¹¹ *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, 54 U.S. 197.

¹² *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1, and *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. 515.

Worcester, who was convicted under Georgia law of residing on Cherokee land without a state license. Marshall ruled against Georgia, arguing that the U.S. government had an exclusive relationship with Native Americans and, thus, Georgia could not enforce state laws in Cherokee territory. Neither the state of Georgia nor President Andrew Jackson—nor later settler judiciaries—enforced the decision. In the wake of the Marshall cases came the mass removal of Native Americans from their lands—what many settlers had long desired.

The Marshall cases built on the religious and racial prejudices in the Doctrine of Christian Discovery that dehumanized Indigenous peoples. Biblical imagery continued to be reflected in U.S. legal decisions regarding Native Americans and the land, particularly Old Testament stories of conquest and possession of the land. The legal discourse continued to assert the superiority of the dominant culture and used a “Christian” and “heathen” dichotomy for persuasive purposes.

The contradiction between Christian charity and the oppression and dehumanization that flowed from the Doctrine of Christian Discovery did not go unchallenged. Opposition to the Indian Removal Act was led by Theodore Frelinghuysen in the U. S. Senate, who was criticized for his overtly Christian appeals: “God, in his providence, planted these tribes on this Western continent, so far as we know, before Great Britain herself had a political existence. . . . [They] are justly entitled to a share in the common bounties of a benignant Providence.” In 1833, Native Methodist minister William Apess (Pequot) rebuked the “white man” for the nation’s crimes against Native Americans and African slaves that flowed from the belief in white superiority:

Can you charge the Indians with robbing a nation almost of their whole Continent, and murdering their women and children, and then depriving the remainder of their lawful rights, that nature and God require them to have? And to cap the climax, rob another nation to till their grounds, and welter out their days under the lash with hunger and fatigue under the scorching rays of a burning sun?¹³

Apess asks, “Is it not the case that every body that is not white is treated with contempt and counted as barbarians?”¹⁴

The belief in the inferiority of Indigenous cultures led to attempts not only to deny Indigenous land rights but also to wipe out Indigenous culture through assimilation and attrition. These practices developed alongside legal battles concerning Indigenous rights. In both the United States and Canada, these attempts were facilitated most notoriously through the establishment of Indian boarding schools and legislation designed to force Indigenous cultures to adopt Western practices of land ownership and governance.

From 1820 to the 1970s, Christian missionaries and churches established schools as an outreach to Natives not only in an attempt to facilitate their conversion to Christianity but also to “civilize” Indian children and thus enable their survival in the larger society. In 1879, the U.S. government formally established Indian boarding schools designed to strip Native

¹³ William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man,” in *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings*, ed. Barry O’Connell (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 97.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

children of their culture and educate them according to Western values. Captain Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, succinctly described the goal of these schools when he said, “All the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”¹⁵ Canada followed with amendments to the Indian Act of 1876 that mandated native children to attend Indian Residential Schools run by churches. Native peoples were the first to speak out against the abuses in these schools. In 1900-1902, Zitkala-Ša (Lakota) recounted in a series of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Monthly* the shocking abuse she and other students experienced as a result of assimilationist policies at the Carlisle School. Their experiences are echoed in contemporary stories of survivors of Indian boarding schools. The CRC, through the Board of Heathen Mission, established Rehoboth, its Indian boarding school, in 1903.

The United States and Canada both adopted assimilationist policies targeting the Indigenous cultural practice of common ownership of land in favor of a Western model of private ownership of property. In 1867, the British North America Act (BNA, aka Constitution Act) put “Indians and Lands reserved for Indians” under the control of the federal government, effectively legislating what had been established in U.S. jurisprudence. The goal, as famously expressed by Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, was to “do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion.” In the United States, the General Allotment Act (or Dawes Act) of 1887 was similarly motivated. Senator Henry Dawes, the legislation’s principal promoter, argued that what Native Americans needed was “selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization. Till these people will consent to give up their lands, and divide them among their citizens so that each can own the land he cultivates, they will not make much more progress.”¹⁶ The Dawes Act parceled out land to Native American individuals in a Western model of land ownership, with the remainder being made available for sale to non-Natives. The result was devastating: tribes lost two-thirds of their land and found themselves relegated to a largely non-arable remnant. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has labeled these actions *cultural genocide* because they threatened the very existence of Indigenous nations and caused immeasurable generational trauma.

While Canadian law makes no explicit reference to the DOCD, legislation and later court rulings echo the attitudes inherent in the doctrine. The lack of consistent codification of the DOCD into a legal framework based on interpretation of treaties has contributed to what has been described as “the most uncertain and contentious body of law in Canada.”¹⁷ While Aboriginal treaties were sacred agreements, especially when solemnized with ceremonies, Europeans viewed the treaties as land transfers. The case of *St. Catharine's Milling v. The Queen*, 1888, established the nature of Aboriginal title

¹⁵ Richard Henry Pratt, director of the first U.S. Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, *Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction* (1892) 46. historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/ (accessed 21 July 2015).

¹⁶ Quoted in James Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep: The History of Native Americans* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998), 300.

¹⁷ Ken McNeil, “Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights: What’s the Connection?” *Alberta Law Review*, 36 (1) (1997), 117.

in Canada and the meaning of the treaties in settled areas of British North America. When the British government granted a lumber company license to harvest on reserve crown lands in Treaty No. 3 Territory, the Ontario government objected, arguing that the land belonged to the province. Aboriginal representatives were not present when the case was argued. The British Privy Council ruled that according to the Royal Proclamation, Aboriginal peoples had land rights akin to occupants and that their title existed only “at the pleasure of the crown.” The case narrowed Aboriginal title to exist only on reserve lands. This ran contrary to the spirit and intent of the treaties, which were covenants between sovereign nations, and many First Nations leaders continue to argue that land exchange was never part of the oral negotiations. Unreceptive courts, cultural barriers, and legislation under the Indian Act in Canada that made it illegal for an Aboriginal person to hire a lawyer to challenge the European law until 1951 meant that issues of title did not go before the court until the mid-twentieth century.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Aboriginal title had found its place in European common-law jurisprudence. With the Royal Proclamation and decisions from the Marshall Court and *St. Catharine’s Milling*, Aboriginal title in North America was set. In Canada, the Eurocentric interpretations of the treaties marginalized Indigenous peoples. U.S. westward expansion continued apace, forcibly and violently removing Native Americans from their land and marginalizing them geographically, culturally, and economically. Globally, the norms established in the colonization of the Americas assumed that Indigenous peoples had lesser title and that Euro-American “advancement” took priority.

E. Impact of discovery in twentieth-century law

In the latter half of the twentieth century, as Indigenous peoples increasingly litigated for their rights, Canadian and U.S. courts diverged on significant issues concerning Indigenous land rights. Case law both overturned the logic of discovery set out in the Marshall Court and in *St. Catharine’s Milling* and reinforced the attitudes that supported the DOCD. In *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. United States* (1955), the Tee-Hit-Ton (Tlingit) sued the United States for unlawful harvesting of lumber on traditional lands. The government argued that they had rights to the land based on their treaty with the Emperor of Russia, which stated that “uncivilized tribes will be subject to such laws and regulation that the United States may, from time to time, adopt in regard to aboriginal tribes of that country.”¹⁸ However, no treaty existed between the Tlingit and either Russia or the United States, and in the U.S.-Russian treaty the submission of Indigenous peoples was assumed rather than granted. In justifying the seizure of Tlingit resources, the Supreme Court explained:

Every American schoolboy knows that the savage tribes of this continent were deprived of their ancestral ranges by force and that, even when the Indians ceded millions of acres by treaty in return for blankets, food and trinkets, it was not a sale but the conqueror’s will that deprived them of their land.¹⁹

¹⁸ Quoted in Walter Echo-Hawk, *In the Courts of the Conqueror* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Pub., 2012), 360.

¹⁹ *Tee-Hit-Ton v. United States*, 348 US 272 (1955).

Tee-Hit-Ton was decided a year after *Brown v. Board of Education*, suggesting that while the U.S. courts recognized and struck down the racist logic of “separate but equal,” the racist logic of discovery persisted.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 1978 heard several cases regarding Native American rights and employed nineteenth-century logic explicitly in decisions, especially discovery doctrine. *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* involved the arrest by tribal police officers of two non-Native men. The defendants argued that Native courts had no jurisdiction over non-Native persons. The Supreme Court, citing cases from 1810-1916, decided that according to the DOCD, Native nations do not have legal jurisdiction to try non-Natives because the rights of Natives existed only insofar as they did not interfere with the desires of the higher sovereign, in this case the U.S. government. This decision has been the target of harsh criticism by those who argue that the power to enforce Native law is essential to tribal sovereignty and that the current legal status has allowed non-Natives to break their laws with impunity. The decision has been mitigated by the passage of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, which allows tribal prosecution of non-Natives for domestic violence.

In Canada, the first successful judicial challenge of the DOCD was the 1973 case of *Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, when, following a ninety-year struggle, the Supreme Court acknowledged Aboriginal title that existed prior to colonization.²⁰ Chief Frank Calder and the Nisga’a Nation argued not only that they had title to their lands but also that title was never extinguished. The court found that title existed at the time of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, but they split on the question of title. The first finding overturned *St. Catharine’s Milling* and opened the modern era of land claims. But while *Calder* affirmed that Aboriginal title existed, it assumed that for land rights to exist, patterns of land use had to remain constant from the time of initial contact (referred to as “frozen rights”). The 1990 case of *Regina v. Sparrow* overturned this concept and upheld that Aboriginal traditional practices could remain under treaty rights even under modern forms.

Another positive step for Aboriginal rights in Canada was the landmark case of *Guerin v. the Queen* (1984), which expanded on *Calder* by deciding that Aboriginal rights were legally enforceable against the Crown. This case involved the leasing of Musqueam land by the province for a golf course on Vancouver Island. When the Musqueam became aware of fraud in the lease terms, they sued the province for ignoring their rights based on *Calder*. The court used the case of *Johnson v. M’Intosh* to argue that “Indians have a legal right to occupy and possess certain lands, the ultimate fee to which is in the Crown.”²¹ In a peculiar way, *Guerin* affirmed Aboriginal rights through the DOCD rather than by overturning the doctrine. Although the *Calder* case overturned the DOCD in the interior of British Columbia, the norms established in the DOCD persisted with regard to contested spaces for which treaties existed. More recently, a 2014 case at the Supreme Court of Canada, *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, affirmed that the Tsilhqot’in Nation had legal title to their traditional lands in the interior of British Columbia based on the principles established in the 1973 *Calder* decision.²² While many cases

²⁰ *Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, [1973] S.C.R. 313.

²¹ *Guerin v. the Queen*, [1984] 2 S.C.R. 335.

²² *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia*, [2014] S.C.C. 44.

had been dismissed on procedural grounds, this case represented the first successful defense of Aboriginal title.

The 1984 acknowledgment of Aboriginal title was reversed when the British Columbia Supreme Court decided in favor of the crown in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* in 1997.²³ The case was brought by First Nations (Gixsan and Wet'suwet'en) in the interior of British Columbia when developers began to intrude in their territory. What followed was one of the most lengthy and expensive legal cases in Canadian history. Ultimately the crown reaffirmed the intellectual concepts of discovery: that European patterns of social organization, land use, and property rights were superior to what existed before their arrival and that title exists only "at the pleasure of the crown." The decision was met with outrage and condemnation from both the Native community and legal scholars. The Canadian Supreme Court reversed the decision on the grounds that the oral testimony of the Gixsan and Wet'suwet'en was not given the weight it deserved. Because the Supreme Court could not hear new evidence, it could not resolve the questions before the court, so it ordered a retrial, which has not happened. The Supreme Court left Aboriginal land-rights issues in their previous tenuous position. The court did, however, affirm the value of oral testimony in legal decisions, which ultimately shaped the way that First Nation claims have developed since then.

F. The Doctrine of Discovery today

In the twenty-first century, the DOCD continues to influence legal, intellectual, and social realities across North America. Treaties and legal cases still rely on norms codified in nineteenth-century understandings of discovery. The DOCD is still cited in legal cases, especially concerning land use and title. Most recently, in the 2005 case of *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, Justice Ginsberg used discovery doctrine to justify the sovereignty of the U.S. government in a case involving an Oneida Nation land purchase.²⁴ Though the cases tend to be less dramatic, Canadian common law is also based on the DOCD by reference to the Royal Proclamation, *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, and the reams of litigation that have come from those decisions.

International activism at the United Nations has begun the important work of addressing the legacy of the DOCD and the imperialist practices it facilitated. Action at the international level, specifically the United Nations, is addressing some of the problematic legacies of discovery doctrine. In 2007, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was ratified despite opposition by Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. The UNDRIP affirms,

all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust.²⁵

In 2001, Indigenous peoples globally gained a political voice through the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council on the Rights of

²³ *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010.

²⁴ *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*, 54 U.S. 197.

²⁵ UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Resolution/Adopted by the General Assembly*, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, 2.

Indigenous Peoples. In a June 2006 report to the Special Rapporteur, the Indian Law Resource Center argued that the United States was one of a shrinking number of nations that refused to recognize preexisting land rights—a legacy of the DOCD. In 2012, the special theme for the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was the DOCD and its enduring impact. While the legacies of the DOCD have not been eliminated, the effects are being acknowledged, which is an important first step.

Protests by Indigenous peoples have led some states in the United States and Canada to acknowledge the legacy of the DOCD and issue apologies to Indigenous peoples for colonial practices. Such apologies can only be effective, however, if they include the opportunity for victims to address past wrongs and speak to their collective past.²⁶ An apology is meaningless if it does not fully delineate the offenses and include a call for action to change social and political structures.

In 2008, the Canadian government apologized to Aboriginal peoples for its role in running Residential Schools and for the abuses within that system. This apology was followed by the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to further investigate the experience and legacy of Residential Schools, including providing a safe space for survivors to tell their stories. The apology and the TRC have received mixed reviews, with some affirming their value and others saying that they do not go far enough.

The United States government has also apologized to Native Americans, though few Americans are aware of it. The apology was hidden in the 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations bills and lacks acknowledgment of any specific injustices against Native tribes. Further, the bill concludes with a disclaimer stating that “nothing in this section . . . authorizes or supports any claim against the United States; or serves as a settlement of any claim against the United States.”²⁷ While the apologies of Canada and Australia have garnered considerable attention and commentary through their public expression as part of the TRCs that took place in both countries, the nature of the United States’ buried apology has merely highlighted the absence of reconciliation and demonstrates the need for genuine dialogue.

Finally, a number of churches have responded to the DOCD, affirming their own culpability in the creation and application of the doctrine itself and its legacy in North America. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has denounced the DOCD and calls on churches to examine their own national experiences with the doctrine. In response to this call, the Anglican Church, the Episcopal Church, and the United Church of Christ have offered apologies for colonial oppression and have repudiated the DOCD as “fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent rights that individuals and peoples have received from God.”²⁸ The Roman Catholic Church has not responded to the call to address the legacy of the DOCD, although Pope Francis has offered a general apology for the exploitation of Native peoples. Addressing the DOCD is an important part of

²⁶ The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada reflects this fact.

²⁷ One Hundred Eleventh Congress of the United States of America, “Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010,” 45.

²⁸ General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, A086 R1: Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery (carried) archive.anglican.ca/gs2010/resolutions/a086 (accessed 20 July 2015).

reconciliation in Canada and in the United States. We stand at the edge of a historic precipice, uniquely situated to address the legacy of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery.

III. The Fall, Part 1: Theological dissonance

A. *The Doctrine of Christian Discovery and the family of God* (written by an Indigenous Christian)

“Thus, we come to the conclusion that felt right to us from the beginning: truth is known through conversation.”

—Paul F. Knitter

It is our hope that our journey would be a seeking of our common history as children of the triune Creator. Of course, when anyone embarks on a journey, there are opportunities to explore various rabbit trails that can both enhance and detract from the original journey. In our study of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD) we realized we could not explore or study every thread of the biblical narrative, but our work has been centered on trying to enhance our understanding of our common story as found in Jesus Christ.

Throughout the biblical narrative we witness humankind on a cycle of walking away from God to being pursued by God and drawn back into a closer relationship and fuller understanding of God’s purpose for his created imagebearers. And then our human nature turns us away from God again, and the cycle continues. This has led to many historical moments of trusting our humanness rather than putting our trust in the Creator of heaven and earth. At this point in the story of humankind, God sends his only Son to intercede on our behalf because of the rift in our relationship with the triune Creator.

In Matthew 22:34-40 we are given this simple imperative of how our relationship is to work, not only on a human level but also with all of creation:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

1. Love one another—help one another

These words are the beginning of our common story as imagebearers of God. However, as we tried to create our history and our identities as individuals and nations, our focus became more individualistic rather than on loving our neighbors as ourselves. In the following sections, we have gathered some different thoughts and ideas about how we have come to internalize and live the Doctrine of Christian Discovery today.

The DOCD affected a theological understanding of the created world that the church sought to live out through the imperative found not only in the Gospel of Matthew (22:34-40) but also in how we dealt with all of creation. One area in which the DOCD went horribly wrong was in how the papal bulls assumed that any human being not in Christ Jesus could be seen as less than fully human. This false belief created a power imbalance in the relationship between European settlers and First Peoples of the

lands they sought to inhabit. Parry Stelter, in his book *A Word of Hope for My Aboriginal People*, makes this observation:

As Christians, our whole life and existence is supposed to reflect the grace and unconditional love that God has for us. Yet, when Europeans came, they were so caught up in having their own way, and turning my people into proper Christians, God's greatest commandments got thrown overboard when they landed here.²⁹

Our countries' histories show that we have rejected and ignored and isolated ourselves from the common story we find in the Christian Scriptures. We need to get back to a sense of belonging to a greater whole so that in all we do and say, the name of Jesus is lifted up.

2. How we read and understand a story

One of the fundamental errors of the papal bulls delineating the DOCD was their complete failure to recognize the diversity within creation. Clearly Scripture points to diversity as a gift from the triune Creator, who wants all humankind and the rest of creation to synergize into praise of their maker. Not only have we walked away from God time and time again, we have sought ways to justify our poor treatment of people groups and to abuse and hoard the goods the earth produces for our benefit. In both Canada and the United States of America, our study of the DOCD has shown a power struggle between the First Peoples of the land and the dominant culture enveloped in a greedy arrogance.

The focus of this part of our journey is to understand some possible reasons for this legacy in North America. Walter Brueggemann, in an article titled "The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity," provides a possible explanation for our moving away from a common story to a "me first" attitude. He writes,

The Bible starts out with a liturgy of abundance. Genesis 1 is a song of praise for God's generosity. It tells how well the world is ordered. It keeps saying, "It is good, it is good, it is good, it is very good." It declares that God blesses—that is, endows with vitality—the plants and the animals and the fish and the birds and humankind. And it pictures the creator as saying, "Be fruitful and multiply." In an orgy of fruitfulness, everything in its kind is to multiply the overflowing goodness that pours from God's creator spirit. And as you know, the creation ends in Sabbath. God is so overrun with fruitfulness that God says, "I've got to take a break from all this."³⁰

When European settlers entered this new land of North America (Turtle Island), it was with the promise of great freedom and riches compared to a life they left behind. Upon entering the land, they were greeted in peace by the local inhabitants, and many settlers were taught how to live from the land and receive its bounty. The DOCD provided a mechanism by which the new arrivals began to see themselves as a superior culture and proceeded to articulate a white European gospel. The seeds of greed were growing, and the papal bulls justified action against their hosts thinly veiled in Christian motivations. As the population grew, a false sense of need and desire gathered momentum, and blessings from

²⁹ Parry Stelter, *A Word of Hope for My Aboriginal People* (Word of Hope Ministries, 2014).

³⁰ Walter Brueggemann, "The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity" in *The Christian Century* 116, no. 10 (24 March 1999): 342-347.

God were attainable through hard work and missionary fervor. Again Walter Brueggeman sheds some light on how the church/Christians could make the choices they made in a new land:

Later in Genesis God blesses Abraham, Sarah and their family. God tells them to be a blessing, to bless the people of all nations. Blessing is the force of well-being active in the world, and faith is the awareness that creation is the gift that keeps on giving.³¹

Unfortunately, as we see throughout the book of Exodus, Israel doubted God's provision repeatedly—of food, of water, of protection against enemies (Ex. 16-17; Ps. 95:8-9). Even though God delivered them from their enemies faithfully and supplied them with abundance daily, their first reaction to trouble or scarcity was to grumble against God, failing to trust in his promises. The world's response in fear of such situations is to amass wealth to protect against scarcity and thereby gain power and control over others. Israel followed that pattern and moved away from trust in God's provision despite God's faithfulness over and over to provide for all their needs.

The Doctrine of Discovery comes out of the myth of scarcity and empowers the church and kings and queens to justify the pursuit of more wealth. This pursuit of more *stuff* created around the world a "false need," which was contrary to creation's abundance that is still here today, as God promised it would be. Since the fall, we have sought human ways to hedge our bets against creation's abundance. Our kinship in Jesus has been pushed aside for a more individualistic, self-serving model because we neglect to see the continual abundance that springs forth from creation.

3. Creation groans

In becoming nations of people under the myth of scarcity, part of our nature has led us to abuse the creation. One of the driving factors of our neglect of the relationship between creation and humankind is our greed. We have an insatiable appetite for more and more, and this has caused a deep wound to the land. The Euro-Western world and life view is in direct contrast to that of the Indigenous peoples of North America, where the land is treated in a familial manner. Our people call her mother earth because she provides for and nurtures us, and we can live abundantly. The land was not something we sought to own, but, rather, we understood that our role within creation was to take care of the earth so that all living creatures and plants could thrive. Having Christ's journey to the cross in mind, we as Reformed people believe that all of creation was redeemed by his work on the cross. Christ made himself the servant of all, and greed was not a part of his reconciling creation with his heavenly Father. As followers of Christ Jesus, we are called to reexamine ourselves and our relationship with the earth. In his book *Earthwise*, Calvin B. DeWitt, in chapter 3, titled "A Biblical Perspective on Creation Care," writes,

The Bible's serious treatment of environmental matters should not surprise us. Since God creates and sustains all creation, we should expect the Bible to call us to bring honor to God in creation. We should expect to support

³¹ Ibid., 342.

creation's care and keeping and to encourage us to maintain the integrity of the creation that God repeatedly calls "good" (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Moreover, since the Bible professes Jesus Christ as the one through whom *all things* are reconciled to God (Col.1:20), we should expect it to decry creation's destruction, to call for creation's restoration, and to look forward to the whole of creation's being made right again. And so it does!³²

As DeWitt develops his chapter, he proposes eight biblical principles that help disclose the Bible's powerful environmental message:

1. Earthkeeping: "As the Lord keeps and sustains us, so we must keep and sustain our Lord's creation."
2. Fruitfulness: "We should enjoy but not destroy creation's fruitfulness."
3. Sabbath: "We must provide for creation's sabbath rests."
4. Discipleship: "We must be disciples of Jesus Christ—the Creator, Sustainer, and Reconciler of all things."
5. Kingdom priority: "We must seek first the kingdom of God."
6. Contentment: "We must seek true contentment."
7. Praxis: "We must practice what we believe."
8. Conservancy: "We must return creation's service to us with service of our own."

Our journey to find our collective narrative cannot be outside of creation, since we are woven together from the same dirt that God breathed life into. The story must begin and end in Jesus, and that cannot be limited to a European, Babylonian, Roman, Catholic, or single cultural lens.

4. Hearing different voices

In an attempt to understand our Euro-Western worldview and its effect on North American culture and history, we must listen to different voices that will remind us of the diversity of peoples from an Indigenous perspective. In her chapter in the book *Native and Christian*, Marie Therese Archambault writes these words about how we were evangelized as various Indigenous peoples here on Turtle Island:

Ours is not only a history of oppression. No, it is the history of peoples who lived at least 13,000 years on this continent, by modest estimates, before Columbus arrived. Our People created cultures based upon spiritual beliefs which bound them together in a life of simplicity and balance with each other and with the earth. These cultures were never static; they adapted and changed according to the needs of survival and spirit.

Theirs was not a life of perfection. We do not mean to remember our ancestors as though they were all saints or "noble savages" living in Paradise. They were human beings prone to error as all humans, yet they, like many indigenous people of the earth, founded and lived a balanced way of life. Many of them became persons of great character and dignity.³³

As the church of Christ, we must in all of our diversity seek a way to embrace the diversity of how we know and worship the triune God. Archambault continues:

³² Calvin B. DeWitt, *Earthwise: A Guide to Hopeful Creation Care* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2011), 71-72.

³³ Marie Therese Archambault, "Remember the Sabbath Day," in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 134.

When we read the gospel, we must read it as Native people, for this is who we are. We can no longer try to be what we think the dominant society wants us to be. As Native Catholic people, we must set out with open minds and hearts; then we will encounter Jesus Christ. We must learn to subtract the chauvinism and cultural superiority with which this gospel was often presented to our people. We must, as one author says, “de-colonize” this gospel, which said we must become European in order to become Christian. We have to go beyond the white gospel in order to perceive its truth.³⁴

This has been a struggle for the Indigenous church because of the legacy of the DOCD. One simple question facing the North American church is “Where does the power lie?” We have always assumed Christianity was dominant because it was seen to be true. On the contrary, Christianity was more dominant because it was more powerful than its rivals. Theology was a tool used by the church through instruments like papal bulls to buttress the power claims of those in authority in the name of an all-powerful God. This leads to a question for the church to consider: How can Christians claim to hold the truth when truth itself is seen as an oppressive assertion of power? In contrast to this view, I, Harold Roscher, a Cree from Saddle Lake First Nation in Alberta, Canada, offer this reflection on a Cree theology of reconciliation as an Indigenous answer to the above questions.

I have a creator who loves me and continually seeks me out. He has placed me within the circle of creation along with the animate and inanimate. When I am being the best I can be as an image bearer of the Creator, my role in the circle focuses on Creator first, the human relationship second, and the rest of creation, third. I understand myself to have four components from which I derive a healthy self: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. The seven sacred teachings lead and guide me in my relationships with Creator, humankind, the winged ones, four leggeds, flyers, and the swimmers.

5. Prescription lenses for the journey

The theology of the cross is one way to move our understanding of the DOCD into a journey of reconciliation between European settlers and the First Peoples of North America. The apostle Paul in First and Second Corinthians has to deal with a new church that was struggling with its newfound freedom and power in Christ. We know the Corinthians were coming through a great time of change in their common history of a Greek/Hellenistic worldview into that of a Christian Roman world and life view. Paul argues in his letters to the church that the community of believers must turn its focus to Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. Paul was trying to show the Corinthian church that no matter what the past or the present, Christ’s example remains the same for the believer. Christ’s example is anything but a display of power or superiority; conversely, it is about submission to his Father’s plans for this world. Graham Tomlin offers up these thoughts on the apostle Paul and his work with the Corinthian church to redirect our thought patterns from a them-and-us approach to the study of the DOCD.

Paul’s response centres upon the cross of Christ, as the place where God has revealed his ‘wisdom’, or his ‘characteristic way of working’. As he begins a carefully argued reply in 1:18, he shows that their unity, so easily fractured, is found in the fact that Christ has died for them. Paul was not crucified for them, Christ was. They were baptized not into Paul’s or Apollos’s death,

³⁴ Ibid., 35.

but into Christ's. Their dispute over who baptized whom would 'empty the cross of its power' because it denied the reality of the unity which the cross achieved. The cross stands as the bedrock of the teaching, which gave the church its original identity and unity (15:3).³⁵

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NIV, 1984), Paul drives home the unity of the body of Christ through the analogy of the human body. Verse 12 states, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body." The verse ends with, "So it is with Christ." Paul was teaching a struggling church about how it ought to use its gifts, recognizing that none is superior or lesser but that the cross is the unifying means for us to be reconciled with our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. The cross helps us to deconstruct both our competitiveness and arrogance toward each other as different people groups.

Throughout First and Second Corinthians, Paul asks the church to imitate him in his role as servant (1 Cor. 3:5; 4:1). Paul portrayed the apostolic life as one filled with shame, suffering, and degradation. Paul is trying to teach the church that he is willing to make himself socially weaker so that he might win the weak. The relationship of the church and First Peoples has not worked out according to Paul's imagery of the "whole body, many parts" working in harmony and unity. Instead it has been a power struggle of a dominant culture to lord it over a perceived lesser/weaker, subhuman people.

Graham Tomlin notes that the theology of the cross counters the cultural thirst for power:

The true content of Christian wisdom is not 'knowledge' but 'love': in other words, self-giving towards one's fellow-believers, and especially the poor. It is this pattern of life he recommends to these Christians, namely the way of servanthood, the way of the cross. A theology which begins at the cross is, for Paul, the radical antidote to any religion which is only a thinly veiled copy of a power-seeking culture.³⁶

The DOCD has led us on several rabbit trails over hundreds of years, but just maybe this is a moment when our triune Creator is gathering us together to show the unity and diversity displayed in our common story of Jesus' triumph on the cross. When we have chosen to walk away from the story of the cross and Christ's redeeming work, we have tried to rely on human efforts. Our fallen thinking has led us down the rabbit trails of racial superiority, theological dominance, and the myth of scarcity (God/creation is not supplying my needs, so I had better ensure that I get what I need at all costs) to a place where earthkeeping skills have been found wanting.

The apostle Paul took the theme of mutual care a step further. Our hope should be that we would grow so closely bound together that we actually share the same feelings. When one member suffers, the whole body hurts. If we accept that our common story must conclude with the conviction that we are truly family, it would change many of our attitudes

³⁵ Graham Tomlin, "Theology of the Cross: Subversive Theology for a Postmodern World," Theology Network, www.theologynetwork.org/christian-beliefs/the-cross/theology-of-the-cross--subversive-theology-for-a.htm (accessed 20 July 2015).

³⁶ Ibid.

about ourselves and others in the body of Christ. As Jesus put it, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

B. Drinking downstream, turning from fallen thinking (written by a Euro-Canadian Christian settler to Canada)

“Okay, let me try to lay this out straight for you,” Dan said. “I’m not saying any of this is your fault or even that your grandparents did any of it. I’m saying it happened, and it happened on your people’s watch. You’re the one who benefited from it. It doesn’t matter that you’re way downstream from the actual events. You’re still drinking the water.

“I don’t care if you feel guilty. I just care that you take some responsibility. Responsibility’s about what you do now, not about feeling bad about what happened in the past. You can’t erase the footprints that have already been made. What you’ve got to do is take a close look at those footprints and make sure you’re more careful where you walk in the future.”

—Lakota Elder Dan to settler author Kent Nerburn in *The Wolf at Twilight*³⁷

As Reformed Christians in a circle of conversation about the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, it is important to reflect on the nature of sin and reconciliation. The DOCD, as we have seen, sprang from a worldview that assumed the superiority of European rulers, laws, and ways of worshipping God. As such, it was Eurocentric fallen thinking. The CRCNA and the entire body of Christ in North America *drinks downstream* from that historical reality and its contemporary effects. The distance of years, or a lack of immediate responsibility, does not change the reality that “Dan” points to above: that the corporate sin of the DOCD has lingering effects, and that the church needs to take responsibility for the footprints of brokenness and be more careful where it walks in the future. This exercise of responsibility is a challenging and hopeful journey of reconciliation, of renewing God’s family.

A caveat before we continue: Tracing the sins of colonialism and the DOCD can easily degenerate into smug *hindsight wisdom*. The uncovering of truth in human society is limited by human finitude and sinfulness (fallen thinking). The echoes of dehumanization in the DOCD are coming to light today in the stories of Indigenous peoples. However, even as the church comes to grips with the historical and contemporary reality of these corporate sins, we recognize that sin clouds contemporary perspectives too, and that being *careful where we walk* demands constant vigilance and discernment. Therefore, in our reading and reflecting on some theological issues here, we walk tentatively and in a humble spirit of *semper reformanda*.

1. Common memory

The DOCD is a foundation of the power structures of colonialism and assimilation. As we have just heard in the previous section, the cross of Christ calls us to unity, grace, and hope as imagebearers of our Creator. Indigenous church leaders regularly remind us that *reconciliation is a verb*—that is, it describes an action.³⁸ And Scripture calls us to a ministry

³⁷ Kent Nerburn, *The Wolf at Twilight* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2009), 116-17.

³⁸ Wendy Beauchemin Peterson. www.facebook.com/IndigenousPathways/photos/a.407821749387426.1073741829.404671949702406/471256816377252/?type=1 (accessed 21 July 2015).

of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). Reconciliation is built on knowing our common story in all its terrible and beautiful complexity.

George Erasmus, cochair of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Canada), has said, "Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created."³⁹ The church's unity and community at the foot of the cross include efforts to learn the buried histories from which we *drink downstream*. This is what the Blanket Exercise helps us to do.⁴⁰ This is also why it is important to grapple with the *responsibility of what we do now* that "Dan" talks about.

Historical amnesia is a condition of contemporary Western culture and its idolatry of progress. A society fixated on growth, the future, and the idolatry of progress does not take the time necessary to reflect on lessons from the past. For reconciliation to be real and meaningful we need to know the common stories of our past. A common reaction heard from settler-Canadians who experience Indigenous perspectives on history in the Blanket Exercise is "*I just didn't know.*" Another reaction is summed up in the common statement "*It's in the past; get over it.*" Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, responds:

To those of you who would say, 'It's in the past. Why don't they just get over it?', I would say this: we—and you—are not out of the past yet. Our families were broken apart, and must be rebuilt. Our relationships have been damaged and must be restored. Our spirits have been stolen and must be returned. Our love for life was turned into fear and we must work together now to learn to trust once again.⁴¹

The broken past of North America is visible in the intergenerational effects of colonialism, which are echoes of the DOCD ethics of dehumanization. These lingering effects of corporate sin can span generations. Neal Plantinga explains,

We know that when we sin, we pollute, adulterate and destroy good things. We create matrices and atmospheres of moral evil and bequeath them to our descendants. By habitual practice we let loose a great rolling momentum of moral and spiritual evil across generations. By doing such things, we involve ourselves deeply in what theologians call corruption.⁴²

The DOCD's denial of the humanity of Indigenous peoples in North America most certainly perpetrated profound corruption and injustice. But sinful malaise over the course of generations can become subtle and even unconscious. As Ted Peters observes, "Racial prejudice is an important example of how a curse can be so built into a cultural milieu that its

³⁹ As cited in *The Blanket Exercise* (script), KAIROS, Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (2011), 2. This is a paraphrase of H. Richard Niebuhr in *The Meaning of Revelation* (1967), 115.

⁴⁰ The Blanket Exercise is an interactive educational tool developed by KAIROS, a Canadian ecumenical ministry, and used by the CRCNA to walk participants through the history of relationships between Indigenous peoples and European settlers, with the goal of moving toward reconciliation. See http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_blankets.cfm.

⁴¹ Remarks at the Witnessing the Future Ceremony, Rideau Hall (15 October 2009). See www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/TRC_Chair_Murray_Sinclair_speech.pdf (accessed 21 July 2015).

⁴² Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 26.

purveyors are nearly blind to their own patterns of self-justification and scapegoating.”⁴³ DOCD assumptions of European superiority were a likely root of the belief that *solving the Indian problem* and *saving the backward pagan* would make for a benevolent mission. Because of grace, there was goodwill by many purveyors of that mission, and there were proximate fruits of that mission. But the foundation, Eurocentric fallen thinking, is at the root of the mission’s profound brokenness. The Rev. Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, has said that residential schools were an “example of systemic, institutional evil . . . that swamped the goodness of the individual people involved.”⁴⁴ Bishop MacDonald has also referred to the DOCD as a “moral wound.”⁴⁵ Systemic sins of societies and worldviews may be unrecognized but “exert their pressure regularly and powerfully enough so as to make certain subsequent behaviours predictable.”⁴⁶ Colonialism is one such sin, and its moral wounds of dehumanization and racism, from the blatant to the subtle, are often buried, shared experiences that must be uncovered and addressed by both the oppressed and the oppressor. In particular, the church must wrestle with a dark irony: that considering others less than human has become an internalized and generational moral wound that diminishes our ability to reflect the image of God. Colonialism and the DOCD have left a mark on both Indigenous and settler communities. Therefore, the church must certainly avoid the predictable temptation to absolve itself of responsibility and the need to turn from fallen thinking even as it *drinks downstream*.

We are presented with an extraordinary challenge and beauty in probing God’s call to reconciliation alongside our Indigenous neighbors. Hearing and knowing their voices and perspectives in authentic relationship certainly clarifies truth. For example, Danielle Rowaan, a CRC justice and reconciliation staff worker, asked her friend Violet, an Elder of the Carrier people (Northern British Columbia), what she should tell church people about Indigenous peoples. Violet replied, “Sometimes Native people want to be white. Tell them that they’re made in God’s image.”⁴⁷ Here Violet is naming the internalized effects of the DOCD on Indigenous peoples over generations, and is challenging its arrogance. This is profound theology from the margins. In Violet’s expression of truth, we can see the footprints of the DOCD that consider a people and a culture to be inferior. *Imago Dei* is a rich foundation of the dignity of all people. It is a contrast to the assumptions of superiority in the DOCD. As imagebearers of their Creator, humans share in the responsibilities and privileges of

⁴³ Ted Peters, *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 169.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Joanne Stassen, “Churches face challenge in TRC call to value aboriginal spirituality,” CBC News (24 June 2015). www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/ (accessed 21 July 2015).

⁴⁵ Mark MacDonald, *Decoding the Doctrine of Discovery*, Panel presentation, Ottawa, Ontario (1 June 2015).

⁴⁶ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 63.

⁴⁷ Danielle Rowaan, #LivetheApology. dojustice.crcna.org/article/livetheapology (accessed 29 June 2015).

being stewards and collaborators with Christ. As J. Richard Middleton has put it, “Human imaging of God’s power on earth . . . need[s] to take into account the fact that in the biblical account no human being is granted dominion over another at creation; all equally participate in the image of God.”⁴⁸ Given that all people participate equally in *Imago Dei*, Violet’s truth reveals a need for repentance and a conscious turning away from the fallen worldview of the DOCD.

Turning away from generations of a broken history is by no means simple. It is more than a statement of apology or the repudiation of a historic doctrine. Building common memory means that statements and apologies are not the last word but a catalyst for a prayerful, deep, difficult, *long*, and ultimately liberating journey of reconciliation. This journey “starts with remembering truthfully, condemning wrong deeds, healing inner wounds, releasing wrongdoers from punishment and guilt, repentance and transformation of wrongdoers, and reconciliation between the wronged and the wrongdoers.”⁴⁹ Given the deep implications of DOCD-related brokenness, there are no shortcuts on the journey of reconciliation. The past of the DOCD has not remained in the past; its brutal effects linger. However, for the body of Christ, this challenging journey is one of hope because through mutual respect and unity in Christ, the unified church of Indigenous peoples and settlers can live more fully as a body.

2. Taking responsibility for what we do now

To live more fully as a body, settlers in the church need to follow “Dan’s” advice and *take responsibility for what we do now*. That starts with remembering truthfully that we drink downstream from the DOCD and its dehumanizing effects for oppressed *and* oppressor, and then taking “Violet’s” advice, honoring our Indigenous neighbors as imagebearers of God. Honoring includes discerning what the church has missed and lost in considering Indigenous peoples and cultures to be subhuman and backward, and then working with Indigenous peoples to recover as much of the good as possible. This process of discernment and celebration of Indigenous gifts is critical for the fullness of the body of Christ and the integrity of the gospel in North America. Bishop MacDonald notes, “Theologically, the Doctrine of Discovery has been the handmaid to the idolatrous assumption that God’s presence has been confined to Western Civilization—an idea that has all but destroyed the capacity of the major denominations to grow in Indigenous communities.”⁵⁰ A Euro-superior syncretism has, then, been a stumbling block to the message of the gospel to Indigenous peoples. Therefore, in humility, the church needs common-grace-inspired discernment that honors the fact that God was present in this place before the arrival of Europeans.

The church also needs, with open and learning hearts, to work with Indigenous peoples to reacquire their gifts to church and nation. Indigenous theologian Rev. Dr. Terry LeBlanc explains the hope and possibility

⁴⁸ J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 50-51.

⁴⁹ Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 151.

⁵⁰ Mark MacDonald, “The Gospel Comes to North America,” *First Peoples Theology Journal*, 28, no. 1 (2006): 96.

in reflections on the Prime Minister's Apology to Survivors of Residential Schools (June 11, 2008):

The PM and leaders of the opposition admitted that we were wrong—this raises a counterpoint: Native communities can legitimately say we were right to struggle for our culture and our language. Parliamentary leaders also acknowledged that they robbed the nation of the contribution that Aboriginal people might make—the counterpoint is, again, that Aboriginal people have a contribution to make to this place and nation—we need to do things to ensure that this contribution can be re-acquired. If there was a wrong, there is a right. This needs to move from personal change to collective responsibility at multiple levels.⁵¹

Rejecting the fallen thinking of Euro-superiority includes uncovering, supporting, and celebrating the contribution that Indigenous peoples make to this place and nation *and* the church. This does not mean an altruistic attempt to make space at the church table for Indigenous peoples. It means a new table characterized by Christ's prayer and call for unity in John 17.

Stepping into a journey of reconciliation most certainly includes building relationships and friendships between Indigenous peoples and settlers. The exchange between Danielle and Violet described earlier shows that the learning of truth happens in relationships—in kitchens, cultural interpretive centers, Urban Aboriginal Ministries, on the land, and so on. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada included countless stories of healing, resilience, and forgiveness that are a profound testimony to the church about the nature of reconciliation. Knowing the stories of our Indigenous neighbors is a way to overcome the barriers and suspicions between us.

Relationships will also help set a foundation for new openhearted learning about the gifts of Indigenous peoples for the church. The gospel, as the Word of God, is not confined to one culture's interpretation of it (as Galatians 2:11-21 demonstrates).⁵² There is, therefore, extraordinary opportunity available to the church of Christ, in mutually respectful relationships and circles of dialogue between Indigenous peoples and settlers about contextualization of the gospel, intercultural mission, and creational theology. Together, as imagebearers of Creator God, we can celebrate that the gospel mission flourishes and grows in the creational gift of culture and that it discerns and challenges the brokenness of cultures and relationships. Because we are all imagebearers of God, no one is superior to another. We need each other and the Spirit's guidance to *take responsibility for what we do now* and to live God's call to reconcile all things. May we receive the grace, energy, and persistence to become the unified family of God.

⁵¹ Terry LeBlanc, speech to the Christian Reformed Church in North America's Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee and Committee for Contact with Government in Joint Session, November 27, 2008. Rev. Dr. LeBlanc is the director of the North American Institute of Indigenous Theological Studies.

⁵² In insisting that the Gentile church is not bound by the law, as Jewish Christians claimed they were, Paul can be understood as saying that no one cultural group has status over another in the church. Also, as Mark MacDonald puts it, "A similar respect is seen in the submission of the Spirit's animation of the proclamation of the Word in the various languages of the peoples on the day of Pentecost" (discussion with Mike Hogeterp, 9 July 2015).

IV. The Fall, Part 2: A mirror—U.S. CRC history in the Southwest

To assess the role of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD) on the policies and practices of the CRCNA, the task force conducted interviews and research on missions among Indigenous peoples in the U.S. Southwest, specifically the Navajo and Zuni. Following are the findings of archival research and an Indigenous perspective on that history, specifically the work at Rehoboth.

A. Archival research

The archival research focused on the ways that the church viewed both the land and the people of the land and how those perspectives shaped mission work.⁵³ The CRC's archival record shows that, consistent with DOCD belief in the superiority of European Christians, the church adopted the fallen thinking that the land and the people of the land were theirs to "take." The DOCD distorted the gospel in that it rejected the belief that Christ was sovereign among the Navajo and Zuni before the *bilagáana* (Diné/Navajo word meaning "white man") arrived. The CRC's policies and actions concerning Indigenous peoples of the Southwest were directly shaped by the norms, values, and assumptions common to the DOCD and colonialism, to the detriment of both the people of the land and the *bilagáana* who worked there.

1. CRC mission policy evolution

The nature of CRC mission work was defined by two driving forces: the policies emanating from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the attitudes and priorities of missionaries on the ground in Navajo and Zuni territory. Both of these were inextricably tied to the DOCD worldview of Euro-superiority. The church made policies based on an understanding that they had an inalienable right to expand their church to Navajo and Zuni territory and that until they came there to save the local Indigenous population, the Navajo and Zuni were firmly in the grip of the devil. Therefore, they pursued policies characterized by the goal of assimilation and "civilization" of Indigenous peoples. The missionaries on the ground echoed these attitudes as they responded to immediate concerns and limitations in an effort to pursue these policies. However, to discern the impact of the DOCD on the CRC regarding the mission to the Navajo and Zuni, it is important first to outline how the guiding frameworks developed both at the board level and on the ground.



⁵³ This research was undertaken by Seth Adema at the Christian Reformed Church Archives at Calvin College on 24-29 August 2014.

The CRC mission to the Indigenous peoples of the United States originated in 1888 when the Board of Heathen Missions was founded to carry out the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, specifically to the Indigenous peoples of North America. Article 7 of the Board of Heathen Missions' constitution reads, "The Synod has decided that the Mission work be begun among the Indians and other colored peoples in our land, and preferably in those areas where no other churches nor organizations have labored before."⁵⁴ After a failed attempt to establish a mission in South Dakota—due to the missionary's abrasive personality and the political situation regarding the Sioux peoples during and after the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee—the CRC reevaluated its mission and began a short period of reflection and preparation for a new mission. During this period of reflection, the church remained committed to mission work within the continental United States, although there were voices of protest arguing that mission work to Indigenous peoples could "not be carried out" and would "kill all missionary desire" within the CRC.⁵⁵

This period of reflection ended in 1896 when Reverends Andrew Vander Wagen and Herman Fryling departed to establish a mission in Navajo and Zuni territory. With the purchase of land to establish a mission in Navajo territory, and shortly thereafter to Zuni lands, the church began its first continuously operated mission field. In 1903, the Board of Heathen Missions decided to build a school for Navajo and Zuni children, which they named Rehoboth ("Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land"—Gen. 26:22). A 1950 report explains the reason for pursuing education as a policy was because "it seemed easier to reach the natives through their children than simply to present the gospel to adults, so . . . the children of heathen parents were gathered under Christian teachers and were given . . . an education."⁵⁶ Six children entered the school in 1903. As was common practice in both the United States and Canada, school officials cut the students' hair, replaced their native clothes with Western dress, and replaced their Navajo names with "English" names (because "they did not have good names.")⁵⁷ While the project included a hospital, opened in 1908, this school came to define the mission for the church and for the Indigenous peoples who lived in the territory.

One of the earliest and most persistent problems encountered by the *bilagáana* missionaries was the inability to secure significant attendance at the boarding school. And once students were enrolled in the school, they frequently ran away. Missionaries would travel in "the bush" for days in an effort to recruit students. These hardships were frequently cited in *The Banner* as areas in need of prayer and support. Securing pupils for the school apparently involved coercion: in 1910, when the Indian Agent from Gallup required parental consent for children to attend the school, Rev. Brink complained that this "entirely overthrew our plans, as such

⁵⁴ *Acts of Synod 1888*, 44.

⁵⁵ Protest by T. Keppel, *Acts of Synod 1892*, 22.

⁵⁶ World Missions – Indigenous Mission Policy Report – 1950 (RG 4.9.1, box 1702, folder 7, pp. 40-41.)

⁵⁷ *Acts of Synod 1904*, 74.

has never been required of us before.”⁵⁸ Rev. Bosscher, who served at Rehoboth from 1909 to 1950, was especially troubled by the problem of runaways and absenteeism. In 1921 he complained that retrieving runaways had forced him to cover 500 miles. When contemplating the reason for the chronic problem, he wrote, “I presume they feel like young horses not accustomed to the stable.”⁵⁹ But perhaps the children were simply trying to run home to their families.

Because constructing a school and hospital was a capital-intensive method of mission work, and because of the lack of clear success in converting Navajo and Zuni peoples, CRC members at home and abroad were critical of the mission field. In 1949, Harry Boer criticized the mission in the U.S. Southwest in a pamphlet titled *Our Mission Budget and the Indian Field*. In it Boer lamented that the focus for mission work had shifted from preaching the gospel to providing education and medical services. Himself a missionary to Nigeria, he believed that the success of the mission to secure converts did not justify the capital expense. The following year, a policy report on Indigenous missions also noted that the nature of mission work led to a “Santa Claus policy” by which the church was tolerated only for the financial investment that came with missions.⁶⁰

Most notable about Boer’s pamphlet was that he traced financial problems with the mission to a deeper ill: he saw that the church had not developed Indigenous leadership because of an assumption of cultural superiority, an attitude that finds its most clear expression in the DOCD. In an undated response to Harry Boer titled *Our Indian Missions: Pietistic or Reformed?* and corporately authored by the General Conference of Christian Reformed Missionaries on the Indian Field, CRC missionaries argued that measuring the success of the mission by the number of converts was inappropriate.⁶¹ This document demonstrates an awareness concerning the cultural implications of mission work and the reasons the Navajo and Zuni did not trust missionaries. The authors wrote that the Navajo and Zuni had every reason to be suspicious of the *bilagáana* because of the many different people who have a particular aim for engaging with local Indigenous populations. They wrote, “Exploited, robbed, slaughtered in the past century, once belittled as ‘stupid, dirty, hardhearted’ by those who did not know them . . . is it any wonder that they view with suspicion every white approach?”⁶² While the report maintained the end goal of assimilating the People of the Land into the Christian Reformed Church, it also recognized the cultural reasons that the church had failed in its mission up to that point. In 1950, in response to criticisms of the “Indian Mission Field,” a study commissioned by the Board of Missions was roundly critical of the approach of the New Mexico missions and proposed “the Indigenous Church” as a superior model. This model, which

⁵⁸ Letter to Rev. Beets, 1-23-1910, “Home Missions – Native Americans – Correspondence and Reports of L.P. Brink, Rehoboth School, 1908-1909” (D 4.8.2, box 224, file 4).

⁵⁹ Jacob J. Bosscher, “Missionary Correspondence, 1925, Rehoboth, NM, Superintendent” (D 4.9.2, box 7, folder 6).

⁶⁰ “World Missions – Indigenous Mission Policy Report – 1950” (RG 4.9.1, box 1702, folder 7).

⁶¹ *Our Indian Missions: Pietistic or Reformed?* (undated), 17.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 20.

called for increased use of Indigenous catechists, was adopted in 1953, but over the next several years, synod slowly but steadily moved away from the Native Church model.⁶³ Those within the CRC demonstrated a remarkable awareness regarding the mission field, yet they remained unapologetic in the assimilationist bent to the mission, which they saw as a necessary manifestation of Christianity.

2. CRC views of the land and the people of the land

While missionaries were uniformly motivated by their commitment to the Great Commission, they carried with them a particular view of both the land and the people who lived in the land. Two central themes dominated the ways missionaries discussed the people and the land: cultural superiority and ownership. These cultural narratives show that the Christian Reformed Church viewed their mission through the lens of the DOCD. Therefore, the mission to “spread the Word” became synonymous with the spread of European culture. Put simply, Indigenous cultures were explicitly defined as contrary to the gospel that the church aspired to spread.



One of the most obvious ways that the DOCD shaped the work of the CRC is in the language used to define native peoples. By defining Navajo and Zuni as “pagans,” missionaries used a technical term to define a cultural failure to accept the gospel. The Navajo and Zuni were seen by the *bilagáana* as culturally incapable of accepting the gospel, which is why the goal of assimilation, or “civilizing” the native, was central to the work of the church. This belief is clearly illustrated in the image from the May 22, 1931, issue of *The Banner* under the headline “What Christianity Accomplishes,” showing a “before” photograph of a Navajo man in his traditional clothing and labeled “A PAGAN

INDIAN,” and an “after” photograph of a Navajo family in Western clothing. Individuals were seen as capable of reform, but their culture was not.

The discourse in the writing of missionaries and board members hardened back to that of the DOCD. The use of the term “pagan” was common. For example, Gerrit Vander Meulen reported that the Zuni mission

⁶³ *Acts of Synod 1953*, p. 88. Article 96 of Synod 1954 reversed the policy of the Native Church for New Mexico, and by 1958 an overture by Classis Rocky Mountain moved further away from the Native Church model (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 45; *Acts of Synod 1958*, p. 33).

school was “compromising with heathenism” by allowing students to attend “pagan dances.”⁶⁴ A promotional brochure for Rehoboth School referred to “pagan superstition which holds these primitive people in its grasp.”⁶⁵ A piece written for the thirtieth anniversary of the mission described the Zuni as encumbered by a “pagan system of religious worship and tribal customs, which they can readily use as a whip to keep all members of the tribe in line for their own ceremonies.”⁶⁶ Ironically, the inclusivity of the Zuni religion led one anonymous author to write that the term “Calvinistic Pagan” fit the Zuni because the Zuni religion saw all of life under the dominion of God.⁶⁷ These comments came from diverse sources but maintained the same tone and cultural attitudes.

Similarly, the land itself was often referenced as a battlefield, connecting the mission of the church to convert people to the colonial ambition to subdue and claim the land. Missionary I. Van Dellen, in a letter to the Board of Missions, wrote that the church “should storm the strongholds of Satan in this village and surrounding territories.”⁶⁸ One schoolteacher asked for prayer for “this citadel of Satan,”⁶⁹ and another, on the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone at the Zuni church, spoke of the landscape as central to the spiritual battle, saying, “What our God begins He finishes. We had come, as I said to stay and, if possible, to conquer, the Lord willing. I say to conquer; and what did we find before us at Zuni to conquer? A citadel of Satan.”⁷⁰ The land was envisioned as a spiritual battleground where the forces of Christ and Satan fought in a sacred war. The church explicitly used warfare terminology, especially during the war years of the 1940s; the church’s “territory” at mission posts and Rehoboth School were beachheads, whereas Navajo spaces, such as the hogan, constituted a stronghold of the devil. In 1949, Gerritt Vander Meulen used this analogy to critique the practice of allowing students to return to their home communities for special events, writing, “The battle of the ages is Christ against Satan. Then may we, during the time that they are entrusted to us, permit them to go to Satan’s side and battle against Christ?”⁷¹ A 1948 edition of *The Banner* explicitly compared the mission field to the battlegrounds of WWII.⁷² The cultural divide between the Navajo and Zuni and the *bilagáana* was described in numerous documents as a

⁶⁴ Gerrit Vander Meulen, Letter to the Board, May 31, 1949, “Missionary Correspondence, Papers 1935-50, Zuni, N.Mex. - Maintenance” (D4.9.2, box 93, file 7).

⁶⁵ “The Story of Christine,” Undated, Promotional Material, 1955-1991 (RG 4.9.1, box 1718, folder 4).

⁶⁶ “Thirty Years Among the Zunis,” p. 76, Oct. 11, 1897 to Oct. 11, 1927, Classis of Muskegon, CRC Memorial Edition.

⁶⁷ *Zuni Speaks*, 1953, Promotional Material, 1955-1991 (RG 4.9.1, box 1718, folder 4).

⁶⁸ I. Van Dellen, letter to the Board of Missions, December 9, 1944, “Home Missions – Native Americans – Subject File 692 – Organization of Native Churches, 1940s” (D 4.8.2, box 1316, file 9).

⁶⁹ Rena Vander Woude, Letter to Rev. Evenhouse, March 9, 1954, “Missionary Correspondence, 1950-1964, Zuni Teacher” (RG 4.9.2, box 96, folder 12).

⁷⁰ “Home Missions – Native Americans – Speech by Rev. A. Vander Wagen and B. Sprink - Zuni” (D 4.8.2, box 244, file 3”).

⁷¹ Gerrit Vander Meulen, Letter to the Board, May 31, 1949, “Missionary Correspondence, Papers 1935-50, Zuni, N.Mex. - Maintenance” (D4.9.2, box 93, file 7).

⁷² *The Banner*, September 24, 1948, “Indian and Foreign Missions,” 1133.

spiritual battle between the forces of darkness and light.⁷³ This imagery was used to embolden the church and maintain support for the mission in New Mexico. Within the context of Indigenous-settler relations in North America, the distinction between “spiritual warfare” and “cultural conquest” were muddy and oftentimes indistinguishable.

Parents were viewed as enemies in this spiritual battle because they were considered incapable of assimilation, an attitude with direct parallels across the United States and Canada. For example, in a public lecture in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the problem was explained by contrasting the mission school to the Navajo hogan. Children were kept in school only to a certain age, after which they returned home. The mission agency therefore despaired: “The religious instruction which we have labored to give them is soon lost. In the Hogan it is the old pagan life enforced by deference which the Navajo always shows his elders which crowds out their good principle. . . . Our work thus resolves itself into pouring water into a sieve!”⁷⁴ Thirty years later, a policy statement echoed the same theme, expressing concern that the influence parents held on their children counteracted the educational goals of the church.

Because the church viewed Indigenous culture itself as sinful, assimilation of the People of the Land was seen as the final victory of Christ over Satan. Success was measured in terms of the adoption of Western cultural practices. In celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the mission in New Mexico, Herman Fryling gave the following as evidence of their success as missionaries: “Their natural life has in many respects been so wonderfully changed these past fifty years that you would hardly know the present Indian being a descendant from the Indian fifty years ago.”⁷⁵ Another missionary pointed to changes in funeral rites as evidence of the progress many Navajos were making. Others measured progress by the ability of students to read, write, and speak English. And, as noted above, success was measured in physical appearance: the relinquishing of Indigenous clothing and adoption of Western dress and habits.

U.S. governmental reforms regarding the treatment of Native Americans was met with resistance by the CRC. The Wheeler-Howard Bill (1934), also known as “the Indian Reorganization Act” and colloquially as “the Indian New Deal,” was a modest attempt by John Collier, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to reverse the policy of assimilation and to rectify some of the historic injustices done to Native Americans by assigning greater financial and political sovereignty to Indigenous nations within the United States. In response, in an open letter to Collier titled “Is Our Government Promoting Paganism?” the General Conference of Missionaries of the Christian Reformed Church critiqued the bill on the grounds that all Indigenous practices are spiritual, and therefore the U.S.

⁷³ See “Dear Board Member,” Nov. 8, 1943; see also *The Banner*, July 20, 1906, “The Rehoboth School”; *Sheboygan [Wis.] Press*, Saturday, July 12, 1952, “Navajo Indians Sing in own Tongue at Church on Friday” – “Home Missions – Native Americans – Clippings, 1925, 1952” (D 4-8-2, Box 225, file 3); Applications for mission posts (RG 4.9.2, box 78, folder 2).

⁷⁴ Home Missions, Heathen Missions Executive Committee and Board Minutes, 1920-1921 (RG 4.8.1, box 208, file 4, Lecture – Our Training Schools).

⁷⁵ Speech for Semi-Centennial of Indian Missions, H. Fryling “Home Missions – Native Americans – Semi-Centennial of Indian Missions, 1946” (D 4-8-2, Box 242, file 4).

government would be promoting a “pagan” faith.⁷⁶ The letter ended by imploring Collier to “leave them alone, and they will gradually go where the religion of our forefathers went, where all primitive things go, when replaced by something better.”⁷⁷ This comment echoes the popular belief, with roots in the DOCD, that Indigenous peoples and cultures would inevitably disappear.⁷⁸

Simultaneously, missionaries also viewed the land as a “promised land” for mission work, which lent itself to biblical metaphors of the *bi-lagáana* as Israelites and the Navajo and Zuni as Canaanites.⁷⁹ Missionaries marveled at the foreign landscape, all the while claiming ownership over it. A tract celebrating thirty years of missions to the Zuni read, “You can hardly believe you are still in your own USA. You feel you are in a region where heathenism is still strong.”⁸⁰ The authors connected the foreign quality of the land to the culturally foreign nature of the people; but in pointing out that the land was “in your own USA,” the tract bespoke a sense of ownership of the land that characterized the mission. This sense of ownership is an echo of the American notion of manifest destiny, an outgrowth of the DOCD in the United States.

These attitudes created conflict between both the church and the People of the Land, and between the church and the U.S. government. This played out during an incident at Black Rock in Zuni territory where the CRC aspired to construct a church within the territory of the Zuni people against the wishes of the Zuni tribal council.⁸¹ In October 1937 the Zuni Pueblo government requested the Indian Agent to deny the CRC and the Roman Catholic Church necessary permits to conduct mission work in the territory. Both the CRC and the Catholic Church continued working at the chapel on the territory, against the wishes of the Zuni authorities, so the Zuni took the case to the federal government in protest.⁸² This issue came to a head in November 1941 when the Bureau of Indian Affairs became involved. John Collier, as mediator of the dispute, initially took a position in favor of the Zuni, ruling that the CRC was illegitimately operating in

⁷⁶ An Open Letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier, “Is Our Government Promoting Paganism?” *The Calvin Forum* (July 1936), 269.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁷⁸ Similarly, the Mission Principles Study Committee believed there was no reason to learn the Navajo language because “all Indian languages, including Navajo and Zuni, will in the course of time die out and our language emphasis must be determined in the light of this development, although we do not anticipate this development until the passing of this generation.” (“Home Missions – Native Americans – Summary of the Reactions of Indian General Conference to the Report of the Mission Principles Study Committee,” D 4.8.2, box 243, file 1).

⁷⁹ See: Robert Allen Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today,” in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States*, edited by James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 93-104.

⁸⁰ “Home Missions – Native Americans – Mission Related Booklets, 1909-1934,” (D 4.8.2, box 243, file 4), “Thirty Years Among the Zunis, Oct. 11, 1897 to Oct. 11, 1927,” *Classis of Muskegon*, CRC Memorial Edition, 71.

⁸¹ See “Home Missions – Native Americans – Subject File 645, Correspondence Re: Zuni Land Problem, 1941” (D 4.8.2, box 1315, file 7).

⁸² See letter from Governor of the Zuni Pueblo to John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 22, 1941, in the aforementioned file.

Zuni territory; that is, the government defended Indigenous land rights against the will of the church. A year-long dispute began, and a last minute meeting reversed the decision to favor the CRC.⁸³ Thus, against the wishes of the Zuni peoples, and seemingly against the better judgment of John Collier, the CRC played an integral role in the refusal of Indigenous rights to their land.

Finally, in spite of the assumptions of cultural superiority that typified the history of CRC missions and the frequent conflicts between *bilagáana* and the People of the Land, individual missionaries relied heavily on the work of Indigenous catechists to work as translators and evangelists. *Navajo and Zuni for Christ* noted that thirty individuals worked as interpreters, and while some missionaries who learned the Navajo language served in this capacity, the majority of translators were Indigenous.⁸⁴ L.P. Brink noted the necessity of Indigenous catechists at Synod 1920.⁸⁵ Even though the People of the Land were vital to the success of the mission, Native missionaries were limited in the upward mobility they could achieve, as they were relegated to supporting roles. Churches questioned how much Indigenous students could learn and, by extension, how much responsibility they could handle. Churches doubted the abilities of Indigenous peoples to communicate the gospel. While the reasons for this failure to promote Indigenous peoples to top leadership positions, even after adopting the mission policy of the Indigenous church,⁸⁶ remain difficult to document, an implicit belief in European cultural superiority clearly proliferated within the CRC.

A specific example of the tendency to deny leadership positions to Indigenous peoples can be seen in the case of J.C. Morgan, a translator, missionary, and tribal leader in the Navajo community in the first half of the twentieth century. Morgan was in every way the ideal Navajo in the eyes of the CRC. The 1931 cover of *The Banner* used a photograph of the Morgan family as the illustration of “what Christianity accomplishes.” Morgan converted to Christianity during his boarding school years in Colorado and became a translator for missionary L.P. Brink and worked with him as an “assistant missionary” for thirteen years. While he was already a Christian when Brink met him, CRC publications credited him as being their first convert.

By all accounts, Morgan’s relationship with Brink was fruitful and characterized by mutual respect.⁸⁷ Working at Farmington, Morgan played a central role in spreading the Christian Reformed mission outside the confines of Rehoboth and Zuni territory, often taking the lead as catechist.⁸⁸ When Rev. Brink died, the denomination decided Morgan was not qualified to fill Brink’s position, writing in a letter of explanation, “It

⁸³ John De Korne Letter to George Yff, January 21, 1942, “Home Missions – Native Americans – Subject File 645, correspondence re Zuni Land Problem, 1941 (D 4.8.2., box 1315, file 7).

⁸⁴ John De Korne (ed.). *Navajo and Zuni for Christ: Fifty Years of Indian Missions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian Reformed Board of Missions, 1947), 31-44.

⁸⁵ *Acts of Synod 1920*, 24.

⁸⁶ See text pertaining to note 63.

⁸⁷ *Acts of Synod 1934*, 228.

⁸⁸ *Acts of Synod 1936*, 201.

is not a question of race. It is not a question of color. Instead, it is a question of fitness or qualification.”⁸⁹ Although this letter noted that a Navajo would have advantages in spreading the gospel, the church inspector nevertheless noted, “In my opinion the Indian is not fit for any work where it requires a little responsibility.”⁹⁰ Mrs. Ridders (wife of the Rev. Ridders) was especially critical of Morgan’s response to the situation when she wrote, “Morgan may hold it [this situation] against us eternally, because that is the nature of the Indian, even the Christian Indian, so called.”⁹¹

Morgan eventually left the church and developed an independent congregation, much to the chagrin of the CRC missionaries who hoped to maintain a mission in Farmington.⁹² He later wrote in an editorial for the *Farmington Times Hustler*, “The Navajos contend that the true Christians among the whites and other people will approach heartily and encourage the Indians in accepting this great responsibility of religious work among their own people. Some white missionaries have said that there is no room for an Indian and a white man on a mission field. We wonder if there will be room for both in the kingdom.”⁹³

* * * * *

The experience of the CRC in the U.S. Southwest demonstrates that the cultural ethos fostered by the DOCD was determinative in the life and mission of the church. The impetus of mission work, while inspired by the Great Commission, tied the gospel to culture as much as to faith. Put in other words, *bilagáana* understood that the role of the missionary was to spread their culture, and success was defined in the degree to which Navajo and Zuni peoples appeared Westernized. This then shaped the ways that the church viewed the geography of the Southwest as a promised land and battleground between the forces of light and darkness. The church then defined the combatants in this battle in cultural terms, firmly establishing themselves as the forces of light, and the Navajo and Zuni as working for the forces of darkness. While the *bilagáana* believed that they could convert the Navajo and Zuni and in so doing shift them from enemies to allies, the deeply entrenched attitudes of cultural superiority persisted. These attitudes were foundational to the work and mission of the church and persisted through the history of the mission. These ideas were rarely confronted in the first several decades of the mission work, and when they were (as in the

⁸⁹ “Home Missions – Native Americans – Correspondence and Reports, J.C. Morgan, 1932-43” (D 4-8-2, Box 226, file 8, file 9).

⁹⁰ Report of the Inspection Trip to Mission Field, August 12, 1919, “Home Missions – Native Americans – Inspection Reports and Related Correspondence, 1919” (D 4.8.2, box 225, file 2). Ironically, J.C. Morgan went on to prove his leadership skills as chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council and as a political activist.

⁹¹ Mrs. Ridders to Dr. Beets, Sept. 22, 1937, “Home Missions – Native Americans – Correspondence re Rev. H. Ridders’ work in Shiprock, N.Mex., 1935-1938” (D 4.8.2, box 1309, file 3).

⁹² “Home Missions – Native Americans – Correspondence re Rev. H. Ridders’ work in Shiprock, N.Mex., 1935-1938” (D 4.8.2, box 1309, file 3).

⁹³ *Farmington Times Hustler*, Friday, Feb. 23, 1940, Public Forum, “Home Missions – Native Americans – Jacob C. Morgan Correspondence, 1919-1925” (D 4.8.2, box 1306, file 9).

cases of Harry Boer and J.C. Morgan), the overwhelming response of the CRC was dismissive. The result is that the church continued and continues to be shaped by the Doctrine of Christian Discovery.

B. Historical and settler trauma resulting from the CRC missions in the Southwest (an Indigenous perspective)

The term *historical trauma* articulates the multigenerational emotional, psychological, and interpersonal stressors experienced by members of oppressed and victimized communities. It is commonly used to refer to the problems, challenges, and dissatisfaction prevalent in many Indigenous communities throughout North America. It is trauma that is primarily due to the relocation and cultural genocide resulting from Indian boarding schools run by governments and churches throughout the United States and Canada.

Indian boarding schools, or Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in Canada, were established to remove Indigenous children from their communities as part of official policies of aggressive assimilation into the Western European culture of North America. Many of these schools were run by governments, but a large number of them were also run by churches and denominations, including Quakers, Presbyterians, Methodists, and the Christian Reformed Church. Our Indian boarding school, established in New Mexico, was called Rehoboth.

In the Southwest, one does not need to speak to Navajo and Zuni people for very long before meeting someone who is struggling with historical trauma as a result of attending a boarding school. There are many manifestations of this trauma. Here are a few:

1. Deficiency in parenting skills

When children are taken from their families and raised in a military style boarding school, they miss seeing and experiencing what healthy parental nurturing looks like. Culturally appropriate discipline and guidance from people who know and love you is replaced by strict discipline and rules from people of a foreign culture whose job is to forcibly assimilate you. Our personal experience of being raised is one of the biggest influences in our own ability to parent.

2. Depression and self-hatred

When young children are taken from their homes, placed in a foreign environment, and punished for speaking the only language they know and for practicing the only culture they have been taught, they feel like something is innately wrong with them—something they cannot control or change. Over time, this develops into low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and even self-hatred. The fruit of this can be depression, addictions (such as drugs, alcohol, and gambling), violent behavior, and even suicide.

3. Lack of opportunity to contextualize worship

Christian worship in North America has been highly contextualized for the dominant culture. (If we truly worshiped like Jesus did, we would attend synagogues on Saturday with services in Hebrew.) Most Euro-American church services are on Sunday and feature three-point sermons, organ music, and strict starting and ending times. This makes sense for Euro-American culture. It is not bad. In fact, it is even necessary, as the goal of the early church and the model of Paul and Jesus were not to make

everyone Jewish (Gal. 2) but rather to bring the gospel to the whole world. Unfortunately, the freedom to contextualize worship, so freely enjoyed by people of European descent, has not been passed on to Native American converts to Christianity. Rather, the boarding school experience included praise sung to the music of the piano and organ. When tribal languages were used, they kept the English tunes (as seen in Navajo hymnals). This is problematic because Navajo is a tonal language, and the pronunciation of the words normally sets the tune and dictates the notes. In English, the musical notes can set the tune, and the intonation of the words can adapt accordingly; but in Navajo, changing the intonation of the words can either alter their meaning or render the sounds unintelligible.⁹⁴

When children are punished for speaking their language, the strong ones don't stop using it. They just quit getting caught. So speaking your language becomes something rebellious that you do after the missionary has left the room and the dorm matron has turned off the lights. Practicing your culture becomes something you hide from God rather than something you recognize as a gift. Christianity becomes the "white man's religion," and going to church becomes something you do to please the missionary rather than an act of intimate communion with your Daddy in heaven.

Today a vast majority of the Indian boarding schools throughout North America are closed and even torn down. But Rehoboth is still open. It is still educating Native American children. And it is still financially and spiritually supported by many Christian Reformed churches.

Rehoboth is no longer operating as a boarding school. The jail⁹⁵ has been torn down. The dormitories have been repurposed. The Navajo and Zuni languages are no longer forbidden. And the cultures of both of these tribes is ever so slowly beginning to be respected and even taught in the school.

Over a decade ago, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the establishing of Rehoboth, there was a process of healing and reconciliation that took place. Former students were invited; representatives from the denomination attended, and teachers and staff from both the past and the present participated. Stories were shared. Tears were shed. And apologies were given. People who were present report that it was a powerful and beautiful event. And I am incredibly grateful that at long last the history of the Christian Reformed Church's boarding school was formally and publicly addressed. But as truth and reconciliation projects have taught us, confessions, apologies, and reconciliation must flow out of a sincere and rigorous search for truth. Hearings have not been conducted, and the search for truth has not been completed because not all people have felt safe to share their stories. The extent of the trespasses and their effects have not been fully revealed, acknowledged, or confessed.

The public apologies by leaders of the CRC and the Rehoboth administration were followed by an apology from a Native Christian leader.⁹⁶ While each of these apologies was no doubt sincere, this event was not conclusive;

⁹⁴ This is why, in many Navajo churches, it is not uncommon to read the words out loud as a congregation before singing them. Otherwise, fluent speakers will have no idea what they are singing.

⁹⁵ There was a jail and a range of other government services on the Rehoboth campus.

⁹⁶ <http://www.rcsnm.org/confession.pdf> (accessed 4 August 2015).

nor was it comprehensive.⁹⁷ Apologies for misguided policies and individual mistakes cannot adequately address the trauma characteristic of these boarding schools, which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada goes so far as to label a form of cultural genocide. We are only now learning the extent of the trauma experienced by students, the long-term effects on families, communities, and the church. Many students who suffered abuse at Indian boarding schools are just now gaining the courage and strength to share their stories. They need safe spaces outside of traditional power relationships to come forward and share.

Another layer of trauma is also involved. It is not a new manifestation of the historical trauma experienced by the Native American community but a buried trauma experienced by the perpetrators of injustices. Some have referred to it as “settler’s trauma.” It is a trauma of well-intentioned people who thought they were following God, but in fact were actively participating in an unjust and racist system that was committing cultural genocide against a group of people believed to be inferior and even subhuman.

Settler’s trauma often manifests itself in an inability to honestly look back, a hesitancy to take ownership, and a panicked need to mitigate the guilt. It is a trauma that gives justification and seeks to explain context rather than owning the full burden of the actions. We see this trauma in Adam when confronted by God for eating the forbidden fruit in the garden. We see it in Aaron when confronted by Moses for casting a golden calf for the people of Israel. And we see it in Judas when trying to return the thirty pieces of silver paid to him for his betrayal of Christ. It is a trauma over actions with such devastating and far-reaching consequences that it feels as if the guilt might literally destroy you.

It is a trauma that demands weeping. It is a trauma that takes days, weeks, months, even years to begin to comprehend. It is a trauma over transgressions whose victims are so numerous that it requires almost daily repentance and a continual seeking of forgiveness. It is a trauma that cannot be covered with quick apologies and cheap grace. It is a trauma that requires lament.

In talking with many non-Native CRC people about Rehoboth, I commonly hear acknowledgment followed by the word “but” . . . “it wasn’t all bad.”

- Yes, Rehoboth was a boarding school, *but* . . .
- Yes, students were punished for speaking their languages, *but* . . .
- Yes, children were taken from their homes, *but* . . .
- Yes, the CRC Board of Heathen Missions initiated a lot of pain, *but* . . .

We must understand that “but” represents trauma. And as long as it persists, healing and even forgiveness will elude us. There cannot be a “but.” We cannot spread the guilt. And we cannot seek to justify our actions.

- The CRC was wrong to establish and run a boarding school named Rehoboth; the land the missionaries sought to conquer was not theirs to flourish in.
- It was wrong to punish students for speaking their language.

⁹⁷ Apologies from abused parties seem, at the least, unconventional and questionable. The apology by former students reveals, foremost, their desire to forgive and reconcile. It also reveals their understanding that open hearts are required by both sides in this journey and that “confession alone is not the end.”

- Our denomination was wrong to take children from their homes.
- The CRC Board of Heathen Missions initiated a lot of pain through its dehumanizing view of Native Americans.

The CRC played a part in the historic trauma of Indigenous peoples in the Southwest and, as a result, is itself traumatized. Our path forward toward reconciliation is difficult. We will not reconcile these relationships overnight, for reconciliation is not a one-time event. It has a definite starting point but no definitive ending. Reconciliation begins with a conversation and ends in the living out of the restored relationship. And the doorway to this healing, the entrance to this journey, begins with lament: sorrow for our brokenness and a hope that God has healing in store.

V. The Fall, Part 3: CRC history and the Doctrine of Christian Discovery in Canada

“Verily, the white man’s ways were the best.”
—Duncan Campbell Scott⁹⁸

As section II of this report (“A North American History”) points out, the DOCD legal legacy in Canada is vested in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The assumption of Crown as “protector” of Indigenous peoples has force of law in Canada. Subsequent legal decisions and legislation denied the sovereign nation status of Indigenous groups and turned Indigenous people into wards of the state (via the Indian Act of 1876). The DOCD-related presumptions of the superiority of Christian Europeans over pagan, heathen, and savage Indigenous peoples have characterized much of the history of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada. Rather than addressing the full scope of this impact (in law, public policy, and land rights), we will consider the disturbing example of Indian Residential Schools (IRS).

Indian Residential Schools, Truth and Reconciliation

“In order to educate the children properly we must separate them from their families. Some people may say that this is hard but if we want to civilize them we must do that.”
—Hector Langevan, Minister of Public Works, 1883⁹⁹

Detailed histories of the IRS system reveal the schools as an attempt to assimilate, civilize, and Christianize Indigenous populations in Canada. As the nation state of Canada was being formed in the last half of the nineteenth century, there is evidence of a prevailing assumption among Euro-Canadian leaders that Indigenous cultures were inferior, uncivilized, and in danger of dying. Therefore attempts to force assimilation were understood to be benevolent. “This was the underlying theory of the residential school system.”¹⁰⁰ The Rt. Hon. John A. MacDonald (first Prime Minister of Canada)

⁹⁸ Duncan Campbell Scott, “Charcoal” in *The Circle of Affection* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1947), 213.

⁹⁹ As quoted in Sinclair, et. al., *They Came for the Children*, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Interim Report (2012), 5.

¹⁰⁰ John Raulston Saul, *A Fair Country* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), p. 23.

reflected assumptions of the inferiority of Indigenous peoples and cultures in his arguments for a residential school system in the House of Commons (c. 1868):

When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with his parents who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write.¹⁰¹

Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs 1913-1931, reflected a prevailing assumption that the survival of remaining Indigenous peoples depended on their civilization and assimilation. Therefore, as a lead administrator for Indian Affairs, Campbell Scott advocated intermarriage,¹⁰² education, agricultural pursuits, and prohibition of the practice of Indigenous culture and ceremonies. These efforts, he said, would “continue until there is not a single Indian left in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question and no Indian Department.”¹⁰³

So we see that, in Euro-Canadian cultural assumptions and public policy, Indigenous peoples were considered a problem to be solved by assimilation and the erasing of distinct Indigenous cultural and linguistic identities. Campbell Scott’s maxim, “Verily, the white man’s ways were the best,” certainly reflected a prevailing worldview of Euro-superiority. That worldview was a key foundation to colonialism and European land acquisition in Canada. Residential schools were a key part of Canada’s efforts to address the presumed “Indian problem.”

In the course of our work and learning, the synodical Doctrine of Discovery Task Force was privileged to attend the Edmonton, Alberta, National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).¹⁰⁴ Beginning in 2010, the TRC convened events across Canada to gather and honour the testimony of IRS survivors and their families. Stories of the denigration of Indigenous culture and language, of horrific abuse, of great anger, of courageous resilience, and of extraordinary acts of grace and forgiveness were a regular and powerful part of TRC hearings.

¹⁰¹ Duncan Campbell Scott, Speech from 1868. Library and Archives Canada, Harold Daly fonds, C-006513.

¹⁰² Lisa Salem Wiseman, “Verily, The White Man’s Ways Were The Best”: Duncan Campbell Scott, Native Culture and Assimilation. journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/scl/article/download/8253/9309 (1996, accessed 6 March 2015). “Scott shared the common belief that Native peoples possessed an innate savagery which was transmitted through blood; miscegenation, then, would dilute any undesirable qualities and render the Native peoples more receptive to the ways of civilization,” 121.

¹⁰³ As cited in Sinclair, et. al., 12.

¹⁰⁴ In the course of our time in Edmonton, the task force was blessed to hear Indian Residential Schools survivors’ testimonies and to meet with the TRC’s research director, Paulette Regan. Ms. Regan is author of *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2011), a profound perspective on the need for reconciliation in Canada. Ms. Regan gave Task Force members a thorough sense of the history of the TRC. Regan reflected with us on the role of *providence* in bringing leaders like Phil Fontaine (former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations) into the process in a way that built a profound momentum to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the founding of TRC. This underscores that reconciliation is a providential and deeply spiritual process.

In 1879, the Government of Canada undertook a hasty study of Indian boarding schools in the United States. The result, “Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds,” written by Nicolas Flood Davin, recommended the establishment of residential schools for Indigenous children in a partnership between churches and the government. Davin expected that churches, imbued with missionary fervor, could run schools cheaply. He also expected the schools would undermine Indigenous culture and spirituality, “and it would be wrong . . . to destroy their faith ‘without supplying a better’ one, namely Christianity.”¹⁰⁵

As the IRS system developed, churches took on tasks of assimilation by separating children from their families and communities, forbidding the use of Indigenous languages and culture in school, and advocating the prohibition of traditional cultural practices (“the heathen savage life”).¹⁰⁶ The dehumanizing assumptions and language that were brought to this enterprise created a shadow side to Christian missionary fervour. Patterns of neglect and physical and sexual abuse caused great trauma among students of the schools and were compounded by the forcible separation of Indigenous children from their families, communities, and cultures. The result is that generations of Indigenous children suffered trauma and insecure attachments to their families, communities, and cultures. The ensuing patterns of addiction, poverty, family breakdown, and intergenerational trauma in Indigenous communities are tragic and unsurprising.

In the days immediately preceding the closing events of the TRC (May 31 – June 3, 2015), Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin of the Supreme Court of Canada described the IRS system as “cultural genocide.” The TRC commissioners used the same descriptor in their public statements in the powerful closing events. Genocide, the deliberate extermination of an ethnic group, connotes a systemic evil. Presumptions of European superiority in the DOCD dehumanized Indigenous peoples and made the systemic evil of the IRS system possible.

The body of Christ, as represented by the churches involved in residential schools, has been in the process of coming to grips with the IRS legacy. Rather than providing a comprehensive survey of each of these churches’ actions, we will consider the example of our sister church, the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC).

Beginning in the mid-1980s the PCC became aware of the painful legacy of the residential schools it ran¹⁰⁷ and began a process “to ‘hear and respond’ more sensitively to the agendas of First Nations people.”¹⁰⁸ This led to a deep grappling with the legacy and ultimately to a confession adopted by the PCC General Assembly on June 9, 1994. This statement clearly recognizes the sins of European superiority, colonialism, and “the assumption that what was

¹⁰⁵ As cited in Sinclair, et al., 10.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁷ The PCC ran residential schools for ninety years. Before 1925, the PCC was involved in eleven schools. From 1925-1969 the PCC was responsible for two schools in Birtle, Manitoba, and Kenora, Ontario. Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, *Brief Administrative History of Residential Schools and the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Healing and Reconciliation Efforts* (Presbyterian Church in Canada: Toronto, 2010), 2. presbyterian.ca/?wpdmdl=94 (accessed 21 July 2015).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 5.

not yet moulded in our image was to be discovered and exploited.”¹⁰⁹ This demonstrates that the foundational assumptions of the DOCD had an impact on the practice of Christian mission in the residential schools in Canada.

The Presbyterian confession is one example of statements that have been made by churches and religious orders that ran residential schools. On June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in the House of Commons, offered an apology to survivors of the residential schools. From that place in the highest representative assembly in Canada, the Prime Minister’s words were the words of all Canadians. These confessions and apologies are important seeds of reconciliation that need persistent tending; in other words, they are not the final words. They should signal the beginning of a new relationship and a new direction toward healing and reconciliation. The difficulty is that, in Canadian society, there is ongoing ignorance of the reality of this broken history and deep reluctance to step in the direction of reconciliation. “It’s in the past” or “I didn’t do any of this” are common reactions. We may write off the “Indian problem” as intractable, fail to acknowledge that there is a clear *Settler Problem*, and then ignore the reality of broken relationships. Paulette Regan, the TRC’s research director, explains:

How is it that we know nothing about this history? What does the persistence of such invisibility in the face of the living presence of survivors tell us about our relationship with Indigenous Peoples? What does our historical amnesia reveal about our continuing complicity in denying, erasing, and forgetting this part of our own history as colonizers while pathologizing the colonized? How will Canadians who have so selectively forgotten this “sad chapter in our history”^{*} now undertake to remember it? Will such remembering be truly transformative or simply perpetuate colonial relations? Surely without confronting such difficult questions as part of our own truth telling there can be no reconciliation.¹¹⁰

From 2009-2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission pored over millions of archival documents and interviewed thousands of survivors and intergenerational survivors of the IRS system. The truths revealed have been profound and painful and have stimulated a path of healing for many survivors and their families. The process that led to the TRC—the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement—was the result of IRS survivors’ persistence over the course of decades. The early sharing of their stories was met with derision from churches and government and “a code of silence”¹¹¹ in Indigenous communities. The courageous persistence of survivors in sharing their stories and naming the wrongs made the healing path of the TRC possible. But reconciliation is a long story. A TRC report is not the final chapter. At the closing events of the TRC, it was regularly stated that “this

¹⁰⁹ Presbyterian Church in Canada, Confession of the *Presbyterian Church in Canada* as adopted by General Assembly, June 9, 1994. presbyterian.ca/?wpdmdl=1075 (accessed 21 July 2015).

¹¹⁰ Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2011), 6. ^{*}“Sad chapter in our history” is a quote from Prime Minister Harper’s apology speech.

¹¹¹ Isabelle Knockwood refers to this code of silence in her memoir of the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School titled *Out of the Depths*. Knockwood and other survivors of Shubenacadie, under the leadership of Nora Bernard, initiated the 1995 class action lawsuit that ultimately led to the IRS settlement agreement. The litigation of 1995 was the fruit of survivors’ courageous story sharing and organizing that began after IRS closures started in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

ending is a new beginning” and that reconciliation is a generational project. As the CRCNA reflects on the DOCD and its contemporary effects, it is important to note the long journey of the TRC as we consider response and appropriate action.

The TRC final report and calls to action include significant references to the DOCD. Specifically the TRC calls for the development of a “Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation” (Call to Action 45). A reframed Royal Proclamation would renew the nation-to-nation principles that were the foundations of the covenants of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara 1764.¹¹² The nation-to-nation principles stand in direct contrast to DOCD presumptions of European superiority. The TRC calls for the Government of Canada to “repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*.” In Call to Action 46, the TRC asks faith groups to take similar actions in the development of a Covenant of Reconciliation.

1. The CRC and the TRC

The Christian Reformed Church has followed the TRC closely through the work of our family of justice and reconciliation ministries.¹¹³ CRC follow-up and implementation of TRC recommendations is proceeding in collaboration with ecumenical and Indigenous partners and through regular Canadian ministries’ dialogue and reporting to the Board of Trustees.

Paulette Regan encourages communities of settlers to grapple with difficult questions for the sake of the integrity of the reconciliation journey. With a history of pathologizing the colonized, surely settlers have problems to confront. And surely the settler problem is rooted in the DOCD-related assumption that “the white man’s ways were the best.” The IRS legacy makes clear that there are questions about churches’ interactions with Indigenous peoples that need to be discussed among the whole body of Christ in Canada: Have we assumed that our ways—rooted in Western European Christianity—are superior to Indigenous ways of knowing and being? Have we, in reflections and actions on “the Indian problem,” been conscious of a settler problem and of fallen thinking in ourselves?

The Christian Reformed churches in Canada grew in the post-World War II era and did not participate in the operation of residential schools with the Canadian government. Nevertheless, we have been reflecting on *our* settler problem: on June 23, 2012, the director of Canadian ministries, Bruce Adema, said the following in an “Expression of Reconciliation” at the Truth and Reconciliation National Event in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: “As members of the body of Christ in Canada, we confess that the sins of assimilation and paternalism in Indian Residential Schools, and in wider government policy, are ours as the Christian Reformed Church.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² The TRC is polite and clever in its subtlety here. A new Royal Proclamation would, presumably, be a *de facto* questioning of the presumptions of Crown sovereignty that evolved in the implementation of the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

¹¹³ Centre for Public Dialogue, Canadian Aboriginal Ministries, the Office of Race Relations, and the Office of Social Justice. Staff and committee members from these offices have participated in, and organized congregational engagement in, TRC-related events.

¹¹⁴ “CRC Offers Expression of Reconciliation,” Christian Reformed Church, 23 June 2012. www.reformingrelationships.ca/?q=content/crc-offers-expression-reconciliation (accessed 22 July 2015).

In addition, on June 1, 2015, Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda and Board of Trustees of the CRCNA chair Kathy Vandergrift presented a Commitment to Action for Reconciliation at the closing ceremonies of the TRC. Following is an excerpt from that Commitment to Action:

In the stories, the tears, and the resilience of survivors, we have learned that all people in Canada “drink downstream” from the hurt of residential schools and the wider sins of colonialism. This history affects the health of the stream that all drink from today. We have been honoured to witness the expressions of truth in the TRC, and in them have seen a sacred momentum of reconciliation and hope. Because of this hope, and with the help of our Indigenous neighbours and Creator God, we are committed to turning from the systemic evils behind colonialism and living into a sacred call of unity and reconciliation.¹¹⁵



Figure 2 Shannon Perez, Darren Roorda, and Kathy Vandergrift present Action for Reconciliation at Ottawa TRC

These CRC commitments to a journey of justice and reconciliation follow long-term ecumenical work on Indigenous justice and participation in the dialogue and signing of the *New Covenant* declarations (1987, 2007), which call for a renewed commitment to action on Canada’s covenant with Indigenous peoples. Members of CRC congregations in Canada have recognized a need for a journey of healing, justice, and reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbors. We, the church, are asking questions of ourselves—as settlers. Living into those questions and into the commitments we have made requires discernment of our history of mission with Indigenous peoples.

It must be noted that the time and context of the development of the CRC within Canada (largely post-World War II) is distinct from the founding of the CRC within the United States and its mission to Navajo and Zuni people in the Southwest. The founding of those U.S. missions occurred around the same time as the development of residential schools

¹¹⁵ “Action for Reconciliation,” Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, June 1, 2012. www2.crcna.org/site_upload/uploads/cpd/Action_for_Reconciliation_Ottawa2015.pdf (accessed 22 July 2015).

in Canada, so it is not particularly surprising to see the use of language like *pagan* and the marks of colonial mission in the CRC from the late 1800s to the middle of the twentieth century. Canadian CRC ministries to Indigenous peoples grew up at least seventy years after the Southwest missions and therefore had a different character and approach. Our discussion of the Canadian ministry context should not, therefore, be read as an equal historical comparison.

2. Urban Aboriginal Ministry Centres

At its inaugural meeting in 1968, the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) began deliberations on “Indian Missions.” The grounds listed in an overture requesting study of the feasibility of “mission work among the Indians of Canada” included “our responsibility toward the original inhabitants of Canada.”¹¹⁶ This sentiment echoes the sense of responsibility expressed by early CRC missionaries to the southwestern United States.¹¹⁷

In response to the 1968 overture, the CCRCC formed a committee on the topic of Indian Missions that rendered a detailed report in 1973.¹¹⁸ That report’s orientation section begins by stating a fact: “Indians are people—creatures and image bearers of God.”¹¹⁹ This is certainly a marked contrast to the dehumanizing motifs common to the DOCD and the derogatory language (“pagan,” “savage”) common to the founding of the residential schools. The 1973 report does not address missiological issues in any great detail, but its two “facts to keep in mind” are worth noting:

- “Their (Indigenous people’s) philosophy of life and religious expression will be different.”¹²⁰ This statement indicates openness to diverse, and perhaps non-European, religious expression. This attitude would be tested later (mid-1990s) in debates about syncretism.
- “They have a long history of defeat and discrimination and segregation. They are presently living in poverty under an atmosphere of fear and despair and even hatred toward white people.”¹²¹ This was a contemporary expression of “the Indian problem,” and certainly a common pathologizing of *the colonized*.

The process of the 1973 report included consultation with CRC representatives from the Navajo Nation and Gallup, New Mexico. It is striking that both Jackson Yazzie (Navajo community minister in Denver) and Alfred Mulder (Euro-American pastor in Gallup) encouraged the Canadians to see to it that Indigenous leaders develop the ministry rather than fitting into a Euro-designed structure. Later, as the recruitment process

¹¹⁶ CCRCC, *Acts of Council 1968*, 30-31.

¹¹⁷ In his reflections on the founding of the CRC Navajo Mission, Rev. Herman Fryling stated, “Quite a number of people felt we owed it to the natives of our country to carry the light of the gospel to them.” Christian Reformed Board of Missions, *Navaho and Zuni for Christ*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1947). 16.

¹¹⁸ Report: Ministry Among Indians in Canada. CCRCC, *Acts of Council 1973*, supplement 7, Article 34, 37ff.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹²¹ Ibid.

for an Indigenous leader floundered, recommendations for Indigenous leadership and theological training were made.¹²²

In early 1974, Henk DeBruyn began establishing a ministry in the urban core of Winnipeg, Manitoba, that was intended “to proclaim Christ in Word and Deed to the Indians and Métis in Canada. It shall be the aim of this ministry under the lead of the Holy Spirit to encourage the development of a working and worshipping community.”¹²³ Similar efforts followed later in Regina, Saskatchewan (beginning in 1978 with Harry Kuperus), and in Edmonton, Alberta (beginning in 1991 with John Stellingwerf). George Fernhout, one of the original leaders of the National Committee on Indian Ministry, explained that the choice for an urban concentration was made based on a needs assessment: that urbanization was one of the most significant issues facing Indigenous people in those days.¹²⁴

These three Urban Aboriginal Ministries (UAMs) have each evolved in a unique way as working and worshipping communities. Diverse programming includes or has included social and cultural support, employment services, health-fitness-nutrition, addictions services, pastoral care, drop-in centers, food banks, John schools, worship and prayer, Christian Indigenous ceremonies, microenterprise development, antiviolence, and encouragement of Indigenous artistic expression. These unique ministries have done remarkable work that is noticed and appreciated by Indigenous and community leaders.¹²⁵

It is important to note, however, that the UAMs sometimes struggle with maintaining connections with mainstream CRC congregations. Early in the history of the Winnipeg ministry, it was noted that “there has not been very much input . . . from the (CRC) churches in the ministry. This was intentionally not encouraged. It is our aim to establish an Indian Community without much white input.”¹²⁶ This ministry choice reflected advice given to the feasibility committee that reported in 1973. Rev. Alfred Mulder of Bethany CRC in Gallup, New Mexico, said of Indigenous Christians, “They need a place where they can escape from the white man’s world and a place where they can put things together. The Christian Reformed community has taken the view of the dominant society, into which the Indian does not fit.”¹²⁷ While these intentions were charitable—designed to shield Indigenous people from the potential for domination by the mainstream denomination—it is fair to say that it had the negative impact of creating a distance between the UAMs and

¹²² Ibid., 50, 52.

¹²³ Ibid., 47.

¹²⁴ George Fernhout, interview with the task force.

¹²⁵ In a Parliamentary dialogue with the CRC’s Committee for Contact with the Government, former Winnipeg Member of Parliament Bill Blaikie made appreciative note of the work of Henk De Bruyn and Kildonan CRC (Winnipeg) Pastor Arie VanEek to establish the Indian Family Center (February 17, 2005 – CCG Archives).

¹²⁶ CCRCC, *Acts of Council* 1976, 67.

¹²⁷ CCRCC, *Acts of Council* 1973, 41. Harry Kuperus, the first staff person of Indian Métis Christian Fellowship in Regina, noted the same dynamic: “We decided that it would be a community not dependent on the white CRC” (interview with Harry and Jan Kuperus, December 2014).

local churches. Distance can certainly lead to misunderstanding and suspicion. It is possible that the obscurity of the UAMs in the CRC led to controversy. Syncretism questions are a case in point.

3. The syncretism question

The CRC's Urban Aboriginal Ministries are spaces of welcome and healing for Indigenous peoples. This work includes programming that is culturally sensitive, incorporating elements of Indigenous ceremonial practices, celebrations, and artistic expression. Visitors to these ministries today may well experience smudging prayers¹²⁸ and drumming that celebrates Creator and the Jesus Way. These ministries have striven to articulate and live a gospel that is contextualized to their communities.¹²⁹

The integration of gospel and culture is a concept that has challenged missiologists and missionaries throughout church history. This is certainly a question that requires great discernment and humility. The conflation of one cultural expression of the gospel with ultimate truth is certainly a danger to be avoided.

UAM efforts to live a gospel that is contextualized have been a matter of some controversy in the CRC congregations in Canada. For instance, in the 1990s, churches in Classis Alberta North raised concerns about the use of "traditional and cultural elements with religious overtones, symbolism, or significance" in the UAMs.¹³⁰ Church communications with the CCRCC and Classis Alberta North converged in Overture 5 to Synod 1999, which notes "sufficient concern among the churches with regard to these practices to warrant an investigation of the compatibility of these practices with the Christian faith," and a lack of satisfactory answers from the CCRCC system on "questions about the issue of syncretism."¹³¹ This overture led to a significant CRCNA Cross-Cultural Ministry Forum in June 2000 in Edmonton.

The report of the 2000 Cross-Cultural Ministry Forum chronicles sessions that were full of tension. For example,

- Dale Missyabit, an Indigenous participant, reported that "he felt his heart had been 'taken out and stamped on' as others questioned how his Native heritage fit with Christianity."¹³² Dale also led a public

¹²⁸ "The Smudge is a purification ritual, where we burn sweet grass or sage or another sacred medicine. As the smoke rises we waft the smoke over our bodies symbolically cleansing ourselves. We do this to prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies to come before our Creator." As described by Harold Roscher, director of Edmonton Native Healing Centre.

¹²⁹ A beautiful example of these Christian Indigenous expressions of faith has come to the CRC in the remarkable artwork of Ovide Bighetty. Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina commissioned Bighetty to develop four series of paintings that integrate Christian and Indigenous themes in a beautiful Woodland Cree style. The series *Kisemanito Pakatinasuwin* (*The Creator's Sacrifice*) has toured Canada (2010-15) in an effort to draw churches into relationship with Indigenous peoples. This tour (known as reForming Relationships) has stopped in communities across the country, including Synod 2012 (Ancaster, Ontario), and has coincided with TRC National Events in three cities. Ovide's beautiful work in *Kisemanito Pakatinasuwin* has been a testimony to the Creator's truth and beauty in Indigenous culture and has been a blessing to the communities in which it has been displayed.

¹³⁰ CRCNA, *Agenda for Synod 1999*, 394.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² CRCNA, *Hearts Exchanged: A report to the Churches reflecting on the Cross-Cultural Ministry Forum*. (Edmonton: June, 2000), 7.

- gesture of reconciliation by inviting Phil Stel, a pastor with whom he had deep disagreements, to stand with him and share Scripture.
- “Speakers from Minority Cultures lamented the fear they felt in the room, while their questioners called for ‘a return to scripture’ and for ‘tough love.’”¹³³
 - In the course of a circle that included a smudge, “fear and disapproval were present in the room, especially during the smudging ceremony, when a few participants walked out.”¹³⁴

In this context of tension, participants were encouraged to approach cross-cultural mission as an “exchange of hearts.” Indigenous church leader Ray Aldred spoke of the lessons his own denomination had learned regarding Indigenous ministry and encouraged the conference attendees to “go to other cultures with the attitude of a learner, not the attitude of superiority.”¹³⁵ This exchange of hearts, in contrast to an attitude of superiority, is a celebration of the gifts of many cultures in the life of the church. Stephanie Baker-Collins, an appointed observer of the conference, encouraged “accountability to the circle, through the process of dialogue, and accountability to a hierarchical structure,” saying, “It is in this area of freedom/trust that I think we will need to work further to understand each other.”¹³⁶ Trust and freedom allow for an exchange of hearts and the transformation of the church into a diverse and unified body. Henk DeBruyn, the founding director of the Winnipeg Indian Family Centre, reflected on his hopes for that transformational journey:

In Scripture, I found that if I want to see the power of God, I must be among people who don’t have power. I saw that the renewal of the church—even the New Testament church—always came from the outside, always came through a conflict situation. So with a disillusioned heart and hurt, it was my hope that participants of this Native ministry would be instruments of healing in the CRC. Dale’s approach to Phil said it for me.* That was the fulfillment of my vision—of God’s vision. To see people who have been criticized reach out to those who criticize and say, “Teach me,” to me that is the work of the Spirit, that is the work of healing, that is the model for healing for the church.¹³⁷

This conference report most certainly chronicles deep tensions and suspicions around cultural contextualization of the gospel related to the work of the UAMs in Canada. The sources of such tension and suspicion are complex, but it is plausible that the deeply rooted presumptions of European superiority in the DOCD reach into the religious experience of postcolonial contemporary Canada, including that of the CRC. This settler problem, left unaddressed, hinders an exchange of hearts and unity in the body of Christ. Confronting assumptions of superiority that weaken the body is at the core a heart issue for confession, repentance, and transformation.

¹³³ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 7. *See text pertaining to note 132.

VI. The journey from the Fall toward reconciliation: Building common memory by sharing stories

“We tell stories to remember who we are.”
—Elder Rev. Stan McKay, Cree¹³⁸

As has been stated, reconciliation is contingent on “knowing our common story in all its terrible and beautiful complexity.” The Doctrine of Christian Discovery and its heritage of systemic racism has buried important stories and diminished the voice and humanity of Indigenous peoples for generations. *Shalom* is incomplete when the voices of our Indigenous neighbors are missing or faint and when injustice persists. Reconciliation can only be realized if we know the extent of the trespasses against the oppressed and marginalized—that is, the *truth* of the effects of the DOCD. Therefore, we believe it is important to share stories, beautiful ones and hard ones, to know more fully who we are as a family and to work for the unity of the body of Christ.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided survivors of Indian Residential Schools the opportunity to share their stories. Video archives of much of this testimony are available.¹³⁹ In the United States the BlueSkies Foundation and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition have likewise provided forums for former boarding school students to tell their stories, which have been recorded and archived. The extraordinary courage of these former students has communicated to other survivors that they are not alone and that they, too, can seek healing.

Hearing the stories of Indigenous people and honoring their lived experience is a key part of the reconciliation journey. It is also important for non-Indigenous settler people to reflect on their stories of living and *drinking downstream* from the DOCD and its heritage. In honestly sharing about our common and broken past, we build “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3) and come to know each other more deeply as God’s family.

A. *Voices missing from official narratives*

Over the course of our work, we reached out to many whose voices we felt were missing from official narratives. Some people were reluctant to tell their stories, but we hope and pray that one day they will feel safe enough to speak. We know their stories are essential for our journey of reconciliation. Others graciously agreed to share their stories publicly for the first time. We are humbled and honored.

Editor’s note: The introductory letter that precedes this report explains a decision by the Board of Trustees to remove a story from this section of the report. For pastoral reasons, a story from a former dormitory resident and student at Rehoboth Christian School is being followed up through other means at this time; consistent with synodical procedures, it will be shared with the advisory committee that reviews this report at Synod 2016 to

¹³⁸ Stan McKay, in the lecture “Cree Perspectives on Covenants of Peace and Justice,” Canadian School of Peacebuilding, June 2011. Rev. McKay was the first Indigenous Moderator of the United Church of Canada.

¹³⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=513 (accessed 26 July 2015).

contribute to understanding how the troubling history of boarding schools relates to the Doctrine of Discovery and the CRCNA.

1. SUSIE SILVERSMITH

Susie Silversmith, Diné (Navajo), lives in Denver, Colorado, where she and her family are long-term members and leaders of the Denver Christian Indian Center, a CRC ministry. Her boarding school experience shares many characteristics with those documented by the TRC, the BlueSkies Foundation, and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. The prelude to her story includes the reminder: "In 1879, the Indian Boarding School system was founded and the taking away of our identities began. The only good Indian is a dead one, they said. Kill the Indian in him and save the man. Strip children of their culture and remove them from the influence of their families and nations."

From the rising of the sun to the place of its setting, people may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

—Isaiah 45:6, NIV

Pay attention, my child, to what I say. Listen carefully. Don't lose sight of my words. Let them penetrate deep within your heart, for they bring life and radiant health to anyone who discovers their meaning.

—Proverbs 4:20-22, NLT

When I was born, my parents buried my umbilical cord in the ground in the sheep corral. They believed that wherever I traveled in life, I would come home someday.

My name is Susie Silversmith. I was born at Sage Memorial Hospital on May 7, 1955. I am a member of the Navajo Nation. My first clan, coming from my mother, is Tsinaajinii (Black Streak Wood), and my father's clan is Honaghaahnii (One who walks around). My *cheis* (maternal grandparents) are Totsohnii (Big Water). My *nalis* (paternal grandparents) are Todichiinii (Bitter Water). My mother is from Klagetoh, Arizona, and my father is from Cross Canyon, Arizona. I am married to Richard who is Toaheedliinii (Water flows together), born into the Kinyaa'aanii (Tower-ing House) from Mariano Lake, New Mexico. His mother is from Mariano Lake, and his father is from Pinedale, New Mexico.

I had seven sisters and four brothers. I remember bits and pieces of being with my parents at a young age. I learned the Navajo language and prayed in the early mornings. Many of my parents' teachings stayed with me, even though I was taught to get rid of them. I remembered my parents telling me, "Never forget who you are as a Navajo/Diné person. Know your clan, so you don't marry someone of the same clan." As young as I was, I heard stories, chanting, singing, and teachings of my parents. They taught me about balance and harmony, taking care of Mother Earth, and to understand the importance of the nature around me. Chant songs, drumming, and rattles are music to my ears. Navajo is my heart language.

The *bilagáana* (white people) gave my family English names and told them to abandon their Navajo names. We received the last name "Clark," but my last name was later changed twice. I was named "Susie" after the nurse at the hospital. I, along with my parents and grandparents, was given a census number by the U.S. government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). I call it my prisoner number. I was put on the Navajo

reservation—my prison. In 1961, when I was six years old, my parents were ordered by the U.S. government and the BIA to put me in Kinlichee Boarding School. My father took me there and left me crying after him. I remember crying all the time. I was in Kinlichee for six years, Toyey Boarding School for two years, and Fort Wingate Boarding School for one year.

When we arrived at boarding school, we were assigned a number, were given baths, and were dressed in identical clothes and shoes. I was stripped of my Navajo clothes and moccasins, which had been sewn for me by my mother, and they were thrown away. Our hair was cut above our ears with bangs. I looked terrible. It was my first haircut. I cried when I saw my long hair on the floor. Tears still well up in my eyes when I remember the way it lay on the floor. School officials used our newly cut hair as a handle to jerk us around and put us where they wanted, like standing at attention or in line for chow or school. Sometimes they would make us stand in line for no other reason but to control us.

In Navajo culture, caring for my hair was very important. My mother always told me not to cut my hair because I would lose a part of me. It was critical to a person's mind and thoughts. The Navajo bun, or *tsiiyeel*, represents us as Diné people. In our culture, we believe that wisdom is tied up in our *tsiiyeel* with our knowledge, memory, and thoughts. I remember my mother lovingly washing my long hair with yucca root and combing my hair out with a bundle of stiff grass called a *be'ezo* as she shared stories of our culture.



Figure 3 Susie visits her old boarding school with a young friend

In school, we were forbidden to speak Navajo, and horrific measures were taken to punish us when we failed to speak English. I had a hard time learning English. Without my Navajo language, I was broken and unable to celebrate my heritage. Taking my identity from me made me feel powerless. I lost some of my native language, but I remembered much of it and worked for a long time to become fluent again.

We were punished in many ways by school officials. I was forced to stand in the corner for speaking Navajo. They washed my mouth out with

soap many times until I gagged and vomited. I was forced to clean toilet bowls and floors over and over again even when they were sparkling clean. I was forced to kneel on a cement floor for hours. Sometimes the dorm aides forgot about me, and I was still there at night. I was not allowed to participate in some fun activities, like going to the movies, with the “good kids” who did what they were told. I remember crying myself to sleep in a dark room many times.

We were trained like soldiers and forced to follow rules so closely that I became brainwashed. We were taught how to make our beds, how to clean, and how to behave at the table. Every morning we would stand in line as they checked our beds. When it was not right, they tore off the bedding and ordered us to make it again. This could go on for hours because they always found something wrong. Even now, I make my bed with all the corners tucked in and the top sheet folded back over a blanket. My husband doesn’t like it this way, but I continue to do it because it is ingrained in me. They taught us to clean floors on our hands and knees. Even now I clean this way; I have a mop and a broom at home, but I don’t use them. They taught us strict table manners: how to use silverware, how to sit and eat correctly, either family style or dinner style, how to pick up a slice of bread and break it in four pieces. I break my bread this way even now, decades later.

We were fed USDA commodity foods, mostly processed canned food, and much of it tasted terrible. We were told to eat everything on our plate, and someone stood at the exit door to make sure we did. I used to stuff food in my milk carton to hide it, but they would open it and put it back on my plate. Sometimes I would just cry and fall asleep sitting at the table with my food. I know what hunger feels like, too, that sharp pain at the bottom of my stomach. I was allowed to eat only what was given to me when it was time to eat. I was a very skinny child.

The school teachers were mean. The BIA hired our own people for certain job positions to control us, but I remember mostly *bilagáana* as teachers. All the teachers were very mean and abusive. I frequently got in trouble for being slow to respond to orders. We were often hit with wooden paddles, hands, or rulers with sharp edges, whether on our hands, rear ends, or other parts of our bodies.

Bullies were a problem at boarding school. The boys would often wait after school to pick on us and call us names. I could not figure out why they did this, but now I think they felt bad about themselves or were also physically abused and were reacting to what was done to them. If they caught us, they would hit and kick us anywhere on our bodies. I especially remember two incidents when we were very small, in first or second grade: an older boy, who often pulled my hair and hit me, once caught me and hit me in the face and then kicked me in the stomach until I fell unconscious. I don’t know how I came to. From that moment on I started to defend myself and fight back, so I got into more trouble. Another time a boy came at me with a sharp pencil in his hands. I put my hand up and he stabbed my pinkie finger. I hit him in the forehead with my fist and saw a big bump form on his forehead. I started to cry. Blood was all over, and the teacher punished me for it. I don’t remember if he was punished.

The frequent beatings and abuse created cycles of abuse—physical, emotional, spiritual—and so much heartache. This harsh upbringing in boarding school had sad results. I did not show affection or speak and feel love for my children as they were growing up. I punished them, told them to eat everything on their plate, verbally abused them, spanked them, and made them work and clean. I treated them the way I was brought up in the boarding school, with strict discipline.

I was always lonely. Every chance I got, I would go to the laundry room. It had a big window, and if I sat in a certain place, I could see the road at the top of the canyon or mesa. I would watch the road to see if my parents were coming to get me. Kinlichee Boarding School was built near a wash and was surrounded by a fence. I tried many times to run away as I got older, but I was always caught. One time at Toyey Boarding School, I crawled through the sagebrush, dirt, trees, and cactus for miles, but they found me and brought me back for more punishment.

Loneliness is a familiar feeling that has hung over me since the early age of six. Loneliness is serious—it gnaws at my sense of reality and draws me toward emptiness, sadness, and hopelessness. I was lonely most of the time in boarding school. I needed to interact with people to enjoy life and stay sane, but I was kept away from my friends. We were routinely separated and punished, especially when we spoke Navajo. Loneliness is painful, deadening, and daunting. By denying us friendship, they denied us one of our most basic needs. The sense of loneliness, rejection, and worthlessness made communication very hard for me. People thought that I was shy or a loner, especially in Christian high school.

The religious instruction I experienced was quite inconsistent and confusing. I was baptized many times by the Catholic, Presbyterian, Mormon, and other religious groups that came to the boarding school on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings to teach us. I think of my parents' ways of praying for us in their own ceremonial and traditional Navajo ways, and I am thankful for that because a lot of bad things happened to us by people who claimed to be Christians.

One Saturday when I was seven or eight years old, Mormons came in a large bus and invited us on a field trip. They took us to the Mormon church in St. Michaels, Arizona. They lined us up to get baptized, and when some of the children at the start of the line started crying, I got scared and started to cry. They put me under the water twice because they said my hair came back up. After that I was afraid of water for many years. One summer, on a Native youth group outing, we had to race across the lake in canoes. My canoe tipped, and I almost drowned.

I finally left boarding school in 1970 when my oldest sister, Louise, brought me to Denver, Colorado, to go to Denver Christian High School. I went through culture shock coming into this urban setting and adjusting to the speed of everything. Sadly, I don't remember having any friends in the church or the Christian school.

My siblings, nephews, and nieces also came to Denver so they could attend better schools than the boarding schools. In the summertime, my sister Louise sent us home to our parents so we could help them on the reservation. She came for us at the end of summer and took us back to school in Denver. At the start of my senior year, I missed my ride back to Denver,

so I ended up in a boarding school at Fort Wingate, New Mexico. This boarding school wasn't as bad as Kinlichee, perhaps because I was older and didn't try to run away, but the academic level was so low that I sat out most of my school year. I was able to make some friends, though.

It was at Fort Wingate Boarding School that I was introduced to the Bible and Christianity in a nicer way. During my early years in boarding school, Christianity was always taught to me in a harsh and scary way. I was told that I was going to burn in hell because of who I am, and it stayed with me for a long time. I was always afraid of God and wondered when he would throw me in the fire. In boarding school, we were promised prizes, like pretty pencils, for memorizing Bible verses. I memorized John 3:16, but I never received the prized pencils. This Bible verse stayed with me, though, and is still in my heart today. Even though I never really knew what it meant, I would say it over and over again when I was punished.

At Fort Wingate, a Navajo science teacher shared with me about Jesus, God our Father, and the Holy Spirit. He gave me short verses to read, and at the end of the school year he asked me if I was ready to let Jesus come into my heart. I replied "yes" because it had not been beaten into me, like in my earlier years. I wasn't scared anymore. I found out that despite my hurt and fear, I always have hope in Christ. I know the comfort of God, as his Spirit comforts me and stays close to me. I invited God to help me make sense of my emotions and to define how I felt about the person I had lost, myself. He understands my situation, the complexities of my past experiences, and all of my thoughts. He can help mend the hole that I felt inside at boarding school. I am so thankful to God for that teacher because my life changed and is still healing. I am grateful to my Creator God, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit my helper.

Four of my older sisters have now passed away, as well as two of my older brothers. They were all put in boarding schools, some as far away as Utah and Oregon. They survived the schools, but they never had a chance to tell or share their stories. I know other survivors of boarding schools who tell me they admire my courage in sharing my story, but they are not yet ready or able to share their stories.

In 1978, I married Richard Silversmith and had two sons. I loved my family, but the generational trauma we experienced resulted in alcoholism and abuse. Both my father and my husband abused alcohol, and I soon learned how alcoholism affects the whole family. In living with alcoholism, I've been through mistrust, anger, resentment, criticism, uncertainty, anxiety, and the list goes on. My husband put himself in an alcoholic treatment center, and I received counseling and support also. Through extensive counseling, I recognized the abuse I put my family through as a result of my childhood experiences. I did to my children what was done to me: spanking them, never telling them I love them, being overly strict.

But I praise the Lord, for he has performed miracles in my life! Jesus helped me, restored me, and redeemed me, and our family got a second chance at life. Through counseling and the work of the Holy Spirit, I was given a healthy understanding of love, both for others and for myself. Our recovery involves the healing of the emotional illness of all members of the family. I give Jesus all my praise and gratitude. All things are possible

in Christ Jesus. “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor. 12:9).

My Creator Diyin made me Navajo. I was supposed to be stripped of my identity—my Navajo name, language, ceremonies, culture, kinship, heritage, and life—but I remembered what my parents always told me: “Never forget who you are as a Navajo/Diné person.” In boarding school, I was denied the love of my parents. I knew they loved me, but I didn’t spend time with them to say “I love you” or give hugs. Some people tell me today, “You are a better person because you went through the abuse of boarding school.” No, abuse is abuse. The historical trauma that I have experienced still lives in me today. I am sixty years old and have lived most of my life with the trauma that was inflicted on me as a little girl. My horrific history of abuse is a part of me.

I had a dream about a year ago at the time I was writing my story. I had been overcome with emotions and felt broken in spirit. At times, recording my story was too much to handle. My tears came uncontrollably, and I felt I could fill a big barrel with them. I wanted to be alone even though my family was around. In my dream, a Navajo medicine man came to my Hogan. I recognized that Jesus was the Navajo medicine man visiting me. He came in and went to the west, middle part of the Hogan, where the medicine man sits when he is performing a ceremony. I welcomed him in and was right there beside him. I sat by him, and he took my hand and put his arms around me and comforted me with a hug. With tears running down my face, I asked him, “Why? Why am I broken in spirit and feel this pain of abandonment from what happened to me as a child?” I told him that my life has been painful. I suffered many things at a young age, and it is still with me. I try to forget and forgive. It is hard to do. I remembered him saying, “It’s okay. You will be okay.” Then I woke up. I wanted to stay in that dream. I felt the comfort, peace, love, and security that only Jesus can give me. It was a good dream. Jesus was physically present—he was there talking to me in my heart language, Diné/Navajo. I hold on to that dream today, as I tell my story. I know that Jesus will heal me from the historical trauma in my life.

After being in boarding school for nine years, I went back to the reservation and had many conversations with my parents about my life there. I had many questions and received only a few answers. I was very angry at the time. Before my father passed away, he built me a hogan and told me, “I want you to come home to this.” Although the Navajo Housing Authority calls it substandard, whenever I leave urban life to go home, I go there. It is six miles from a paved highway in a remote area of the Navajo reservation. It doesn’t have electricity or running water. It has an earth floor and a wood stove in the middle. I haul my own water and wood. The clay dirt roads get very bad in the winter and when it rains. It is a third-world existence, but it’s very peaceful. I hear the animals around me and nature presents its beauty. I like going there, away from the noise and busyness of the city. Both my parents are gone now, but I will retire to the place I call home, my hogan on the Navajo reservation.

And as I continue my journey, I walk in beauty with Jesus, my Savior and my Lord. May this verse bring blessings to all of you who read my

story: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV).

2. TONISHA BEGAY, BENJAMIN CHEE, AND CHANTELLE YAZZIE

Echoes of the effects of the DOCD can also be heard in younger generations of Indigenous peoples. Chimes, the Calvin College newspaper, published the stories of three Native American students—Tonisha Begay, Benjamin Chee, and Chantelle Yazzie—in February 2015. The introduction to the stories notes, “The CRC, and Calvin in particular, has had a long history of involvement with the Native American people. But according to these students, all of Navajo descent, the relationship has not necessarily been a good one.”¹⁴⁰

Tonisha Begay speaks candidly of the missionaries who descended among the Navajo, “armed with bad theology and the belief that they ‘meant well,’” and the trauma that resulted from the boarding schools. A graduate of Rehoboth and Calvin College, she speaks of the difficulty of being between two worlds: “When I go back home, I have to justify going to two schools that are affiliated with an institution that viciously oppressed my elders.” She describes the reluctance to describe that past: “People think that establishing Rehoboth was sufficient, and because of its violent and culturally oppressive past, they avoid bringing it up altogether. A strong association with Rehoboth does not excuse ignorance about Rehoboth, Navajos or other Native Americans.”

Benjamin Chee’s story suggests that many of the cultural prejudices characteristic of the DOCD are still with us: “I felt a distance between me and the other people on my floor because we had little in common. When I did get a chance to tell my story, no one could engage me because they could not relate to my experiences. I felt that they wanted to, but did not have enough cross-cultural experience to interact with someone who was different than them.”

Chantelle Yazzie describes her greatest difficulty at a Christian college to be “a lack of interest from the majority culture to learn from a culture different than theirs.” Both Ben and Chantelle describe the hurt that results from the ignorance of their classmates—the use of degrading and offensive stereotypes, the reluctance to educate themselves about Indigenous cultures and history, the lack of sensitivity to their minority experience. Ben speaks of the need for majority students to get outside their comfort zones: “It might be hard,” he says, “but Native Americans experience discomfort every day and we have no escape from it.” Chantelle offers solid advice: “Talk to me directly. But most importantly, acknowledge the fact that you might not know all the answers, be open to learning. . . .” She also implores us to “recognize the rich yet tumultuous history of the peoples indigenous to this land.” Ben concludes, “It will take effort from both sides and a great deal of grace.” Amen.

Tonisha, Ben, and Chantelle each acknowledge their appreciation for the quality of their education at Calvin College even though much of it came from their struggles to educate others and forge relationships built on truth, trust, and grace. They each express the sentiments of Tonisha’s

¹⁴⁰ “The Native American Perspective,” *Chimes*. February 13, 2015. www.calvin.edu/chimes/2015/02/13/ (accessed 26 July 2015).

conclusion: "Despite all of the confusion about my identity and pain that I've experienced at Calvin, I still love this place. . . . I became passionate and hopeful about justice, Kingdom-building and racial reconciliation."

3. BRUCE ADEMA

Bruce Adema is Dutch-Canadian and lives in Burlington, Ontario. Bruce is a pastor at Waterdown Christian Reformed Church, has served in the Philippines with Christian Reformed World Missions, and served a term as director of Canadian ministries of the CRCNA.

A few years ago I was in South Africa. One of the Reformed denominations invited the Christian Reformed Church to send a fraternal delegate to their synod, and I was the one who went. My white hosts were very open about their lives, ministries, joys, and frustrations. One man told me that his family had lived in South Africa for more than 400 years, yet to their chagrin, people still would not recognize them as Africans. "My family and I are Afrikaans; we are ethnically Dutch, but we are Africans too!" he declared with pride and with passion.

At the time, my thought was, of course you are African. You were born on African soil. Your roots grow deeply into this land. And I thought, "If you can't be African, then I can't be North American." Indeed, even though my family arrived on these shores only 65 years ago, I identify myself as a Canadian, from the North American continent. Most everyone else would agree. But am I? Do I have the right or the privilege to identify myself that way, and to be seen that way by others? My South African friend was denied the epithet "African" because his white Europe-originating community failed to acquire numerical dominance. My Europe-originating community, on the other hand, came in such numbers, and was able to decimate the Indigenous population so ruthlessly, that we have become the majority. And thus we claim the title that likely should not be ours, and we establish in our laws our own privilege.

The Doctrine of Discovery is the source of our undeserved power. By claiming that "Christian" European culture trumps Indigenous culture, by saying that we are masters of the land by virtue of our race or technology or power while it remains the ancestral home and birthright of others, we show ourselves to be very poor Christians and very rude guests.

We don't talk much about this. An uncommon topic of conversation is the morality of building our homes and schools and churches on the traditional territories of the First Nations. Seldom do we discuss the predicament of those people whose land we occupy. We might cluck our tongues about the treatment of Palestinians in refugee camps, or the sad story of apartheid and discrimination in South Africa, but we don't want to turn the mirror around and look at ourselves.

I am a Canadian, and the congregation I serve is a Canadian church. "Canadian," after all, is a name assigned by the Europeans who only partially understood what the Indigenous people were saying. Better for me, and for the church, to see ourselves as guests, and to establish respectful and mutually beneficial understandings of conduct with our hosts, the Indigenous peoples.

It is a good thing for the Christian Reformed Church to be learning about the Doctrine of Discovery. An even better thing will be for us to come to see what can be done to overcome its racist legacy, and then actually do it.

4. CURTIS KORVER

Curtis Korver is Dutch-Canadian and lives in Port Alberni, British Columbia. Curtis is a pastor at Alberni Valley CRC and has served as chair of the CRC's Committee for Contact with the Government.

I live in the Alberni Valley on Vancouver Island, traditional Nuuchaltnulth land. The church I pastor is at the mouth of the Soanah River. Just upriver is a rock that marks the boundary between the Hupacasath and Tseshaht tribal land; the rock, they say, has always been there, just where the Creator put it.

I write this in response to a request to describe contemporary impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery (DOD). Straight lines are hard to draw, but the DOD, and the fallen thinking that gave rise to it, lurk in the shadows of each statement I just made about my life and current home.

The Alberni Valley is the city of Port Alberni, the surrounding land ringed by high mountains and bordered by the Alberni Inlet, a narrow body of ocean water that stretches about 65 km to the open Pacific. The name goes back to Captain Pedro D'Alberni of the fleet of Spain that explored the area in the late eighteenth century and established a fort up-island in Nootka Sound. Alberni himself spent only a few years on this coast, but his name remains. In the world that was shaped by and gave shape to the Doctrine of Discovery, no one among the Europeans could imagine using names that Nuuchaltnulth people already had for the area. The names, the language, and the knowledge of the people already here were not considered valuable enough to learn.

One name that survived is the name of the river that empties into the Alberni Inlet just a few hundred meters from our church building. The river is called Soanah, and though the precise translation is elusive, the name carries an image of fresh water welling up. Just a few years ago, our congregation, Port Alberni Christian Reformed Church, asked if our sixty-year-old name radiated a welcoming and relevant word. Among the many names suggested, one that never found much traction was *Soanah CRC*. A name that speaks of fresh water welling up didn't garner much attention from church people who would surely know about John 7:38, where Jesus says, "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." I wasn't here for the discussions; I don't know how decisions were made, so I tread carefully. But I can't help but wonder if, quite unconsciously, the same fallen thinking that gave rise to the Doctrine of Discovery was invisibly and silently present when we never thought that through the Nuuchaltnulth people God might be giving us a name rich in historical, geographical, and scriptural imagery. Please understand that I do not believe anyone in this congregation holds to the racist claims of the Doctrine of Discovery; most of us have never heard of the thing. But that is what makes the DOD so powerful and dangerous—without even knowing it exists, we are influenced by it.

And that rock in the Somass River—oral history says the rock was placed there by the Creator in the beginning, and the two tribes, with some push and shove and give and take, have accepted that division from the beginning. Widely accepted anthropology argues that the tribes were not here from the beginning but migrated over the Bering land bridge thousands of years ago. Oral history and a few anthropologists claim that the Creator created Nuuchah Nulth people in this area. They have always been here. What if this is true? How could we say with the Doctrine of Discovery that this was *terra nullius*—empty land—when God himself placed people here? That would also wreak havoc with Genesis 1-3, but those chapters already leave significant anthropological questions unanswered. Widely accepted anthropology is not yet turned on its ear, but in the interest of science and truth, maybe we should ask if the DOD has placed a guard on our thinking.

I live in the Alberni Valley on Vancouver Island. That sentence might be quite different without the fallen thinking that gave rise to and was further shaped by the Doctrine of Discovery.

B. *Additional perspectives*

1. Other settlers' voices

The preceding stories and reflections represent diverse perspectives on how the Doctrine of Christian Discovery and its historical sequelae have affected their lives. We received anonymous comments similar to those of Bruce Adema and Curtis Korver that reflect an acute awareness of the stories of the People of the Land that we now occupy. One Canadian woman writes,

I live in the Ottawa Valley on unceded, unsurrendered Algonquin territory. This means there are no treaties or agreements with the original peoples about sharing the land. It was the Doctrine of Discovery that enabled me to buy the land on which I live. Canada's laws flow from that doctrine and work in my favor as a settler by putting the onus on Indigenous peoples to prove title to land and not the other way around. . . . When I walk in the forest behind my house, I think about who has walked there before me. An elder told me that we cannot reconcile our relationship with the land until we reconcile our relationship with the original people of that land. The Doctrine of Discovery is a large barrier standing in the way of that reconciliation.

Another describes similar feelings and issues a challenge:

Whether you meet in a home, classroom, theatre, or domed cathedral, find out about the land that it sits on. Work together in your church groups, your families, your friends to research that land and who lived there before. Find out who took it, when, why, and how. Where are those people groups now? No matter if you legally purchased a building, or hailed from another country and feel no responsibility toward this land's past, or have never been close to someone who is aboriginal, or belong to a denomination that was not directly involved . . . this is still your history. You are still a part of this system. We all are.

An additional voice reflects on the undeserved privilege she experiences:

Though I was not part of the treaty processes and land claims in the Kitchener-Waterloo region where I live, I still continue to reap the benefits of settler colonization. My non-Indigenous heritage gives me a privilege

that I am not even fully aware of. Over the years, I have become acutely aware of how our roots continue to shape the people we are. We are affected intergenerationally by experiences. The fact that I do not have the trauma of residential schools in my family's past is an incredible privilege in and of itself. I continue to be free of many other injustices excused by the Doctrine of Discovery that disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples in my community.

She resolves to "use the privilege that I have received, though not by choice but by circumstance of my birth, to be aware of the ramifications of the Doctrine of Discovery."

This responsibility is multiplied in light of our identity as Christians, as a contributor reminds us:

Millions of Aboriginal lives were lost because of orders that used God's name to justify their death. Thousands more were impacted by sexual assault, enslavement, disease, land confiscation, cultural genocide, and the list goes on. These horrors took place in the name of Jesus Christ. Christians of all denominations must not deny their role in this. Though they may not have been the perpetrators, their beliefs link them to this behaviour and warrant the intense work and responsibility of reconciliation.

2. Our African American brothers and sisters

Finally, in seeking diverse perspectives on the effects of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, we are reminded by our African American brothers and sisters how deeply the legacy of the DOCD has affected them historically. As noted above, the papal bulls articulating the concept of *discovery* also extended the papal mandate to enslavement of all non-Christians. Euro-Christians refused to recognize that "God was here [in Africa]" before the white man came.¹⁴¹ The effects of this aspect of the DOCD are immeasurably egregious. And while race-based slavery has been overturned in North American jurisprudence, systemic racism tenaciously persists. We cannot underestimate the dehumanizing effects of the DOCD on all ethnic minorities, and we must listen carefully to the stories and insights of our brothers and sisters of color. We must recognize and seek out their expertise in the work of dismantling systemic racism and effecting racial reconciliation, and we must fully commit ourselves to those efforts. Reconciliation must involve all those groups that have experienced the ripple effects of the DOCD.

VII. Reconciling all things

We return full circle to the affirmation of our Preface, that Jesus lived, died, and rose again to reconcile *all things* to himself, to reestablish *shalom*, "the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight."¹⁴² As Reformed Christians, we know that *shalom* has been broken by collective and individual sin and that we have been called to discern that sin, repent, and then pray and work for the coming of God's kingdom. God's plumbline revealing unrighteousness and injustice (Amos 7)

¹⁴¹ As related to Steve Kabetu by his great-grandfather about the missionaries who arrived in the early 1900s. He added, "What we didn't know was that he had a Son." www.thebanner.org/together/2014/12/god-is-not-white (accessed 3 Aug. 2015).

¹⁴² Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 26.

exposes the brokenness of the DOCD. Its effects throughout history connote a crookedness in the structure of Western culture that, in turn, has affected societal structures and relationships built on this faulty foundation. As a task force, we have been overwhelmed by what we have learned: the ripple effects of the DOCD seem immeasurable. To truly know, confront, and confess collective and systemic sin, to lament over that brokenness, and then to repent of it are not within our power. This work can only be done by the Holy Spirit moving in us through grace. We ask the Spirit to open our hearts to the work of God's grace that will surely come to heal us—both settlers and Indigenous peoples—and one day, put all things right.

As we pray and rely on the Holy Spirit to do this work, we are also aware of our responsibility to act on what we have learned as a task force. We confess a sense of inadequacy in developing effective recommendations in response to our findings. We are acutely aware that our findings are incomplete and that many stories of the effects of the DOCD have not yet been told. While our task force encountered interest among CRC members and Indigenous people to probe this history, others expressed a great reluctance to do so, possibly resulting from feelings of guilt, denial, pain, fear, and/or a sense of vulnerability. Additionally, generational trauma is almost impossible to measure, particularly as many people are just coming forward with their stories as safe spaces are provided for that opportunity. Nevertheless, it is clear that the DOCD has had devastating effects on Indigenous peoples, settlers, and the church. This systemic sin and its moral wounds must be acknowledged and addressed for the journey of reconciliation to begin. Thus we offer recommendations that follow the biblical pattern of identifying sin and acknowledging it (through education and investigation), lamenting the brokenness, repenting, and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation through relationship. We submit these recommendations in hope-filled faith, believing that the One who began this good work will bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6).

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Mike Hogeterp, chair, and to designated task force members when the report of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force is addressed.

B. That synod's discussions and deliberation of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD) utilize a sharing circle format whenever practical and include Indigenous representatives in leading such exercises.

Grounds:

1. Sharing circles are a time-honored practice in many Indigenous cultures that facilitate inclusive and open dialogue on challenging topics.
2. Sharing circles are particularly helpful in bringing out the reflective elements of a conversation and in refining consensus.
3. Indigenous voices and leadership are critical to dialogue on this issue and to the effectiveness of sharing circles.

C. That synod acknowledge the need for great sensitivity, discernment, and long-term commitment in addressing the legacy of the DOCD, particularly in addressing CRCNA mission work among Indigenous peoples.

Grounds:

1. Antiracism and other reconciliation ministries teach us that the process of reconciliation requires open hearts, education, commitment, humility, hard work, and a safe environment in which to share stories; it cannot be rushed.
2. The resistance our task force encountered among many to probe this history evinces these needs.

D. That synod acknowledge the historical role of the DOCD, particularly its use as an instrument of power for land possession and colonialism that denied the image of God in Indigenous peoples; and its foundation of systemic sin and moral wounding across generations that have resulted in wrong relationships with God; wrong relationships with the land and God's good creation; wrong relationships with Indigenous peoples resulting in generational trauma, suffering, and injustice; wrong relationships in the body of Christ; and settlers' trauma. CRC participation in the dehumanizing worldview of the DOCD distorted the image of God within settlers, diminished the CRC's expression of the fullness of the gospel to Indigenous peoples of North America, and deprived the CRC of living in the beautiful mosaic body "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Rev. 7:9; cf. Acts 2).

Grounds:

1. Systemic sin rooted in greed and racial oppression has deprived the body of Christ of the full beauty of and right relationship with God and God's good creation and provision.
2. The denial of the image of God in others has caused dehumanization of and disastrous injustice against Indigenous peoples, resulting in intergenerational trauma, conflict, and brokenness among individuals and in the church.
3. This systemic sin has also caused "settler's trauma" among well-intentioned Christians who have participated in an unjust and racist system that has denied the image of God within each of us, obstructed the flourishing of the gospel in Indigenous communities, and hindered the development of our true identities in Christ.
4. The cross of Christ calls the church to turn from sin and to live in unity as imagebearers of God within the body of Christ, composed of people "from every nation, tribe, people and language."

E. That synod, in recognition of God's call to the journey of reconciliation, (1) repudiate the DOCD as fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and (2) commit to a long-term process of education, confession, lamentation, and repentance, with the ultimate goal of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Grounds:

1. As Christians, we are called to examine our hearts, confess and lament our sins, repent, and seek forgiveness and reconciliation (Job 13:23; Ps. 32:3; 51:3; 139:23-24; Prov. 28:13; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; 7:9-10; 13:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9).

2. Fulfilling this recommendation is consistent with the CRC's mission, would allow us to stand in unity with those denominations doing similar work, and would serve as a testimony of God's faithful working in the universal church.
3. Reconciliation is a long-term *process* that requires a full understanding of trespasses and their consequences, confession of trespasses (both collective/historical and individual), lamentation, and repentance. Only then can forgiveness be sought and reconciliation be fully realized.

F. That synod affirm initial actions for justice and reconciliation of the CRC in Canada that are already in process:

- the public acknowledgment of “systemic evils behind colonialism,” the confession of the CRC's “sins of assimilation and paternalism,” and the commitment to live “into a sacred call of unity and reconciliation,”¹⁴³ as expressed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada.
- follow-up initiatives on the calls to action of the TRC.

Grounds:

1. Canadian Ministries, in consultation with the CRCNA-Canada Corporation, have built on a long-term commitment to Indigenous justice and reconciliation, in TRC-related congregational education, advocacy, and public commitments to reconciliation.
2. The TRC follows the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in affirming the significance of the church's role in Indigenous justice and reconciliation. A committed and active response to this is critical for the integrity of mission in Canada.

G. That synod acknowledge the continuing need for a denominationwide process of education about the DOCD and its historic and contemporary effects, and that, specifically, synod instruct the Board of Trustees to direct the CRC offices with mandates concerning justice, inclusion, mercy, and advocacy (i.e., the JIMA working group) to consult with Indigenous and ecumenical colleagues for the development and/or animation of congregational learning and action resources on the legacy of the DOCD.

Grounds:

1. A full understanding of the legacy of the DOCD and its effects on Indigenous peoples and those who “drink downstream” from it is required for the ministry of reconciliation, the unity of the body of Christ, and the work of justice to which we are called.
2. Multiple experiences with the Blanket Exercise denominationwide demonstrate congregational eagerness to know more about the history of Indigenous/settler relations.

¹⁴³ “Action for Reconciliation,” Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, June 1, 2012. www2.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/cpd/Action_for_Reconciliation_Ottawa2015.pdf (accessed 22 July 2015).

3. Existing resources, such as the *Living the 8th Fire Curriculum* (Centre for Public Dialogue and Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee), and ecumenical resources are available to assist in this learning/animation task.
4. This report and its appendices are a source of detailed historical information that will translate well into accessible learning resources.
5. The expertise of Indigenous and racial reconciliation ministries (denominational and ecumenical) is needed for comprehensive education on this issue. Our African American and ethnic minority brothers and sisters are indispensable to this dialogue.
6. Fulfilling this recommendation would be a good faith response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #59.

H. That synod acknowledge the CRCNA's historical appropriation of a Euro-superior worldview and resulting trespasses against Indigenous peoples generally and, specifically, against the Navajo and Zuni peoples of the U.S. Southwest; and that synod instruct the BOT to commit to continued investigation of the archives and examination of the effects of these trespasses.

Grounds:

1. Archival evidence, particularly in the Board of Heathen Mission practices, and current testimony document this fallen thinking and its effects. Our task force's archival investigations were initial, and we expect that further probing is warranted.
2. The Rehoboth confessions of 2003 were a step in the right direction, but a more comprehensive consultation and examination—with the full input of former students—of specific trespasses and their effects is needed for the healing of those who have not yet told their stories or worked through the trauma resulting from those trespasses.

I. That synod call CRC agencies and ministries, congregations, and affiliated educational institutions to prayer and lamentation in response to the educational process on the effects of the DOCD, and direct the Board of Trustees to consult prayerfully with Indigenous peoples and church leaders to discern the Holy Spirit's timing for a *CRCNA Prayer and Worship Gathering of Lament* for our corporate sins and moral wounds related to the DOCD and, at the appropriate time, direct appropriate ministries to organize such a gathering under the leadership of Indigenous Christians.

Grounds:

1. Corporate sin calls for corporate lament. Prayer is essential to the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
2. Lament is a biblical response to the brokenness and fallenness of the world (Lam. 3:39-40; Job 6:8-10; 42:6; Ps. 51:3; Matt. 5:4) and produces true repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-10).
3. Our task force has noted with appreciation the *life of prayer* motif common in recent CRCNA prayer summits. It is reflective of common Indigenous Christian practice.

J. That synod encourage regular forums for humble discernment on issues of cross-cultural mission and syncretism by directing its mission agencies to engage in an ongoing assessment of mission practices to ensure that cultures are celebrated appropriately as partners in gospel mission and that the image of God is respected in all people.

Grounds:

1. Terms like “pagan” and “heathen,” as applied to Indigenous peoples in missions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada and in the United States, were common and related to a deep undercurrent of the DOCD.
2. We are called to discern (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Thess. 5:21), to hold on to what is good, and to reject evil. Ministry history in Canada and the United States shows that the CRC has fallen short in recognizing the “good” of Indigenous cultures and has likewise failed to recognize its own syncretism of Euro-superiority.
3. The *Hearts Exchanged* Cross-Cultural Ministry Forum (Edmonton, 2000) was a binational healing event that recommended regular reflection on such issues.
4. Regular dialogue on cross-cultural mission with Indigenous communities will enhance the volume of Indigenous voices in the church and deepen the unity and diversity of the body of Christ.

K. That synod encourage the development of a “common story” with our Indigenous neighbors by encouraging agencies, congregations, and affiliated educational institutions to celebrate with thankfulness to God that Indigenous cultures and languages have persisted despite grave oppression, work with Indigenous peoples and communities to build healthy and mutually supportive relationships, encourage the development of Indigenous leadership in CRC churches and institutions, enter into dialogue with Indigenous Christians/theologians/church leaders about contextualization of the gospel, intercultural mission, and creational theology; and by directing the Board of Trustees to (1) form and mandate a commission, chaired and led by a simple majority of Indigenous persons, to design and implement a five-year process whereby a true “common story” can unfold, specifically creating safe space for telling and listening to life stories of Indigenous brothers and sisters, including those arising in the context of our indigenous mission work in the United States and Canada; (2) provide sufficient resources for this process; and (3) build on previous and similar efforts, whenever possible.

Grounds:

1. God’s good creation includes diverse cultures, languages, and peoples, for which we are called to give thanks.
2. The historic and contemporary marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the church has diminished the unity and wholeness of the body of Christ, and building respectful mutually supportive relationships is an important step toward healing.
3. Colonialism and internalized assimilation have hindered the expression of unique Indigenous perspectives on Christian faith that are important for the unity and wholeness of the church.
4. The pastoral concerns associated with telling stories of trauma and abuse, specifically evidenced by the removal from this report of a

personal story documenting abuse suffered in a CRC ministry, underscores the need for a safe, long-term process for telling and listening to those stories.

5. The wisdom, knowledge, discernment, and faith of Indigenous leaders are critical to help guide the process of truth telling and reconciliation. This leadership is essential for designing and directing a common story commission that is culturally sensitive, contextual, and that can appropriately address pastoral concerns and facilitate healing.
6. The facilitation of a storytelling and listening process could revitalize the faith and witness of the denomination, CRC churches, and individuals, and could lead to a richer spiritual identity in Christ as we understand each other's stories and journeys.

Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

Seth Adema, Canadian of Dutch settler ancestry

Mark Charles, American of Dutch heritage and Navajo, of the clans Tsin bikéé' dine'é, Tó' aheedlínii, *cheis* Tsin bikéé' dine'é, and *nalis* Tódich'íi'nii

Mike Hogeterp, Canadian of Dutch/Frisian settler ancestry

Carissa Johnson, Canadian of Chinese/Dutch settler ancestry

Steve Kabetu, Canadian of Kenyan settler ancestry

Linda Naranjo-Huebl, Mexican-American, of Scotch-Irish settler ancestry

Harold Roscher, Cree and adopted Dutch

Susie Silversmith, Navajo, of the clans Tsinaajinii, Honaghaahnii, *cheis* Totsohnii and *nalis* Todichiinii

Peter Vander Meulen, American of Frisian settler ancestry

Appendix A

Mandate for the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

I. Mandate

Facilitate a discovery process—a learning process for leaders and members of the CRC—in an examination of the following questions in order to come to a shared understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery and its consequences. The task force will be expected to keep the church informed throughout its work, conclude its work with a summary report of its findings, and, if appropriate, make recommendations to the Board of Trustees for further action.

II. Associate members

The task force is encouraged to expand its associate membership as it deems necessary, either initially or as the process unfolds. It should pay particular attention to including diverse perceptions, voices, and expertise.

These associates should have an understanding of the CRC and its history / culture, but need not be members of the CRC.

III. Core questions

The discovery process should answer, but not necessarily be limited to, the following questions:

- How and why did the Doctrine of Discovery come to be, and what was the role of the church and European social/cultural attitudes in its creation and propagation?
- What were its principle effects on indigenous peoples during the age of conquest, particularly in what is now Canada and the United States?
- What are, if any, the continuing effects of the Doctrine of Discovery and its legacies (such as related legal instruments or cultural attitudes) on indigenous peoples, and do these effects vary in cause and manifestation in different locations in the United States and Canada?
- Has the Doctrine of Discovery and related instruments both expressed and shaped the dominant (European) culture in the United States and Canada and affected our ways of relating and ministering to each other in ways that may be not be well understood or acknowledged? If so, how?

IV. Process

The task force should consider the following participatory process and feel free to improve upon it:

- Plan and conduct a series of hearings to listen to testimony from native and aboriginal peoples in the United States and Canada regarding the questions posed in the mandate.
- Take into consideration the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada.
- Publicize the hearings through appropriate denominational channels as an educational opportunity for CRC members.
- Summarize the findings of the hearings in a report to the BOT by September 2014 and through the BOT to Synod 2015.
- Make specific recommendations to the BOT by September 2014 regarding further action the CRC should take on the Doctrine of Discovery and related issues.

Appendix B

Timeline of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery

For a visual representation of the history of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, with signposts from general, United States, Canadian, and CRCNA history, see: <https://magic.piktochart.com/output/7335999-doctrine-of-christian-discovery-timeline>.