



Spiritual  
Quadrant

# Linking Arms

## The Haudenosaunee context of the Covenant Chain

*By Richard Hill, Grand River Tuscarora*

THE MOHAWK NAME for the Covenant Chain of Peace is *tehontaten-  
sonterontahkhwa*. It is a multi-dimensional cultural mechanism for  
advancing the cause of peace. The term translates to “the thing by which  
they link their arms.” The linking of arms is a Haudenosaunee metaphor  
for establishing, building and maintaining peace through the united minds  
and actions of the participants. It was first codified during the formation  
of the *Kayahnerenhkawah* or the Great Law of Peace, the founding govern-  
ance document of the Haudenosaunee (People Building a Longhouse.)

The legendary Peacemaker assembled the first Chiefs and Clan Mothers of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida and Mohawk Nations about one thousand years ago to impress upon them the meaning of the Great Law and the importance of unity.

At one point, the Peacemaker asked the 50 Chiefs to stand in a circle and link their arms together to show their strength in unity. By interlocking their arms (meaning that they should be of one mind and treat each other with respect), the Chiefs provided a protective circle within which the people reside.

The Peacemaker also planted the Great Tree of Peace in the centre of that circle. He warned the Chiefs that if anyone should try to uproot that tree (destroy the Confederacy), the Chiefs had to hold firmly to one another — remain strong in their resolve to keep the peace. If the tree were to lean over, the Chiefs, with their arms linked, would be strong

enough to stand it upright once again. This means that the power of the Good Mind can overcome any adversity, provided the three principles of the Great Law are respected: Peace, Strength (Power) and the Good Mind (Righteousness).

## Path of peace

When other people, clans and nations sought protection of the Great Tree, they were told to follow its roots to the source — the capitol of the Confederacy, the Onondaga Nation which served as both the Fire Keepers and the Wampum Keepers. The path of peace is clearly delineated on the Five Nations Wampum belt, more commonly called the Hiawatha Wampum Belt.

In that sacred document, we see the Tree of Peace in the territory of the Onondaga Nation, at the heart of the Confederacy, linked by the white path of peace to the other nations. The square figures representing the nations are also linked to one another. More than a metaphor, the path of peace was also a trail that ran from the Eastern Door of the Great Longhouse, in the land of the Mohawks (near present-day Albany, New York) to the Western Door in the land of the Seneca Nation, near present-day Letchworth State Park.

People who earnestly wanted peace in their lives would enter the Confederate lands through one of these doors. Once greeted and their peaceful intentions acknowledged, they would be escorted into the Tree at Onondaga where the Grand Council of Chiefs meet.

## The Ship and the Canoe meet

When the French arrived in Haudenosaunee territory, their intentions were not peaceful. In fact, in 1609, the French invaded our lands and this resulted in the first time firearms were used against our people. The French showed disdain for the political protocol of the Haudenosaunee. They later invaded the Onondaga Nation and it was said that they were seeking to enter the Confederacy through the roof, to extinguish the fire.

In 1613, Dutch traders arrived at what is now called Albany, New York, to establish a fur trading enterprise to rival that of the French to the north. Two Dutch captains landed and made an agreement with the Mohawks to live in peace. In that agreement, the Mohawks pledged to assist the colonists, providing them with a safe place to live, offering to trade, providing food and resolving any matters peacefully so that war would not threaten either side. The Dutch captains pledged to respect the rights of the Mohawks not to impose their will upon the Haudenosaunee.

This agreement was codified in the great Two Row Wampum belt, also known as Aterihwihsón:sera Kaswénta. The symbolism of the belt tells of a mutual covenant to promote peace, respect and friendship.



[www.degiyagoh.net/guswenta\\_two\\_row.htm](http://www.degiyagoh.net/guswenta_two_row.htm)

The metaphorical imagery of the Two Row Wampum is that the Dutch ship is now tied to the Haudenosaunee canoe, floating together on the River of Life. Our peoples became linked to one another. In fact, our leaders stated that our children and our grandchildren will be related to one another (meaning that we are to treat each other like family as called for in the Great Law). Yet they will not try to steer each other's vessel (respect sovereignty) and will use the Good Mind (rationality) to resolve any difficulties that may arise.

This is the political and cultural foundation in all subsequent treaty-making with the various colonial powers. As more agreements were made, issues resolved and peace advanced, the meaning of the Two Row Wampum became enlarged. It was an on-going treaty relationship, not a single event. Therefore the wampum belt records many matters subsequent to its formation in 1613.

## Covenant Chain of Peace

In the beginning, the ship and the canoe were tied together with a rope. It was also said that the vessels were tied to a tree on the shore by that rope. This was meant to symbolize that the Mohawks became the primary trading partners of the Dutch. The Mohawks received honourable treatment and any injustice was quickly dealt with by the Dutch magistrates. The rope secured the treaty partners to the local land.

Difficulties naturally rose. The metaphorical rope was replaced with an iron chain. As a result of the fur trade, many iron tools were introduced to our people and they began to realize that some of these tools were strong and useful. It is said that the vessels were then tied to a large boulder, to make the relationship more secure. This is a reference to extending the relationship in-land, to the territory of the Oneida Nation — the People of the Standing Stone.

The fur trade expanded and soon the entire Confederacy was involved. However, relations with the French degenerated and a century-long war threatened the peace. The French made references to the Covenant Chain, but did not fully embrace the cultural and political protocols. In one telling moment, a Mohawk spokesman linked arms with a Huron chief and French official, sang a song and slowly danced around the council fire to symbolize the covenant of peace. Unfortunately the French generally refused to maintain a relationship with the Grand Council, preferring to negotiate with individual nations instead.

The first Covenant Chain was manifested in three ways. The political fire of the partners was linked by the path of peace. Shuttle diplomacy was the standard of the day as ambassadors traveled the path of peace between the fires. Wampum belts would visualize this linking of fires by the use of squares, diamonds or hexagon figures linked by a central path. The belts also carried the words of atonement, condolence and agreement to document the terms of the on-going relationship.

The iron chain was conceived as having three links, each representing a desired outcome from the relationship: peace, respect and friendship. These are the same principles represented by both the Great Law and

the Two Row Wampum. There is a consistency through time as to the intent of political relationships from a Haudenosaunee point of view.

Despite the best of intentions, the Haudenosaunee began to grow tired of the slick words of the Dutch. Land frauds and unfair trading practices eroded the respect and friendship between the parties, resulting in conflicts. The Dutch repeatedly shook their Covenant Chain to ask the Haudenosaunee warriors for protection. Time and time again, the warriors responded. However, when the Haudenosaunee asked for the same consideration, help was slow to materialize, if at all. The iron chain began rust.

## Silver Covenant Chain

Before that rust could be cleaned, the English defeated the Dutch and took over their colonial operations. One of the first tasks of the English was to make peace with the Haudenosaunee. Through a series of treaties in 1677, the English evolved the metaphor of the Covenant Chain by remaking it in silver. The Haudenosaunee had come to understand the importance of silver to the Europeans and trade in silver brooches became popular, as did silver gorgets (neck collars), arm bands, and hat bands. Silver had political connotations to the English as well.

The treaty council minutes began to reflect the notion that the chain was made of silver so that it could be polished from time to time to renew the agreements, make amends for any transgressions, and restore peace. This sat well with the Haudenosaunee who had a concept of light, whiteness and fire as important to the peace building process.

*Light* represented the idea that honesty and true friendship would be experienced, with no dark deceptions among true allies. *Whiteness* translated to peacefulness and good-mindedness, i.e., the use of reason over violence. Fire represented both the spiritual fire that burned within each individual and the council fires whereby peace could be restored and enhanced. Even though the fire was transitory, its flame represented eternity — that peaceful relations could last forever if both sides acted honorably.

The English used the Covenant Chain to build peaceful co-existence with the Haudenosaunee that lasted one hundred years until the American Revolution split Haudenosaunee loyalties. British Indian Agent Sir William Johnson once expressed how the Chain was then tied to the great unmovable mountains. By this he meant that the Chain had finally reached the capitol of the Haudenosaunee — the Grand Council that was held at Onondaga, known as the People of the Hills, and encompassing all of the Haudenosaunee, including the Seneca Nation, known as the *People of the Great Hill*.

## An Indigenous protocol

The Covenant Chain has undergone several transformations. It was the original linking of arms of the first Chiefs of the Confederacy. They extended their hand of friendship to link arms with the first colonists. As time went on, they embraced the French, Dutch and English, and eventually the Americans and the Canadians, keeping the Covenant Chain at the center of their relationships.

The Covenant Chain of Peace has several elements:

- a) an on-going treaty relationship predicated upon the principles of the *Aterihwihsón:sera Kaswénta* (Two Row Wampum);
- b) the linking of arms, or holding of hands, meaning the firm commitment to uphold the terms of the treaty-based relationship and treat each other as equals;
- c) an agreement to a dispute resolution mechanism to keep the chain bright and promote peace;
- d) the details of the treaty agreements as represented by several wampum belts, which tell a larger story than the written documents; and
- e) a three-link silver chain and a silver pipe with a small chain attaching the bowl to the stem that was used whenever our nations gathered together to polish the chain.

In addition to the colonial powers, the Haudenosaunee also used the Covenant Chain to build political relationships with many other Native

nations. Since the 16th century, countless treaty councils were held by which former enemies put aside war to become allies. A great union of Indigenous nations resulted, best represented by the great Covenant Chain wampum belt crafted to show the unity of 24 Native nations who reaffirmed their peace with the English in 1763 at Fort Niagara.

The Covenant Chain stretched across the northeast and deep into the south, among the Cherokee and Choctaw. The imagery of the chain also increased. Some wampum belts show two human figures, each holding one end of the Covenant Chain. When the United States wanted to make peace with the Haudenosaunee after the Revolutionary War, President George Washington commissioned the largest Covenant Chain wampum belt. It has thirteen

figures, representing the original states, holding the Chain with two leaders under the roof of the Longhouse. Through that Chain peace was restored and a federal pledge was made to protect the land interests of the Haudenosaunee.

However, that Chain has now grown rusty. Haudenosaunee leaders have recently visited the White House and are encouraging the new president to polish the Covenant Chain, to knock off the rust of neglect and return to the time tested-mechanism of the past and bring peace, respect and friendship back to the forefront of our relationships. The Grand River Confederacy negotiators of the land rights actions have also asked that the Governor General do the same thing. We are shaking our end of the Chain and are awaiting their response. We have great faith that the hard work of our ancestors will not go to waste. The day is approaching when we will link arms again and live in peace. The Chain wants to be polished once more. ▣



The Covenant Chain Belt is in the New York State Museum, photographed in Turner, 1993



*For reflection and discussion*

- 1) How was your understanding of treaties affected by this article?
- 2) In this article, respecting sovereignty is described as not trying to steer each other's vessel. Do you see this understanding of sovereignty being respected today?
- 3) What are some ideas for polishing the covenant chain today?
- 4) What hindrances stand in the way of a meaningful polishing of the covenant chain?

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# Spirituality and Social Justice

*By Joann Sebastian Morris*

**T**HIS ESSAY IS designed to assess Canadian discriminatory and racist policies, behaviours and attitudes toward First Nations people from a spiritual perspective and to offer solutions of a spiritual nature. Too often, scant attention is paid to our spiritual nature. For most, one day a week and one to two hours on that one day a week are devoted to thinking about our spiritual nature and its impact on our lives. Yet it could be, and is for some, the aspect of ourselves that drives our every act and belief.

Most First Nations people recognize that they are on this earth, primarily, on a spiritual journey. Many other Canadians see this life as a primarily physical and material journey; thus, the majority of their time is spent experiencing the senses and/or collecting goods.

For those of us seeking social justice in our lives and the lives of others, a key guiding principle must be that we are all children of the Creator, that higher power known by so many names. When someone, or a group of people, treat me in a discriminatory or racist way, it is imperative that I remind myself that they too are children of the Creator. They too are growing in spirit just as I am. They are just not as far along in their journey as I'd wish them to be. They need education and understanding, not revenge. Thus, my response to the racist behavior is less likely to be retaliation and more likely to be forgiveness.

Similarly, if I behave in a racist manner toward others, it's critical for me to stop and remember that all races were put here for a reason; all are



children of the Creator. Hopefully, I would face the realization that I still have a way to go on my spiritual journey and need further education and understanding, instead of holding on to resentment.

Years ago, I heard a First Nations elder at an Aboriginal language gathering ask: What if the Creator gave all the birds the same song? He suggested the natural world would be boring and less joyful. Extending his story to humans, he proposed that the Creator gave each First Nation (and race, I would add) their own language to enrich the world and make it more joyful. That story has remained with me for many years. It informed my belief that the Creator also made each race and ethnicity for the same reason: to make this planet a more interesting and joyous home. Every race, ethnicity, culture and language are gifts of the Creator. We can never forget that. Yet we behave in the very opposite way from what the Creator envisioned: we resist one another because of the differences among our gifts.

Further, I believe that the Creator intended diversity to be our greatest challenge. As spiritual beings, we are on this earth to work toward becoming the best human being we can. If we were all the same, like the birds singing the same song, life would be less interesting and contain fewer challenges. To learn to be better people, we need challenges. The greatest challenge provided us by the Creator's own love of diversity, of different songs, is to learn to respect and help one another to grow, in spite of our different skin colours, languages, cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, etc. Our greatest challenge is to see past these primarily physical differences, recognize a fellow child of the Creator, and treat that spiritual being in a socially just way, at home, at work and in the community.

## ***Suggested Activities/Exercises***

- Hold inter-racial talking circles. To deepen understanding between First Nations people and others, we must be brought together with intention. Talking circles, common in First Nations communities and imbued with deep spirituality, could be held. Over time and

tears, we would find similarities in our humanness. Similar stories of hurts, sorrows, joys and lessons learned would be shared. Our common humanity would be discovered but at a deeper level than would occur in an intellectual (mental aspect) discussion.

- Sponsor inter-racial, inter-denominational prayer circles. First Nations communities and others could also join in common prayer, for peace, for reconciliation, for our planet, etc. A portion of such prayer circles could be conducted with prayers spoken aloud, individual by individual. When one speaks from the heart, the power of one's words touches, softens and heals other hearts.
- Undertake a campaign to support First Nations spiritual and cultural practices. Those whose eyes and hearts have been opened to First Nations issues could use their mental faculties (intelligence, research skills, writing and speaking abilities, etc.) to advocate for respect for First Nations spiritual and cultural practices. Because first Nations spiritual beliefs, cultures and languages are gifts of the Creator, it is right and just to advocate for their maintenance, preservation and revitalization.
- Advocate for Canada to behave honourably toward First Nations people. As spiritual beings, we want our country to be an honourable nation. It is, therefore, a spiritual act to call upon Canada to support the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; act on the goals of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which Canada is a signatory; and complete the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission within its seven-year time frame, so we can move forward as a country with increased harmony and peace. ▣



### *For reflection and discussion*

- 1) What are the spiritual/religious barriers that separate non-Native Canadians from First Nations citizens? What are the stereotypes held by non-Natives about First Nations' belief systems, e.g., non-believers/atheists, worship nature/animism, etc.? What are the stereotypes First Nations people have about non-Native Christians, e.g., proselytizers, hypocrites, etc.? What actions can we take collectively to eliminate such stereotypes? What collective actions can we take to break down all spiritual/religious barriers and increase inter-racial, inter-denominational social justice?
- 2) Consider the following definition: "Institutional racism: The network of institutional structures, policies and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites and discrimination, oppression and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups. The advantages created for Whites are often invisible to them, or are considered 'rights' available to everyone as opposed to 'privileges' awarded to only some individuals and groups." As a spiritual being, as a person striving for social justice in Canadian society, what thoughts and feelings come up for you after reading this definition? What actions can we take to learn more about, and dismantle, white privilege/advantage to work toward true equality for all Canadians, including First Nations?

### *Resources*

1. Adams, Maurianne, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin. (2007). *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, second edition. New York: Routledge.
2. Torres, Carlos Alberto and Pedro Noguera, eds. (2008). *Social Justice Education for Teachers: Paulo Freire and the Possible Dream*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

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# Understanding Treaty as Covenant

By Stan McKay<sup>1</sup>

*“So long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow.”*

I GREW UP IN Fisher River (Manitoba) and each summer we attended “Treaty Days” as a family. Most everyone on the reservation attended and many families tented on the riverbank at what was called the “Treaty Grounds.” Representatives of the government of Canada came with bundles of five-dollar bills to “pay treaty.” There was always at least one RCMP officer present, in the formal red coat, to oversee the proceedings. It was there that I learned that I was a “Treaty Indian,” #2640074901.

Much more recently, I have had an opportunity to listen to the Treaty Commissioner who does educational workshops in the province of Saskatchewan. His primary message is that all Canadians are treaty people as a result of the historic treaties which involve all who benefit from the land sharing agreements.

Almost four years ago, Calling Lakes Centre in the Qu’Appelle Valley hosted an event that was entitled “Treaty as Covenant.” The theme had evolved from conversations between staff at the Centre and leaders from the Treaty 4 office in Fort Qu’Appelle. The engagement of resource people from First Nations and conversations with United

Church people around ‘right relations’ developed the concept, as an elder described the signing of the treaty at Fort Qu’Appelle.

When the treaty party arrived in the Qu’Appelle Valley, they were met by first Nations leaders who then left after initial conversations. They went away for ceremonies and prayer. The government officials grew impatient, but the First Peoples returned to complete the process. The elders had guided the leaders to understand that the agreement through treaty was a tripartite project. It involved the Creator, the Queen’s representatives and First Peoples. We have spoken often about the spirit of the treaties and have maintained that it is much more than a legal document. We are bound by a covenant.

The biblical record of covenant making begins with a very inclusive example. Genesis 9:6-17 tells of God speaking to Noah and his family, the covenant being with “all living beings, and all birds and all animals.” Noah’s family is also included. This is an everlasting covenant with creation. There is a binding promise in perpetuity.

The language of covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is now limited to the people of Israel (humans in a nation). These people are described as “God’s children.” It is an understanding that there is an end to “mission” so that no one will teach their neighbour. They will all be forgiven and all shall know.

A regular pattern of worship focuses on Matthew 26: 26-30. This is a supper defined as a covenant meal. How inclusive is it? Does it clarify Christ’s call to share life and does it lift up the concept of “God so loved the world”?

We do not all see treaties in the same way. The “Queen’s representatives” did not hold treaties as sacred documents in as much as they were a means to an end. They were about getting access to the land.

In 1873, Indian Superintendent Provencher wrote: “There are two modes wherein the Government may treat Indian Nations who inhabit this territory ... treaties may be made with them simply with a view to the extinction of their rights, by agreeing to pay them a sum and afterwards abandon them to themselves. On the other side, they may be instructed, civilized, and led to a mode of life more in conformity with the new position of this country, and accordingly make them good, industrious and useful citizens” (*Letter to the Minister of the Interior*, 31). ■

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1. This article was published in *In Peace and Friendship: A new relationship with Aboriginal Peoples*. Toronto: KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. 2008.



*For reflection and discussion*

- 1) What stood out for you in this article?
- 2) In your opinion, is the Canadian Government able to honour the treaties in keeping with the way Native Peoples understand them?
- 3) What stands in the way of the Canadian Government truly living up to treaty obligations?
- 4) According to this article, we are all treaty people. What are some ways that you can live up to the treaty covenants?

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# Called to Reconcile

*By Lori Ransom*

*Peace be with you. As God has sent me, so I send you. When Jesus had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'*

John 20:21-22

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation ... entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ.*

2 Cor. 5:17-22

- "It was so moving."
- "That was difficult to hear."
- "It took real courage to tell that story."
- "Did nothing good come out of the experience?"
- "I never knew. How come we've never been told?"
- "What can we do?"

**T**HESE SIX STATEMENTS are common reactions among Canadians to the story of residential schools. The story is not well known and, as a result, the ongoing effects of this story on the lives of all Canadians are not well understood. The First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples who went to residential schools, or whose family or community members attended the schools, have a better appreciation for the legacy, but they have had few opportunities to explore the meaning of this history with their neighbours.

The experience of First Nation, Inuit and Métis people in being sent to residential schools — an experience of schooling and education that is different from that of their non-Aboriginal neighbours — has created another barrier to understanding between peoples, between members of the same country, and between people who live in the same communities across this land.

Barriers to understanding between people exist all around the world. Lack of understanding and appreciation for what others have experienced historically is the basis for so much conflict between peoples. Writing from the South African context, John DeGruchy reminds us: “The gospel is about overcoming alienation and estrangement between God and ourselves, between us and others, and between all of us and creation.”

We are called to reconcile with our neighbours, to love them as ourselves. Christ came to a world of brokenness: broken individuals, broken relationships between individuals, families and nations. Christ shared in our brokenness by allowing his body to be broken on the cross, taking our sins upon himself and calling us to repentance: to turn away from our brokenness as individuals, in our relations within families and all the people of our communities; to turn towards the building of a new creation. We are called to see everything in a new way. We are called to unlock the doors that we sometimes hide behind out of fear and to be at peace. We are invited to be unafraid, to go out into the world to reconcile with others, empowered with the knowledge that God has sent the Holy Spirit to help us and that we are entrusted by God to be Christ’s ambassadors in the work of reconciliation.

John DeGruchy writes about this calling in terms of the covenants we have with other human beings: “Covenanting implies accepting responsibility for the past and committed participation in its healing, sharing together in the task of restoring justice in the present, and keeping hope alive for greater reconciliation in the future. This is a task which demands the participation of all citizens, irrespective of whether they are people of faith or not, but it certainly is a special responsibility for those who believe they are called to be God’s agents of reconciliation and justice in the world.”

- “That was so much fun.”
- “I learned a lot.”
- “I enjoyed the richness of the culture, the dancing, the music, the visual art.”
- “There are so many similarities in what we believe.”
- “The humour was wonderful.”
- “When can we get together again?”

These six sentences are common reactions among Canadians — First Nation, Inuit and Métis, the children of immigrants from around the world, those who have lived in Canada for generations, or the newly arrived — when they come together to get to know each other better.

We live at an exciting time in our history. It is a time when we can see that everything old has passed away and everything can become new. We are being called to participate in a movement of healing and reconciliation in Canada. We have an opportunity to take part in the work of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This will be a time to gather with neighbours at events, to listen and to learn. It will be hard at first. The stories will be difficult to hear. And we will wonder what we can do. But the beauty of the process is that we will gather together as neighbours.

This is a time for overcoming alienation and estrangement, if we are not afraid to seize the opportunity and take the time to make new connections with others, and ultimately establish new bonds of friendship and community with our neighbours. This is the hope we have in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission’s task is not to do the work for us, but to facilitate reconciliation, to help us build new relationships and consequently new communities: strong and healthy, where neighbours love each other, as Christ loved them.

Love thy neighbour. Respect and value each other for what makes you different. Give thanks that people have different gifts to share. Welcome everyone at the table. If some among you are hungry, give

them something to eat. If some are cold, give them shelter. Repent! If anyone has anything against you, go and be reconciled to them. This is what we have been taught. This is what healing and reconciliation is all about.

## Suggested Activities/Exercises

- Invite a First Nation, Inuit or Métis individual(s) to an event, telling them you are looking for opportunities to learn from Aboriginal people about their culture, history, hopes and dreams or spirituality. In urban settings, Native Friendship Centres and Cultural Centres can provide assistance arranging speakers, including traditional Native Elders. Aboriginal academics work at post-secondary institutions across the country. Local Aboriginal artists and musicians can be fascinating guests. If you are near a First Nation, Inuit or Métis community, contact their local government staff to discuss possibilities — many offer cultural programming intended to help others learn about their communities.
- Have a conversation about residential schools. The Legacy of Hope Foundation has resources — go to [www.1000conversations.ca](http://www.1000conversations.ca) for more information.
- Hold a service at your church reflecting on how people are meant to live in community with each other in the Canadian context. Liturgical resources are available from the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches.
- Read a book by a Canadian Aboriginal author (e.g., Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*) or watch a film (e.g., *Niigaanibatowaad: FrontRunners*). Discuss it with your group. A study guide is available from the Anglican, United, and Presbyterian churches for *Niigaanibatowaad: FrontRunners*.
- Follow the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Where possible, participate in TRC events. Organize opportunities to talk with others about what you learn as you follow the TRC's work. Consult the TRC website ([www.trc-cvr.ca/](http://www.trc-cvr.ca/)) for up-to-date information on Commission activities.
- If you are interested in leading work on healing and reconciliation in your community, training is available from the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches. Contact the national offices of any of these denominations for more information. ■



## *For reflection and discussion*

- 1) What questions do you have about the residential schools system, about the lives and interests of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people today? How might you go about answering those questions?
- 2) Many Biblical passages speak about how we are called to live in community with others. Chose some of your favourite passages and read them in the context of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. Try to imagine what a First Nation, Métis or Inuit individual might think about when reading these passages. What are your reflections as you read these passages in the Canadian context?
- 3) What questions or concerns do you have about reaching out and getting to know First Nation, Inuit and Métis people better? If you are a member of one of these communities, what questions or concerns do you have about reaching out and getting to know non-Aboriginal neighbours, including at local churches? How might you go about easing these concerns?

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