

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

THOMAS KING'S THE INCONVENIENT INDIAN

A Curious Account of Native People in North America

From the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee
of the Christian Reformed Church in North America





We're a committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America that cares deeply about the relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians.

This is a four-part book club based on Thomas King's book *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Your sessions will be guided by four videos. Each session's video will feature a guest speaker touching on some of the key themes of the book, settler-Indigenous relations in North America, and our shared Christian faith. Each session includes discussion questions to prompt further thought and meaningful dialogue.



This project was made possible by the generous work of Alyssa Broadbent, Mike Hogeterp, Richard Silversmith, Harold Rosher, Shawn Brix. And the support of the CRC Extension Fund.

SUPPLIES NEEDED



Copy of Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (available in print, ebook, and audio formats)

If your group cannot afford to buy the book please contact us at cimc@crcna.org as some copies may be available for loan.



A means to watch the video (computer, internet access, smartTV, video/projection, sound)

Optional:



Notebook and pen to jot down additional thoughts while watching or discussing



Simple refreshments if desired

PROMO VIDEO LINK

Get your group excited about this study with this overview [video](https://youtu.be/JF9QX32WZgc) | <https://youtu.be/JF9QX32WZgc>.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Follow these simple steps to facilitate the book club sessions:

1. Introduction **watch** this [video](https://youtu.be/RKGZiVysxp0) | <https://youtu.be/RKGZiVysxp0> to prepare your group for this study.
2. **Read** the assigned book chapters in advance of your session.
3. **Watch** a video: Starting from session 1, watch the session video separately or together as a group.
4. **Come together** and discuss thoughts and questions from the readings, video, topics, or issues raised. Pause the video as discussion questions come up, or whenever a break to discuss seems necessary. We encourage you to discuss your own questions.
5. **Close** by praying together for settler-Indigenous relations in Canada, as well as for reconciliation and understanding in both the church and society as a whole.

INDIAN LAND FOR SALE

GET A HOME

OF

YOUR OWN

✱

EASY PAYMENTS



PERFECT TITLE

✱

POSSESSION

WITHIN

THIRTY DAYS

FINE LANDS IN THE WEST

IRRIGATED
IRRIGABLE

GRAZING

AGRICULTURAL
DRY FARMING

IN 1910 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR SOLD UNDER SEALED BIDS ALLOTTED INDIAN LAND AS FOLLOWS:

Location.	Acres.	Average Price per Acre.	Location.	Acres.	Average Price per Acre.
Colorado	5,211.21	\$7.27	Oklahoma	34,664.00	\$19.14
Idaho	17,013.00	24.85	Oregon	1,020.00	15.43
Kansas	1,684.50	33.45	South Dakota	120,445.00	16.53
Montana	11,034.00	9.86	Washington	4,879.00	41.37
Nebraska	5,641.00	36.65	Wisconsin	1,069.00	17.00
North Dakota	22,610.70	9.93	Wyoming	865.00	20.64

FOR THE YEAR 1911 IT IS ESTIMATED THAT **350,000 ACRES** WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE

For information as to the character of the land write for booklet, "INDIAN LANDS FOR SALE," to the Superintendent U. S. Indian School at any one of the following places:

CALIFORNIA:

Hoopa.

COLORADO:

Ignacio.

IDAHO:

Lapwai.

KANSAS:

Horton.

Nadeau.

MINNESOTA:

Onigum.

MONTANA:

Crow Agency.

NEBRASKA:

Macy.

Sanjee.

Winnabago.

NORTH DAKOTA:

Fort Totten.

Fort Yates.

OKLAHOMA:

Anadarko.

Catoomont.

Colony.

Darlington.

Muskogee.

Pawnee.

OKLAHOMA—Con.

Sac and Fox Agency.

Shawnee.

Wyandotte.

OREGON:

Klamath Agency.

Pendleton.

Roseburg.

Siletz.

SOUTH DAKOTA:

Cheyenne Agency.

Crow Creek.

Greenwood.

Lower Brule.

Pine Ridge.

Rosebud.

Sisseton.

WASHINGTON:

Fort Simcoe.

Fort Spokane.

Tekoa.

Tulalip.

WISCONSIN:

Oneida.

WALTER L. FISHER,

Secretary of the Interior.

ROBERT G. VALENTINE,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

The Library of Congress

“The audacious claim that a European could cross the ocean and claim land for the Europeans without consent of the Indigneous peoples was one part of the Doctrine of Discovery.”

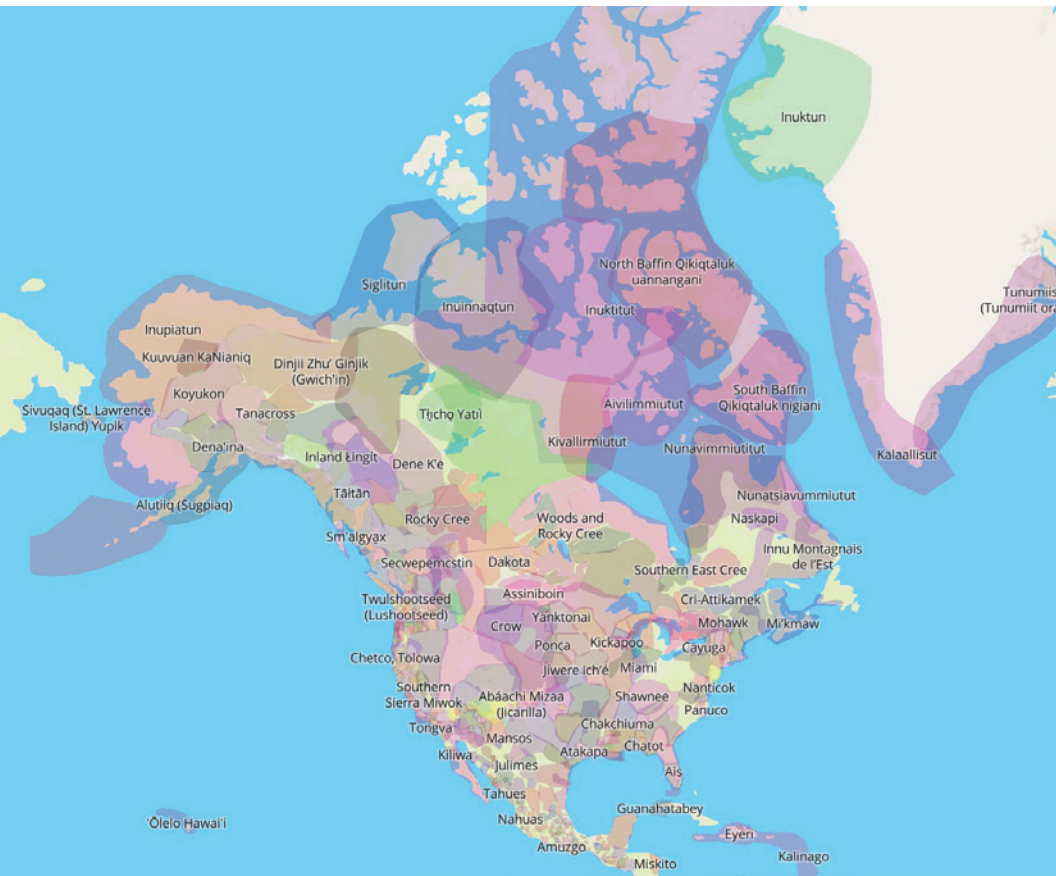
—Shannon Perez

SESSION 1

Colonization, the Church, and Confronting Ourselves


READ CHAPTERS 1-2 (VIDEO | <https://youtu.be/sd7NRfnjY9M>)

Indigenous peoples had a whole system of life on the land that became North America before settlers arrived.



Map of different Indigenous territories across North America. native-land.ca

Explore the map yourself at [Native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca).

A red-tinted historical painting depicting Christopher Columbus on the island of Guanahani (San Salvador) on October 12, 1492. Columbus, a bearded man in a dark robe, stands in the center, holding a wooden cross aloft in his right hand. He is surrounded by several Native Americans. To his left, a group of people, including a woman in a feathered headdress, look on. To his right, a Native American man in a feathered headdress and a woman in a dark dress with a feathered headdress look towards him. The background shows a tropical landscape with trees and a body of water.

“ It’s easy to say that [Christian Reformed churches] are immune to some of this really awful stuff that Mr. King is talking about. Well, no, we’re not. The reality is that the community we’re a part of has been party to the acquisition of land in this country and the breaking of treaties — and in many ways we benefit as a community from the breaking of treaties even if those treaties were broken before our communities arrived.”

—Mike Hogeterp, director of the Centre for Public Dialogue

Christopher Columbus landing on the island of Guanahani (San Salvador) on October 12, 1492; painting by Dioscoro Puebla, 1892.

The Banner

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What
Christianity
Accom-
plishes

Special
Indian Missions
Number



A Pagan Indian



Mr. J. C. Morgan and his family. Mr. Morgan is Rev. L. P. Derry's interpreter and native evangelist.

WESTERN CANADA
THE NEW ELDORADO

HOMES FOR EVERYBODY
EASY TO REACH
NOTHING TO FEAR
PROTECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

WHEAT LAND
RICH VIRGIN SOIL
LAND FOR MIXED FARMING
LAND FOR CATTLE RAISING

FREE 160 ACRES
WESTERN CANADA
FARM LANDS

"WESTWARD THE STAR OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY"

THIS IS YOUR
OPPORTUNITY
WHY NOT EMBRACE IT?

INFORMATION AND ADVICE
FROM THE GOVERNMENT
W.D. SCOTT
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
J. OBEID SMITH
1812 CHANDLER CROSS
LONDON, ENGLAND



Top left: Cover of *The Banner*, the Christian Reformed Church's magazine, showing "What Christianity Accomplishes" Copyright © 1933, *The Banner*, Christian Reformed Church in North America. All rights reserved. Used by permission. TheBanner.org

Top right: Library and Archives Canada

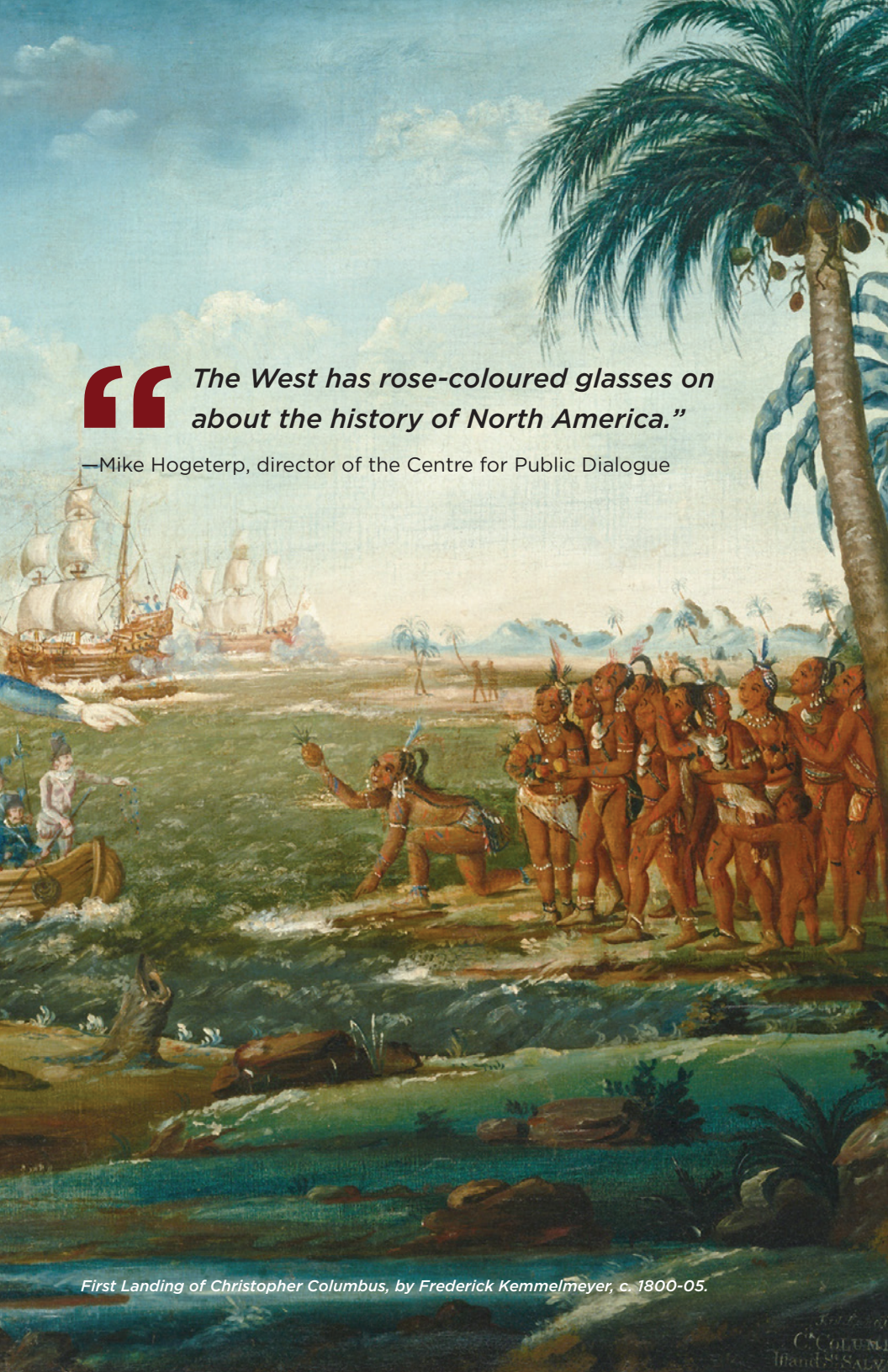
Bottom: *The Landing of Columbus, October 11, 1492*; painting by Currier & Ives, 1846

Though it is difficult to determine with accuracy, historians estimate that from 200,000 to 2 million Indigenous people were living in the area that would become Canada before settlers arrived (a figure of 500,000 is most widely accepted). Exposure to diseases such as smallpox, reduced access to traditional foods leading to starvation, and warfare were some of the factors directly caused by European settlement that led to a rapid decline in Indigenous populations.



“ *The West has rose-coloured glasses on about the history of North America.* **”**

—Mike Hogeterp, director of the Centre for Public Dialogue



First Landing of Christopher Columbus, by Frederick Kemmelmeyer, c. 1800-05.

Gift of
C. COLUMB
Island & SALV



The End of the Trail sculpture by James Earle Fraser in Waupun, Wisconsin. Photo by Veever, distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution—Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

DISCUSSION

- What reactions did you have while Shannon Perez was reading the “In 1492” poem?
- In what ways does the Doctrine of Discovery still affect the church today?
- How has reading this book helped you understand land and ownership in a new way?
- There are many images King uses within the book. Check out his description of the *End of the Trail* sculpture, and discuss the way it depicts colonialism. Additionally, discuss what it means for a non-Indigenous person to depict Indigenous peoples.

SESSION 2

Rights, Self Determination, and Land Stewardship

READ CHAPTERS 3-4 (VIDEO | https://youtu.be/JqeA8i00T_w)

“Here in Canada, we have a mechanism that is called a Certificate of Status. It is a little card that gets issued, many people call them Treaty Cards.”

—Harold Roscher



Example of Canadian Certificate of Indian Status (Status Card) Photo by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

“ An Indigenous person could behave in a certain way, and that could define them collectively as a stereotype — often, in a negative way. However, that is not often the case for other cultures.”

—Shannon Perez





A trail of tears memorial monument in New Echota, Georgia, honouring the 4,000 Cherokees who died on the Trail of Tears.

DISCUSSION

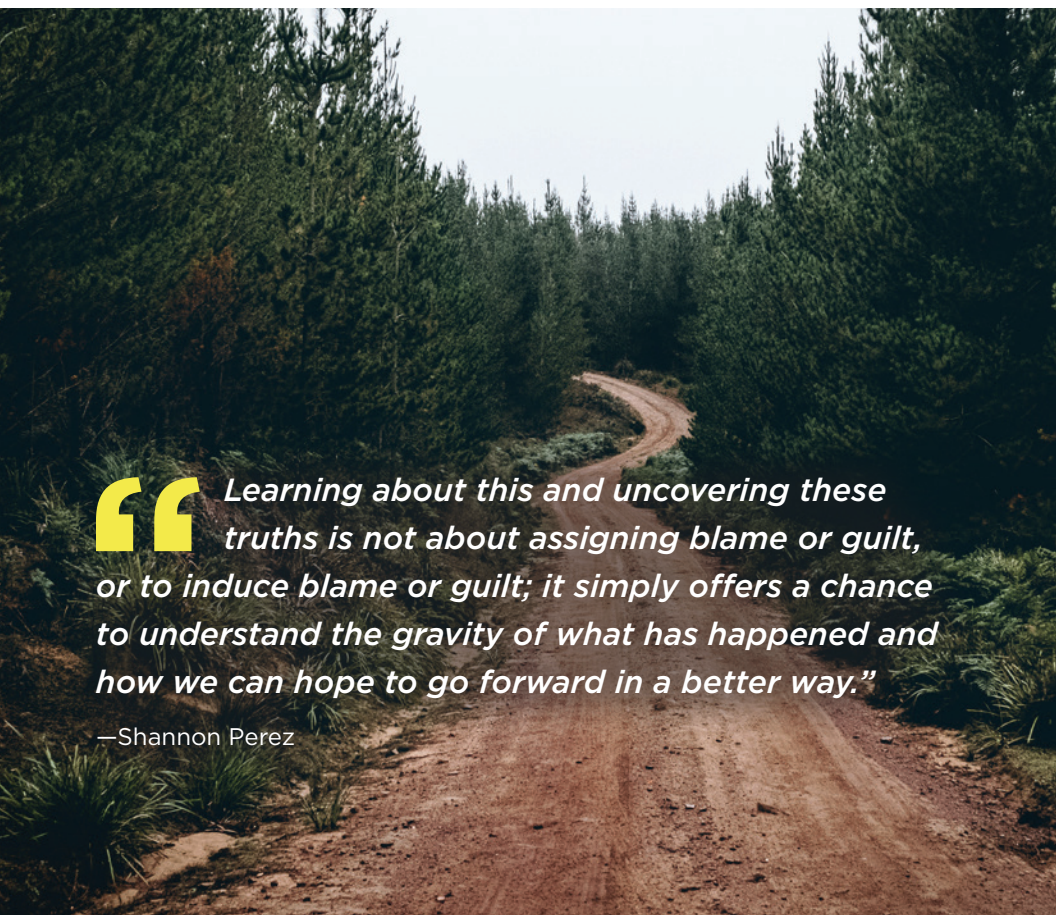
- From a Christian perspective, how can you reconcile how land was taken from Indigenous peoples?
- How do we honour or remember the losses that occurred during the Trail of Tears?
- King says, “In fact, scenarios such as this were commonplace. Coercion coming in a variety of forms and flavours. If a tribe or a band refused to sign a removal treaty, government officials would find a few members who could be convinced to sign, and then the treaty would be applied to the entire tribe. Native people opposed to such treaties and tactics were frequently threatened with military action.” Respond to this quote together.
- How do we live as Christians in the aftermath of unethical events?

SESSION 3

(Never) Forget about It — The Implications of Broken Covenants

READ CHAPTERS 5-7 (VIDEO | <https://youtu.be/U3j9sOntf9I>)

Canada, to make way for settlement, needed land. One of the ways that Canada went about getting land was by treaty.



“*Learning about this and uncovering these truths is not about assigning blame or guilt, or to induce blame or guilt; it simply offers a chance to understand the gravity of what has happened and how we can hope to go forward in a better way.*”

—Shannon Perez

The James Bay Treaty

Treaty No. 9.

Articles of a Treaty made and concluded at the several dates mentioned therein, in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and five between His Most Gracious Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland, by His Commissioners Duncan Campbell Esq. of Ottawa, Ontario, Esquire, and Samuel Stewart, of Ottawa, Ontario, Esquire; and Samuel Hogg, his Majesty's Indian Agent, representing the Province of Ontario, of the one part; and the Ojibway Cree and other Indians, inhabitants of the territory within the limits hereinafter defined and described by their Chiefs and Headmen, hereto subscribed, of the other part:

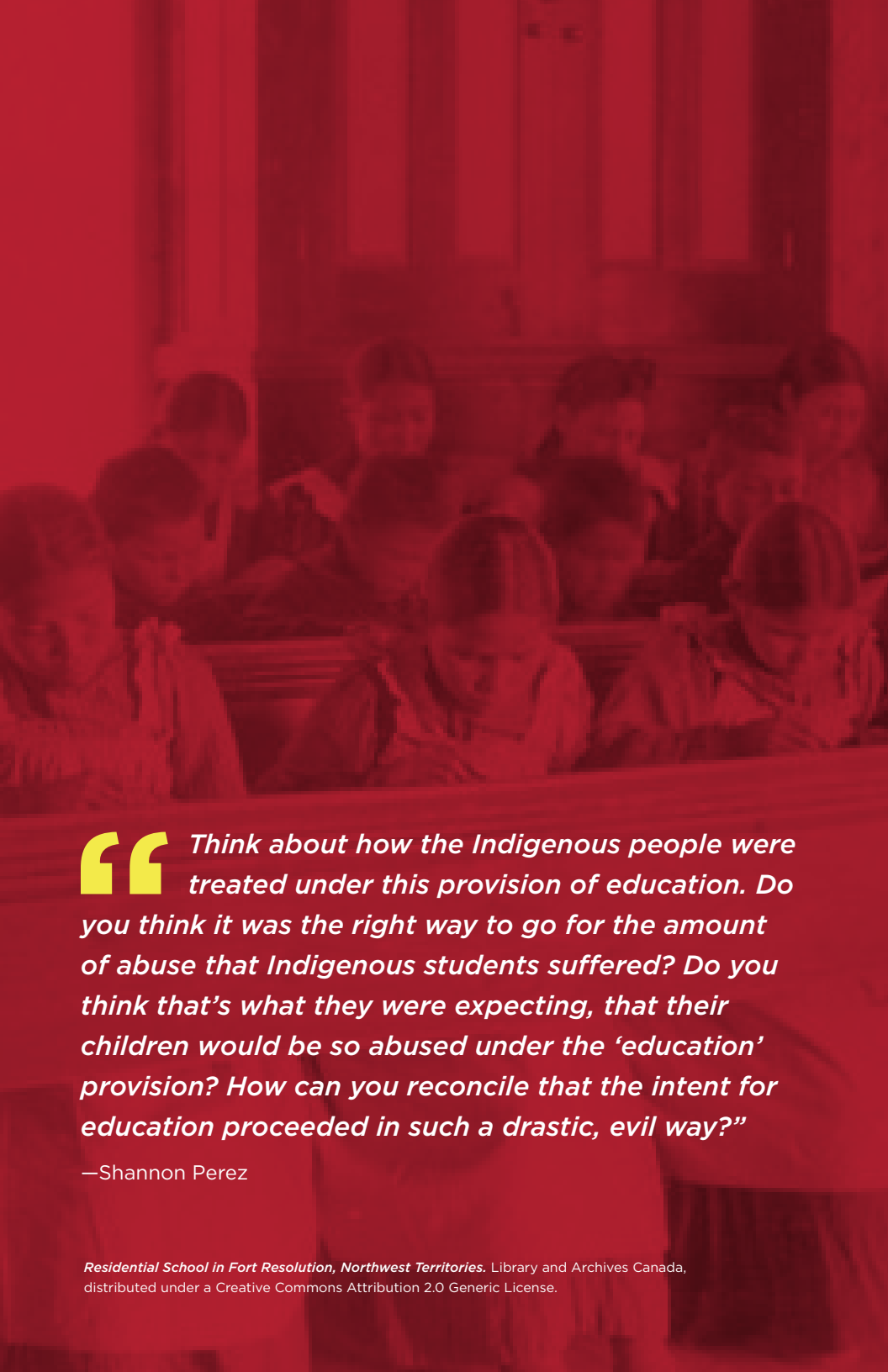
Whereas the Indians inhabiting the territory hereinafter defined have been convened to meet a Commission representing His Majesty's Government of the Dominion of Canada at certain places in the said territory in this present year of 1905, to deliberate upon certain matters of interest to His Most Gracious Majesty, of the one part, and the said Indians of the other:

And whereas the said Indians have been notified and informed by His Majesty's said Commission that it is His Majesty's pleasure to open for settlement, immigration, trade, travel, mining, lumbering and such other purposes as to His Majesty may seem meet, a tract of country bounded and described as hereinafter mentioned and to obtain the consent thereto of His Indian subjects inhabiting the said tract, and to make a treaty and arrange with them, so that there may be peace and good will between them and His Majesty's subjects, and that His Indian people may know and be assured of what allowances they are to expect upon and issue from His Majesty's Bounty and benevolence:

And whereas the Indians of the said tract, duly convened in Council at the respective points named hereunder, and being requested by His Majesty's Commissioners to name certain Chiefs and Headmen who should be authorized on their behalf to conduct such negotiations and sign any treaty to be provided therein, and to become responsible to His Majesty for the faithful performance by their respective Bands of such obligations as shall be imposed by them, the said Indians have therefore recommended for that purpose the several Chiefs and Headmen who have subscribed hereto:

And whereas the said Commissioners have succeeded to negotiate a treaty with the Ojibway Cree and other Indians, inhabiting the district hereinafter defined and described, and the same has been agreed upon and concluded by the respective Bands of the said Indians and the said Commissioners do hereby cede, release, surrender and give up to the Government of the Dominion of Canada, for His Majesty the King and His Successors forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands included within the following limits, that is to say: That portion or tract of land lying and being in the Province of Ontario bounded on the north by the English land and the northern boundaries of the territory ceded by the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1868, and the Robinson-Rupert Treaty of 1869, and bounded on the east and north by the boundaries of the said Province of Ontario as defined by law and on the west by a part of the western boundary of the territory ceded by the North West Angle Treaty, 1850, the said land containing an area of nearly thousand square miles, more or less.

And

A photograph of a group of Indigenous children sitting at wooden desks in a classroom. They are looking down at papers or books on their desks. The image is covered with a solid red overlay. Large white quotation marks are positioned to the left of the text.

“ Think about how the Indigenous people were treated under this provision of education. Do you think it was the right way to go for the amount of abuse that Indigenous students suffered? Do you think that’s what they were expecting, that their children would be so abused under the ‘education’ provision? How can you reconcile that the intent for education proceeded in such a drastic, evil way?”

—Shannon Perez



Top: *Students of St. Anne's Indian Residential School in Fort Albany, Ontario, c. 1945*
Algoma University Archives

Bottom: *Residential School in Regina, Saskatchewan, 1908*



*Do not move an ancient boundary
stone set up by your ancestors.”*

—Proverbs 22:28



**“ Although [settlers] moved the boundary stones,
when you do that, there is a consequence.”**

—Richard Silversmith

DISCUSSION

- What are the things that we are doing without realizing they could be hurtful to Indigenous peoples?



- How do we understand a government apology? What standard do we hold it to from a Christian perspective?
- In the context of what you've learned and discussed through this book reflect on Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."
- How can you help carry out that apology, as a Christian?

SESSION 4

Walking the Road of Reconciliation

READ CHAPTERS 8-10 (VIDEO | <https://youtu.be/bqQz-bl4FXc>)



KAIROS Blanket Exercise program, which teaches the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.
Heather Brooks Photography



In this photo Shannon Perez, Darren Roorda, and Kathy Vandergrift alongside commissioners and honorary witnesses are presenting the CRC's gifts to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the Ottawa event. The CRC promised to continue learning about the common history it shares with Indigenous people.

“ It was one thing for the church to share what it thought was good news; it was another thing altogether for the church to do that in a way that was so wrapped in cultural baggage and cultural expectations, and in a way that demanded things from people rather than offering a gift to people.”

—Rev. Shawn Brix, Canadian church relations liaison,
Calvin Theological Seminary



Canada's Department of Justice website explores the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canada's criminal justice system. They found that Indigenous people, especially women, are more likely to become victims of crime, that Indigenous people are overrepresented as homicide victims and people accused of homicide, and more.

Department of Justice

Citation: "Justfacts: Indigenous Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System," Department of Justice, www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jf-pf/2019/may01.html; and "Understanding the Overrepresentation of Indigenous People in the Criminal Justice System," Department of Justice, www.justice.gc.ca/socjs-esjp/en/ind-aut/uo-cs

QUICK FACTS

- **1996** — the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found that the greatest contributor to overrepresentation in Canada's criminal justice system was colonial values at the root of Canadian criminal laws, policies, and practices that had negative impacts on Indigenous peoples.
- **2014** — 28 percent of Indigenous people reported being victimized in the previous year, compared to 18 percent of non-Indigenous people.
- **2016/2017** — Although making up 4.1 percent of the Canadian adult population, Indigenous adults accounted for 30 percent of provincial/territorial custody admissions, 27 percent of federal custody admissions, and 27 percent of the federal in-custody population.

DISCUSSION

- As Christians, how can we view covenants with regard to past treaties?
- Describe an example or two of something that you found surprising or even upsetting in your reading of King's book.
- How is the Spirit convicting you to respond?

