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Monday June 1 TRC's Theme "We still have a lot to learn."

I began this journey in 1977 when I became the Moniash Meketekene (white minister guy). I soon found acceptance and respect among the wonderful people of Waywayseecappo. The chief one day dropped by and said, "Let's go for a ride." And we wound our way to a place he hadn't visited for a long time. You'll know it as Birtle Residential School (Birtle, Manitoba). I met many ghosts that day as I walked with him down through the empty corridors. He had me promise to tell the story and that is what I have been doing. I found I had much more to learn than to teach. The Sweat Lodge cleansed me of many misconceptions and gave me clarity for the next part of the journey – my healing had begun.

At one of the Kairos workshops on that Monday of learning, Bishop Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Bishop in the Anglican Church of Canada) said, "*When Jesus goes into the Sweat Lodge you may not recognize him when he comes out.*" Of course Jesus has been present in the life of the Indigenous Peoples long before the first boat arrived. I came out of that first sweat knowing I could never be the same again – and I've shared my healing journey and what I have learned ever since. When I returned to Atlantic Canada I told the story and I was heckled by those who had supported the schools for decades - I was told I was a teller of lies. Even my own denomination said there was no truth in what I said. But the learning continued. I was invited to do the study to accompany our 1994 Confession and then I went to Sacred Assembly '95 where Elijah Harper sent many non-Indigenous Canadians on their own healing journey. I joined with others looking for a way forward together and found more and more people ready to embrace the journey. Denominationally we began "The Journey to Wholeness." I was invited to be the Educational Consultant for our church's consultations which took us from coast to coast and we began to hear the stories and the hopes of First Nations communities. By the time we finished we knew without a doubt we had a lot to learn as a denomination. Such efforts and events have taken me to many places. I thank God that my traditional elder, Eileen, has walked with me through many of the difficult places.

The TRC gave me great hope for a new day on this journey. I volunteered for a number of days at the TRC's National Event in Halifax (October, 2011) and stood by the side of Steward Folster as he spoke with passion about his own journey – so different from mine.



Left: Kenn Stright, Vivian Ketchum

Coming to the TRC's Closing and KAIROS' Intergenerational Gathering, continues to remind me how much I have to learn... and to share. More than anything, as I listened to the Decolonizing the Church workshop, I realized that it is time for the church to step back and begin its own healing journey, to step back and start over again (that's called decolonization, by the way) with new insights into scripture and what it means to be 'church'. But, dear church, please don't go to the place of guilt. Go to the place of lamentation. That is being more true to the biblical witness. Dear church, please don't try to 'fix' this ('God deliver us from white men wanting to do good' is an old cliché). Instead, plant seeds that will grow among us and have the potential to bear fruit in the third and fourth generations to come. It is then that reconciliation will be good for all of us.

Monday June 1, began with efforts of a panel to 'define' reconciliation. The one that sticks with me is... two who walk together on a path. They walk together, not one ahead and one behind, not one above and one below, but together, unique and distinct but walking together toward a future as yet unknown.

I walked out of my first Sweat in 1978 with Jesus by my side and with eyes opened, eyes that can never be closed again to the truth. Every step since has been part of the learning and the healing. We still have lots to learn.

Kenn Stright