Ian MacKenzie
Ian MacKenzie is a retired archdeacon who continues to live a full and enriched life by offering his knowledge and expertise through his continued work for the Anglican Church and other organizations. Ian received his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and History from Dalhousie University (Halifax, Nova Scotia), a Bachelor of Divinity from the University of King’s College (Halifax, Nova Scotia), and a Master of Sacred Theology from Union Theological Seminary (New York, New York). He also holds an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the Vancouver School of Theology (Vancouver, British Columbia).

Ian has spent the last 33 years in Caledonia as Rector of St. John’s, Old Massett, a Haida parish (1974–1979), Rector of St. Andrew’s Church, Laxgalts’ap (1979–1982), a Nisga’a parish, Archdeacon of Caledonia (1982–2000), Director of the Native Ministries Program, Vancouver School of Theology (1989–2000), and as an appointed member of the Nisga’a Tribal Council (1979–2001). Ian has been adopted by the Haida and Nisga’a nations, and he is a member of the Raven tribe. He is also a member of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. Since retirement, Ian is still active as the chair of TEENET (a global network for theological education by extension), of which he was a founding member. He is an Emeritus member of the Native Ministries Consortium, which he helped start in 1984. Since 2005, he works as a volunteer Associate Rector for St. Philip’s Church in Wrangell, Alaska, and for the Diocese of Alaska, Episcopal Church, USA. Ian continues to tutor for the Vancouver School of Theology Native Ministries Program. He is a founding member of the David Lochhead Institute for Religion, Technology and Culture and of the Indian Ecumenical Conference. Ian continues to work on the interface of Christianity and First Nations traditional religion as one of the founding members of the Centre for Indian Scholars.

Ian has written several works, including Native Communities Are Not the Same (1995), A Legend in His Own Time: Some Initial Reflections on the Work of Robert K. Thomas (1998), Caledonia: Thirty Years of Change and Development (1999), and Canadian Native Activist Movements (2001).
For Everything There is a Season

There is a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to reap; a time to kill, and a time to heal.

Now is the Time to Heal

My most emotional memory of Indian residential schools is a visit I made in 1970 to the abandoned Anglican Shingwauk Indian Residential School in Sault Saint Marie. At the time, I was a board member of the Nishnawbe Institute, a First Nations-run post-secondary educational institution located in Toronto. A group of First Nations people from Sault Saint Marie, led by Carol and Rolland Nadjiwon, was interested in establishing a similar centre in the Sault. They had heard that this school was being sold by the federal government and that they might be able to acquire it for a nominal fee. Carol had asked Robert K. Thomas and me to join her and Rolland in visiting the property so that we could decide if it was appropriate for our needs. I remember that as we prepared for this visit, we were very enthusiastic about the possibilities such a property might bring to our mutual vision for the institute we wanted to establish.

We arrived in Sault Saint Marie, connected with Carol and Rolland, and, with great anticipation, visited the building. I remember the four of us entering the building and looking at the various areas. Throughout the visit no one spoke, and when we left, we walked out of the building without saying a word. Finally, someone broke the silence with something like, “We should not acquire this building.” Throughout this visit, I felt a deep sadness, depression, unhappiness, fear, and anxiety and the desire to get out of there as fast as possible. It was as if the walls of the place had absorbed the pain of the hundreds of Aboriginal young people who had lived there over the years. The experience has haunted me ever since.

Even though the Anglican Church of Canada had closed most of its residential schools by 1969, the recognition of the devastating effects of these schools on most Aboriginal children was still a long time coming. The apology of the Anglican and United churches was still many years away, and the apology of the Government of Canada was to come thirty-nine years later. As of 2009, the Roman Catholic Church has yet to issue an apology. The federal government’s apology, four decades later, may bring a measure of closure to some of those men and women who experienced the schools or to their children and grandchildren who have also suffered so much. Who can possibly
comprehend the effects over generations of the loss of language, culture, identity, religion, and parenting skills caused by the desire of churches and governments to Christianize the “pagan Indians” and to solve the so-called “Indian problem” through education? Compounding all of this was the scandal of sexual abuse, which was often passed on within the families of the abused victims.

The truth is unbearably painful, but accepting the truth can be the first step in setting us free. Both Aboriginal people and the successors of the colonizers can achieve reconciliation only if we are free of the domination of the past. We are now called upon to enter into a period of sharing with the hope that reconciliation and healing will take place. Many Aboriginal persons are prepared to enter into this discussion. The challenge for the rest of Canadian society, particularly churches and governments, is to respond with actions as well as words in order to set the context for a permanent new relationship between all Canadians and Aboriginal people. While many Aboriginal persons are prepared to engage in the process of truth and reconciliation, are the leaders and members of churches, governments, and their institutions and the general public prepared to do the same? I suggest there are three areas of radical change that must take place if there is to be meaningful reconciliation.

**The Churches**

Some of the mainline churches have heard the critique of Aboriginal peoples since the late sixties and implemented policies and programs, which have changed some things for the better, but such change has usually been slow and has not been sustained. Moreover, it has only been a partial change at best. For example, while the Anglican Church of Canada, supported by some mainline churches, fostered the Indian ecumenical movement that brought together First Nations traditional religious leaders and doctors with First Nations Christians, churches across the country renewed their attacks on what they called “pagan” religious practices. Some denominations began to replace parish clergy in Aboriginal congregations with clergy from those communities, and this often resulted in replacing fully supported, salaried white clergy with non-stipendiary Aboriginal clergy. For reconciliation to take place, the churches, for one thing, need to support salaried, Aboriginal clergy.

Most urgently, churches need to consider opening a serious dialogue with Aboriginal theologians, doctors, and healers who represent part of the many diverse aspects of what the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs has called the *North American intellectual tradition*. One of the common threads Aboriginal writers who have already shared their stories in the first
volume of *From Truth to Reconciliation* is the call for recognition of the truth of past injustices and respect for their civilizations. Most of all, this is a call for respect for their traditional religious thoughts and practices. The only legitimate North American intellectual tradition comes from the diverse tribal societies in our midst!

Sustainable reconciliation will only take place when every Canadian seminary includes a course on Aboriginal religious traditions; when every congregation includes ongoing discussion and reflection on the North American intellectual tradition by initiating and inviting Aboriginal religious leaders to lead such discussions; when every Sunday school includes in its materials the truth about our past relationships and respect for the religious traditions of Aboriginal people living in their area; when Aboriginal peoples achieve real self-government within their churches; and when Christian theology not only respects Aboriginal thought, but learns from it. If this happens, it would make a reality of Bishop Mark MacDonald’s idea that, in this century, the gospel is finally coming to North America as Aboriginal theologians take their proper place within this society.12

**Governments and Their Agencies**

In 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued an apology to Aboriginal people for their treatment over the years at residential schools. Many people have called for this apology for many years as a first step in moving towards reconciliation between the two civilizations. However, an apology without significant program development and massive funding directed at settling the many challenges of land claims, treaty issues, lifestyle issues, and village infrastructure and the rapidly growing social challenge of Indians in the cities makes a mockery of the Prime Minister’s words. For over a hundred years, First Nations peoples have called for the federal government to honour their treaties. Now, governments are involved in modern-day treaty negotiation processes. Several First Nations have entered into these processes in good faith and have signed treaties only to find that the federal government is breaking these treaties within the first five years.13 Provincial governments must also be required to reaffirm their commitment to a new beginning with funding and actions. For example, the Province of British Columbia’s words of commitment are contradictory. Here is what Willard Martin, Chief Councillor of the Nisga’a village of Laxgalts’ap said recently in an email following a suicide in the Nisga’a Nation:

I inform you all, with a lot of sadness, the loss of another Nisga’a youthful member. Sometime between late Saturday and early Sunday, a male young adult committed suicide ... Not much detail is yet available. It is utterly disturbing that in the midst of all this, Health Canada continues to shun pleas for increased support to
mental health and addictions. It is even more disturbing that, a week ago, the
media informed British Columbians about the Liberal Government diverting
considerable amounts of funds from mental health to something else. I think
the senior governments will have to become more realistic in their approaches
and we must confront them directly on the matter. It is clear that the underlying
cause of despairs is the continuing poverty or lack of economic activity. My village
government accepts that fact and is inclined towards initiatives that might service
a better quality of life for all. The Church has to step up and do their part in assisting
any change in the conditions that cause despair. I would urge those appointed to
conduct activity with the Truth and Reconciliation processes to be sure that they
address these kinds of occurrences as they surely stem from the lingering effects
of the infamous residential schools. If the governments and churches want to
create rewarding commemoration to the lives of thousands of aboriginal peoples
victimized at those institutions, they had better ensure that infrastructure and
programming to redirect the lives of future generations are well placed in strategic
places for effective change. The situation cannot be continually minimized. We can
no longer be acquiescent about these occurrences and the ongoing impoverished
First Nations communities.14

Governments and their institutions often make decisions out of ignorance of
the real situations facing Aboriginal peoples and with no sense of the history
of their own continuing colonialism. In fact, many argue that present-day
governments and their bureaucracies are still operating on the colonial
model. In order for reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the
Canadian nation to take place, every elected government official should be
required to participate in an Aboriginal cultures and history orientation
session. The same needs to happen with bureaucrats. It is usually at the
interface between individual Aboriginal people and those in bureaucracies
administering programs that systemic racism operates. Every civil servant
should participate in an orientation on this issue. Those who work directly
with Aboriginal peoples should be required to attend an in-depth cross-
cultural workshop lead by Aboriginal people whose primary foundation is in
the North American intellectual tradition.15

Duncan Campbell Scott directed the Indian residential school program from
1913 to 1932. His stated objective was clear:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this
country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone…
Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not
been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian
Department, that is the whole object of this Bill.16

Today, the leaders of our educational systems would like to think that
the statement applied only to an earlier period of time. While there are
now thousands of programs in educational institutions that are more
orientated to Aboriginal cultures and history than ever before, the fact is
that the underlying educational theory and practice continue to ignore the fundamentally different world views and methods of learning that characterize those following the North American intellectual tradition. In simplified terms, the difference is that the Western mind thinks in linear terms, whereas Aboriginal people think in circular terms. In most of our educational systems, these two processes never meet. When our educational systems recognize the validity of Aboriginal methods of thinking, we will be on the way to true reconciliation.

The challenge to Canadian academic institutions is well stated by Marie Battiste. She contends that academia must support the agenda of Indigenous scholarship, which is to transform Eurocentric theory so that it will not only include and properly value Indigenous knowledge, thought, and heritage in all levels of education, curriculum, and professional practice but also develop a cooperative and dignified strategy that will invigorate and animate Indigenous languages, cultures, knowledge, and vision in academic structures.18

There is some movement in this direction; University of Northern British Columbia continues to dialogue with First Nations post-secondary centres they support, such as Wilp Wilxo’oskwhl Nisga’a Institute.19 The Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art20 at Northwest Community College in Terrace, British Columbia, is working at teaching First Nations art, but also reflecting on the relationship between these art forms and Aboriginal land. The Native Ministries Consortium21 has successfully sought accreditation for arts transferable courses from Open Learning that are taught by First Nations religious leaders who have no formal degrees. Many other Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal programs within mainstream institutions across the country are embarking on similar activities.

The Earth

Canadians could be the recipients of a huge gift. As people in churches, governments, and communities open to the offer of reconciliation and dialogue by First Nations peoples, we will be greatly enriched. The North American intellectual tradition could change all of us in its understanding of the relationships among humans, all sentient life, and Earth itself. It would mean that instead of thinking of Earth as something to exploit for humankind’s benefit, we could begin to think of how we can live in harmony with Earth in all of its manifestations. I remember years ago when Bob Thomas and I were driving across the western United States and arrived at the Mississippi River. I had never seen or crossed that great river, so we found a place where we could park22 next to it and walk by its shores. I picked up some pebbles and began to skip them across the water. After awhile, Bob
asked me why I was hurting the river. For the first time in my life, I began to see rivers and lakes as having a being of their own. What a gift to me! And what a gift Aboriginal peoples might offer to the world if, through them, we began to understand what it means to live in harmony with Earth. It might be the catalyst that would save our planet from what looks more and more like its inevitable destruction.

Many Aboriginal people are offering Canadians an unimaginably generous hand of forgiveness and are prepared to enter into discussion with the colonizers. The time is now for churches, governments and their institutions, and for all Canadians to begin the process of exploration that will lead to change. If we can do this, in the words of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, we will then

resolve a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Canada: that while we assume the role of defender of human rights in the international community, we retain, in our conception of Canada’s origins and make-up, the remnants of colonial attitudes of cultural superiority that do violence to the Aboriginal peoples to whom they are directed.23

There is a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to reap; a time to kill, and a time to heal.

Now is the time to heal.
Notes
1 Adapted from Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 King James Version.
3 The Nishnawbe Institute, formally called the Rochdale College Institute for Indian Studies, was founded by Wilfred Pelletier, Carol Nadjiwon, Jeannette Corbiere, Edna Manitowabi, and me in 1967. The Institute was the first Native-run post-secondary institution in Canada.
4 Thomas was a Cherokee anthropologist who was a major resource person and teacher for the Institute in delivering cross-cultural and Canadian Indian workshops. At the time, he was on the faculty of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. See Pavlik, Steve (ed.) (1998). A Good Cherokee, A Good Anthropologist: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Thomas. Los Angeles, CA: University of California. See also many of Thomas’ published papers and articles. Retrieved 25 September 2008 from: http://works.bepress.com/robert_thomas/
5 For a complete list and dates of all the residential schools run by the Anglican Church, please visit the Remembering the Children website. Retrieved 25 September 2008 from: http://www.rememberingthechildren.ca/history/school-list-acc.htm
6 See appendices 2 and 3.
7 This was the position of the Government of Canada as stated by Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1913–1932. See the transcript of the Special Committee of the House of Commons, 30 March 1920. Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 6810, file 470–2–3, part 7. See also: Titley, E. Brian (1986). A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.
8 Many resist participating in this process for a variety of reasons ranging from personal pain to the conviction that society and its institutions of church and state continue to implement the goal of total assimilation through programs like self-government.
9 The Anglican Church implementation of the Hendry Report, formation of Project North, the support of Native opposition to the Trudeau White Paper, the first MacKenzie River pipeline proposal, the initial funding of the Indian Ecumenical Conference, the gradual placing of First Nations clergy in First Nations congregations to name a few of the many positive activities over the past 40 years. See also: MacDonald, David (2008). A Call to the Churches: “You shall be called repairer of the breach.” In Marlene Brant Castellano, Linda Archibald, and Mike De Gagne (eds.), From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation: 341–358.
11 Vancouver School of Theology now offers several courses by Dr. Martin Brokenleg on this subject.
13 Terrace Standard (2008). Budget Issue upsets Nisga’a. Quoting Kevin McKay, Chairman, Nisga’a Lisims Government, July 2, 2008, “‘What the most frustrating thing for us is that we signed the treaty and so did Canada and there’s the mandate in there to renegotiate the fiscal agreement and they are not doing it,’ said McKay. ‘It’s as if they regard the treaty as something that was over when they signed it, but it’s not.’ ‘When our negotiators
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They sit across from their negotiators, what they say to us is they don’t have the mandate to sign a new [fiscal] agreement.’ McKay said the Nisga’a leadership is perplexed by the federal stance because it holds up the Nisga’a treaty as an example of what modern-day treaties can accomplish.”

14 Willard Martin sent this email on 18 August 2008.

15 Between 1967 and 1971, the Nishnawbe Institute conducted seven cross-cultural workshops attended by clergy and a large number of civil servants. We found that we needed 10 days in order to cause significant change in attitudes. It is important to remember the impact of government bureaucracies on both the creation and implementation of government philosophy.

16 Scott, Duncan Campbell (1920:54–55, 63); see note #7.


19 As the former president of WWNI, I was part of the team negotiating a relationship with University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). At one point, we suggested to the director of Graduate Studies that their future Ph.D. program might need to consider the possibility of an oral thesis rather than a written one. He was not enthusiastic. However, I understand that in the last few years, UNBC First Nations graduate students have begun to challenge the existing academic process as inappropriate for their way of thinking.

20 For more information, see: \url{http://www.nwcc.bc.ca/FredaDiesing/Index.cfm}

21 For more information, see: \url{http://www.vst.edu/nativemin/nmc.php}

22 When one drove with Bob Thomas, stopping to park was an unusual event. With the exception of stopping to eat or gas up, he drove until we arrived at our destination, be it 10 or 3,000 miles.

Inuit children who lived too far away and had to stay at school during the summer
Anglican Mission School
Aklavik, NWT, 1941
Photographer: M. Meilke
National Archives of Canada, PA-101771
[Reprinted from the Legacy of Hope Foundation’s Where Are the Children? exhibit
catalogue (2003)]