

CONTEMPORARY EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION

By Chandra Behrenz

INTRODUCTION

Colonization and the resulting reality of racism at both individual and institutional levels are not inborn, but rather inherited from our environments. The first step to correcting this illness is a change in each individual heart. Every area of life is affected by dysconscious racism: Education, health, and home (including housing, food and water). Today I am using the medicine wheel to break down the learnings.

THE EAST

The east is the right-hand side of the medicine wheel as one looks at it. It marks the beginning (infancy) point. As it pertains to colonization, I start by paying attention to Indigenous versions of Canadian history. Everyone in Canada should have an awareness of the deplorable living conditions on some reserves. Given this, one will certainly see the strengths and resilience of the First Nations. In addition, one may recognize and respect the First Nations' spirituality, which was a source of strength to the people. With this knowledge, I can be aware of dysconscious racism in my own environment.

THE SOUTH

The south is the bottom of the four medicine wheel segments. It marks a time of youthfulness and relating. Racist ideologies have fostered a social hierarchy that impacts everyone. In education, there is a strong need for funding for student services. In addition, there is the need for more Indigenous teachers, and professional training of non-Indigenous teachers. In relationships, being a good neighbour means getting to know Indigenous people on their own turf to increase understanding. Attendance at open events is also a great way to learn about their

culture. I also include the promotion of an awareness of the housing and water issues on many reserves today as being a part of being a good neighbour. This is a time to unlearn misconceptions and correct misunderstandings. Above all, it is important to support the “Indigenization” of the culture.

THE WEST

To the left of the medicine wheel, we are in the west – a time of responsibility or adulthood. This is the area where past injustices **MUST** be remedied. Everyone is called to work toward truth and reconciliation. For myself, I am working toward recognizing racist ideas, acts, and systems. When making cultural purchases, I am now aware to seek out firsthand if the purchase is cultural appropriation or appreciation. An Indigenous worldview holds that all elements are in relation to each other. In my volunteer work with my home parish, I aim to be positive and welcoming to **ALL** people. There is also the realization that some Indigenous people do practice both Native Spirituality and/or Christianity. Finally, it is imperative to work co-operatively, respectfully and collaboratively with First Nations.

THE NORTH

At the very top of the medicine wheel we have a time of reflection (mentality). It is here that I conclude that living out the Gospel means recognizing everyone as my brothers and sisters, and to be mindful to give credit where credit is due. I recently went outside my comfort zone and will be working at the Métis Election for Saskatchewan 2021 on May 29. In my spiritual life I want to pay attention to Indigenous issues raised by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB). Hope for Indigenous people includes people of all faith traditions standing

with our brothers and sisters. This is a time to reflect on building respectful relationships. My aim is to remain curious, humble and reflective.

CONCLUSION

The Four Aspects of Humanity tell us that each person has physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs. Many of these needs can be met through the Seven Grandfather Teachings: Wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth. Reconciliation is everyone's responsibility; all must unlearn the racist narrative of colonialism. All of these measures are good-intentioned enough, but as Saint John Paul II said in 1988, "a change of structures is linked to a change of hearts."