

## IPL2: MY MEDICINE WHEEL

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*When the present does not recognize the wrongs of the past, the future takes its revenge. For that reason, we must never, never turn away from the opportunity of confronting history together-the opportunity to right a historical wrong.<sup>1</sup>*

*To make meaning of present issues in light of past events and return to the habits and routines that ensure movement, balance, connection, and relationship. This will reframe how Indigenous youth understand themselves and their world, allowing them to carry the story of colonization in a way that does not define them or limit their opportunities.<sup>2</sup>*

### **EAST: Acknowledging and Starting point.**

The IPL2 Course brought me to acknowledge during these months that what is stated as the Indigenous problem in reality is a problem<sup>3</sup> that involves everybody. Each one of us is called to become aware of this part of history, trying to understand together what happened and how we have *the opportunity to right a historical wrong*. It was a surprise for me to see through the articles, videos proposed and discussions how there is still a lot of ignorance and prejudice about this “dark side of the Canadian History”.

I experienced the call to know more and better Canadian History, to reflect and understand together through the material provided, to prepare and deepen in the intergenerational and ongoing impact especially in young generations, which is the field in which I have developed and should continue to develop my ministry and start to focus on the ways and means to support reconciliation.

I would like to summarize my reflections through the passage of **Lk 4, 16-30**. There are things that through the lens of the gospel are seen more clearly and are more digestible.

In this passage, Jesus begins his ministry and comes to Nazareth. It's the place where he grew up; it's a familiar land for him, he knows the habits and the traditions:

*“He went according to his costumes, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day”.*

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<sup>1</sup> Governor General Michaëlle Jean, at relaunch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, October 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Methot, LEGACY: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous healing, ECW Press, 2019, p.26.

<sup>3</sup> Bob Joseph, 21 Things you may not know about Indian Act, Indigenous Relations Press, 2018, p.130.

Through the contact with the land, the beauty of creation through the prairies and the initial contact with Native peoples through the importance of certain habits, ceremonies, as part of our daily life.

**SOUTH: From acknowledging to reflective and integrating understanding.**

We continue to read in this passage that:

*“He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah”* and started to read.

Opening the “scroll” of the lessons, through the readings, videos, discussions about the history, the evolving of things through the years and generations and the basic historical facts that happened. I looked for objectivity but especially at the beginning, I experienced in myself this tendency to victimize the indigenous people pointing to the settler, the Crown and even more the Canadian Federal Government. In a sort of tension and polarization of thoughts, feelings, ideas some of which were felt and others were raised up.

Fortunately, Jesus starts to read what it is written in the scroll:

*“The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord”.*

This statement of the word of God, this call of being chosen *to bring the good news to the poor, sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free*, entering in that freedom for all, especially the most needed ones. Not in a logic of assistance but to give back to them what mostly belongs to them.

(The n. 16 of our Verbum Dei Constitutions states: *We will put all our efforts into helping all people “reach the full knowledge of the truth;” so that they may be, know themselves, and feel, as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father, with the same rights and duties.*)

**WEST: Transformative understandings and learnings.**

The gift of coming in touch with our identity that leads us to freedom and therefore reconciliation. Jesus opens to us the way that leads to transformative understanding and learning. We notice in this passage how everybody starts to look at him:

*“all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him...This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening”.*

People, that know him, start to label him: *“This is Joseph's son, surely?”*

We can also say: This is the son/daughter of the chief, surely? Or this is the son/daughter of that indigenous lady that married a no-indigenous husband and lost her indigenous status, surely?

Jesus starts already to bring the good news and to prophesize.

Chief Robert Joseph would say: *“We start today. We start with every little step. If we start right now, and this moment is a moment of reconciliation for some of us, it’s a huge, huge achievement”*.<sup>4</sup>

In a wonderful way, Jesus recalls to the past but enlightening the present and provoking rejection in the audience. Since non-Israelite becomes the object of the prophet’s ministry:

The prophet Elijah was sent to a widow in Zarephath, a town in Sidonia. The prophet Elisha cured only Naaman the Syrian. Which land treaties the prophets would be speaking about today? It is interesting to find out by the material provided the example of a very inspiring documentary by Alanis Obomsawin that tells the story of Kahentiiosta, a young Kahnawake Mohawk woman arrested after the Oka Crisis’ 78-day armed standoff in 1990. She was detained 4 days longer than the other women. Her crime? The prosecutor representing the Quebec government did not accept her Indigenous name.<sup>5</sup>

Hayao Miyazaki, a Japanese director, animator, would say:

*“That’s how Yubaba controls you by stealing your name. So hold on it, Chihiro...if you completely forget it, you’ll never find your way home”*.<sup>6</sup>

#### **NORTH: Next steps.**

*“...Everyone in the synagogue was enraged. They sprang to their feet and hustled him out of the town; and they took him up to the brow of the hill their town was built on, intending to throw him off the cliff, but he passed straight through the crowd and walked away”*.

There is a mixture of thoughts, feelings and expectations not attended that slides from victimise and anger to blaming and pointing out who is guilty, especially being in the present and yet living in the past without having the real sense of oneself. The matter is complex!

Suzanne Methot in her book, *Legacy* explains how trauma is transmitted across generations so that the anger, fears, griefs of the parents are transmitted onto their children without being aware of the processes and mechanisms that are behind our behaviours. So the younger generation is modelled by the older generation and there is a blood memory where we internalize the suffering of our ancestors. She also speaks about the angry Indian and culture of blame: when people, marginalized and oppressed, are unable to express their anger they direct it laterally replacing

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<sup>4</sup> Bob Joseph, *21 Things you may not know about Indian Act*, Indigenous Relations Press, 2018, p.130-131.

<sup>5</sup> *My Name Is Kahentiiosta* by Alanis Obomsawin - NFB

<sup>6</sup> Hayao Miyazaki, *Spirited Away*.

responsibility, reciprocity, respect being *“psychologically violent and emotionally abusive...causing pain and suffering to each other”*.<sup>7</sup>

Shelagh Rogers, OC, as part of the Reconciliation Commission of Canada H. Witness, says that: *“There is much for non-Indigenous people to unlearn and to do. But equally important there is much to unlearn and to undo”*.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus passes straight through that crowd, those people that he knows closely and he walks away. He is free! He knows who he is, his name, his identity and story. Jesus has a complete trust in the love of the Father of all. His life is rooted in the Father`s love and with courage he name things, objective facts, even if can provoke disconcert but without judging he risks his life, he defends and look for what is truthful and upright: he recognizes each human being as a child of God, a brother and a sister called to love each other, although we are not there yet!

I deeply believe that the first step towards reconciliation is the gift of freedom of passing through the different layers of things, that either Indigenous Canadians and non-Indigenous Canadians have learned from colonial society and need to go back, as Suzanne Methot says in her book:

*“to the respect, responsibility, reciprocity and relationship... and also how non-Indigenous Canadians must recognize the wisdom within Indigenous science as a legitimate body of knowledge within Canadian systems and institutions ...This is our collective opportunity to rewrite narrative of genocide and oppression and envision another better way of living- not just within Indigenous communities but between Indigenous peoples and the settler population”*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Suzanne Methot, LEGACY: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous healing, ECW Press, 2019, p.92.

<sup>8</sup> Praise for 21 Things You may not know about the Indian Act.

<sup>9</sup> Suzanne Methot, LEGACY: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous healing, ECW Press, 2019, p.92.