

## Fair Balance

Hugh and I just returned from a holiday in Scotland. We spent 3 days on the Orkney Islands, a 90-minute ferry ride from the northern end of the country. We stayed in a delightful house in the port of Stromness filled with an eclectic collection of books, including a boxed set of "The Pocket Canons", small individual paperback books of the Bible. British novelist Fay Weldon wrote the introduction to Corinthians and she finds it hard to like Paul the Apostle. She describes him as a slippery, preaching, threatening, cajoling young man who has a hot-line to God and God to him – or so he says!

And this passage from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is about financial stewardship, perhaps one of our least favourite lectures from a preaching, threatening, cajoling apostle, or from anyone! In my research on today's gospel reading, I found a commentary by Lois Malcolm, a professor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. An important part of Paul's work of spreading the gospel to the Gentiles was raising funds for the struggling Jerusalem church. Lois Malcolm says central to his appeal for funds is the theme of "grace" or *charis* in Greek. *Charis* appears several times in 2 Corinthians, and in addition to "grace" is also translated as "blessing, a generous act, and a privilege". Paul holds up the Macedonians as models of giving, saying they gave generously and joyously despite their own extreme poverty due to

the grace of God – God's gift freely given, flowing within and through us to others. Malcolm says Paul's intent is not to "guilt" his Gentile flock into donating money but to simply call for equality, or in Greek, *isotetos*, also translated as "fair balance". Today, on Canada Day, I want to explore these concepts in the context of Canadian and Scottish history, and our relationship with our Indigenous people.

In 1989, Enderby Museum staff was sorting through a pile of old papers and found an article written by a J.H. Christie, dated August 5, 1918. James Halbold Christie was born in Speyside, Scotland in 1852. He immigrated to Canada as a teenager and was part of several exploration crews. Locally, he explored and named the Trinity Valley and Christie Lake and Christie Creek are named after him. In 1907 he settled near Armstrong with Amelia Duteau, whose mother was an Okanagan Indian.

In 1908 members of the Okanagan band asked Christie to help them request an investigation into the sale of Indian Reserve No. 5 located at the north end of Kalamalka Lake. A document signed by 17 members of the OKIB surrendered this land to a Mr. Kennedy. A hearing was held at the Head of the Lake. Of the 17 people who signed the surrender of the land, 4 swore they did not sign, 2 swore they did not understand what they were signing, one was under the legal age of 21 required

to participate in such a transaction and one man was not an OKIB member. Of those who did sign, some said Mr. Kennedy gave them \$2 to sign, others that he gave them a bottle of whiskey. As a result of the investigation, IR No. 5 was returned to the band but this was not the end of the story.

In 1912, Mr. Cummiskey, was the Inspector of Indian Agencies for the area. At a meeting with the OKIB he dissolved the Band Council, demanded a new one be elected, removed Chief Baptiste Logan on the grounds of intemperance and incompetency, appointed a man known as Lame Pierre as the new chief and threatened to jail any Band members who objected to these changes. Despite this threat, 9 Band members again sought James Christie's help. The previous inquiry had identified Mr. Cummiskey as one of those who tried to get possession of Indian Reserve No. 5. And Lame Pierre, the new chief appointed by him, favoured selling reserves at Swan, Kalamalka and Duck Lakes. This time Mr. Christie's efforts on behalf of the Band failed. There is not a reserve on the north end of Kalamalka Lake.

At this time in Canada's history, new settlers were pouring into B.C., putting pressure on provincial and federal governments for land. At the same time, BC Indian bands, comparing the large reserves in the U.S. and the Canadian prairies to their relatively small and chopped up reserves, were demanding more land for their people. So, in that great Canadian tradition, a Royal Commission, the McKenna-McBride Commission, was struck to investigate. It had the power to confirm, enlarge or reduce the size of a reserve. Reductions were called "Cut-Offs" – remember this term, as these "Cut-Offs" are the major

source of Land Claims in B.C. to this day. The final decision of the McKenna-McBride Commission was to remove over 47,000 acres of valuable land from B.C. reserves. 87,000 acres was added, but this was mainly less valuable land; rocky, on hillsides, not suitable for farming or building houses. There were so many things going wrong with the administration of Indian Affairs in the Okanagan that 4 Bands formed the Okanagan Indian Rights' Defense League, appointing James Christie as secretary. On their behalf he wrote a detailed report that was read into the official records of the House of Commons and prompted yet another investigation. But due to irregularities and conflicting evidence presented at the first hearing in Penticton, Christie withdrew from the hearings in frustration, advising the bands to hire a lawyer. The head of the inquiry was furious with Christie for withdrawing, labeling him as a troublemaker and the hearings were cancelled. The Indian Agent and Inspector of Indian Agencies were allowed to carry on business as before.

But the Bands did not give up. They formed the Allied Tribes of BC to protest the Cut-Offs. Despite their efforts, the Canadian Parliament passed legislation authorizing the Cut-offs without the consent of the Bands. In 1926, following Christie's advice, they hired a lawyer to fight this decision. Canadian Parliament responded by amending the Indian Act to make it illegal for First Nations People to hire lawyers or bring about land claims unless they had federal government consent. This was not repealed until 1951.

Another discovery for us on the Orkney Islands was the rehabilitation of their most famous son, Dr. John Rae. In the

1800's, he, like many Orcadians, joined the Hudsons Bay Company (at one point, 80% of the Hudsons Bay Company labour force was from the Orkneys). A surgeon and explorer, he discovered Rae Straight, the last link in the Northwest Passage. His success as an Arctic explorer is attributed to his willingness to learn Inuit and Cree techniques for travel and survival and due to his expertise he was tasked with finding out the fate of the Franklin expedition. In 1854 he wrote a confidential report for the Hudsons Bay Co. detailing what he'd heard from Inuit hunters, that the Franklin expedition ended in disaster, the desperate final survivors resorting to cannibalism. The report was leaked to the English press and a fierce campaign against Dr. Rae was launched by Lady Franklin and friends, including Charles Dickens who condemned Rae's Inuit sources as follows: "The word of the savage is not to be taken for it, firstly because he is a liar; secondly because he is a boaster; thirdly because he talks figuratively..." Rae stood by his report and evidence, costing him a knighthood and a lack of recognition for his discoveries in the Arctic.

Over one hundred years after John Rae wrote his report, Louie Kamookak was born in the Canadian Arctic. A school lesson about the Franklin expedition when he was 12 years old fired his imagination. His great-grandmother had told him stories of finding cutlery and a long rope trailing into the bay on King William Island. Thus began Louie's lifelong fascination with the fate of the Franklin expedition. He gathered stories of Inuit elders, cross-referenced journals and books and read voraciously. The clues he pieced together helped Parks Canada find the wrecks of Franklin's ships, the HMS Erebus in 2014 and the HMS Terror in

2016. Louie Kamookak, known as "the last great Franklin searcher", died suddenly earlier this year at 58. The Royal Canadian Geological Society has acknowledged the Franklin search was hampered by the failure to take Inuit oral histories into account – Louie Kamookak bridged that gap.

So, we have been on a journey today. From the Middle East during the early years of the Christian church, to the Okanagan valley in the early 1900's. From windswept islands in northern Scotland, to the Canadian Arctic. Journeys that are part of the history of Canada.

Included in our long list of government commissions is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It provided us with 94 Calls to Action as a guide to advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. Lois Malcolm says God's abundant grace not only grounds the possibility of our being reconciled with one another, it also makes genuine reciprocity with one another possible. To work together towards *isotetos* – a "fair balance". For us to live out, in the words of another apostle, John, the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ. May it be so.

Gracious, loving God,  
We give thanks for the great abundance of our country, Canada, and for the wisdom of our early Christian, settler and indigenous ancestors.

Give us courage to walk the path of reconciliation,  
where justice walks with all  
where respect leads to true partnership  
and where power to change comes from each heart. Amen

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To Franklin's grave. The Economist. Obituary: Louie Kamookak. April 14, 2016. Page 82.

Remembering the Children Prayer.

<https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/truth-reconciliation-three-services.pdf>

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