

Stirrings



Clifford Harper

A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Summer 2016

Truth, Reconciliation and Hope

By Bob Holmes CSB

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Canadian Indian Residential Schools called for action. The Jesuits in English Canada partnering with St. Michael's College responded with a sold-out conference in June – "The hope for the conference is to begin a dialogue among Indigenous leaders and all Canadians and embark on a path of restored relations."

Receiving a smudging cleansing ceremony on entry, we were welcomed by several notables. Then we heard from *Noel Starblanket*, a Cree national community leader, who spent 11 years in a Catholic residential school and 36 years recovering from the trauma. His message to us was, "Now that you have heard the truth you cannot unhear it. You are accountable." His hope is in the indigenous youth and in educating all Canada's young people on Canada's history of colonization, assimilation and unkept treaties with First Nations.

Charlie Angus, Member of Federal Parliament for Timmons-James Bay, spoke of the Treaty #9 promises not kept. The results of the treaty were to give to Ontario and Canada resource riches and to the Cree reserves.

Ontario spends \$16,000 per pupil while those on reserve receive only \$8,000 from the Federal Government. Charlie told us of "Shannon's Dream" – the story of the young 14-year-old girl who raised the awareness of the toxic conditions of her school in Attawapiskat First Nation, gained support from students across Canada, went to Ottawa and won the promise of a new school. The school was built and, although Shannon died in a car accident at 16, the "Dream" continues

calling for equality of education for all Canada's children.

Fr. Peter Bisson SJ, Provincial of the Jesuits in English Canada, recalled the Jesuit apology to First Nations over their residential schools conducted by Jesuits. The apology was read aloud by a young woman. "We live in hope," he said, of rebuilding trust and friendship through recognition of pain and discomfort. Women are the leaders in

places where Jesuits minister with Indigenous communities today.

Former Prime Minister *Paul Martin*, a grad of St. Mikes, held a free-wheeling dialogue with the conference moderator, *John Moore*, a talk radio host. Being "former" gave him liberty to speak his thoughts and hopes for the future relationships between the government and First continued on page 2



The Brentwood Box carved by Coast Salish artist Luke Marston, travelled with the Commission. Offerings were made to it to commemorate personal journeys towards healing and reconciliation.

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Nations. Solutions need to be found to ways of sharing the wealth of natural resources in First Nation territories. Unbelievably there is no Department of Education in the Federal Government. The funding needed for educational programs will be expensive but it will have a big return on the investment. All Canadians need to learn of First Nations' worldview – a holistic eco-centred vision and spirituality.

In the afternoon **Chief Dan George's** "Lament for Confederation" from the year of Canada's 100th anniversary was read.

"How long have I known you, Oh Canada? A hundred years? Yes, a hundred years . . . But in the long hundred years since the white man came, I have seen my freedom disappear like the salmon going mysteriously out to sea. The white man's strange customs which I could not understand pressed down upon me until I could no longer breathe."

Grand Chief Joe Norton, Mohawk, told us of the "Two Row Wampum" symbolizing the parallel paths of the native and settler cultures requiring treaties for their interconnection. Treaties not kept. **David Nahwegahbow**, an Anishinabe lawyer, reminded us that the treaties were

understood by First Nations as peace and friendship agreements in the Maritimes and as agreements to share the land in Ontario and the prairies. The courts will continue to be a very important part of reconciliation. **Grand Chief Abram Benedict**, also Mohawk, reminded us of the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights which Canada has signed but not implemented. It is hard to change the massive bureaucracy in Ottawa.

Dr. Marie Wilson, one of the three Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, reminded us that the 94 recommendations of the Commission belong to all of us. We must ask, "where does my name fit?" The Churches especially must train leaders, respect native spirituality and push the governments to act on the recommendations.

The afternoon ended with an emphasis on youth.

A panel of college students, two indigenous and two settlers, were asked, "What are the barriers you face and what action will you take?" For the indigenous the barriers: racism, discrimination and internalized self hate. The actions: telling indigenous success stories and informing their communities that they have non-aboriginal allies. For the settlers the barriers: ignorance, willed or unwilled, and lack of opportunity to interact with indigenous people. The actions: read the calls to action and see what I can do and look for ways to meet face to face with First Nations people.

Two students and a teacher from Regina told the story of their school, Mother Teresa Middle School. It is a Jesuit school seeking to break the cycle of poverty among youth in the city. 91% of their students are indigenous. They provide wrap around care: transport, breakfast, lunch and clothing. They have extended time and high expectations. And they follow up on former students as they move through high school. It's expensive. Their costs are covered by grants and donations. The alternative is to do nothing!

There is hope for the future!

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Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity

A Poisoned People

By David Bruser and Jayme Poisson



Edited from their article in the Toronto Star Sunday 24 July 2016

GRASSY NARROWS FIRST NATION – For more than 40 years the mercury has percolated through river sediment, the food chain and generations of residents.

From 100 kilometres upstream, the slow, steady drip of the neurotoxin first killed a community's livelihood and then contaminated its people.

A disability board – set up by government officials in the mid-1980s to compensate those who can show doctors they suffer symptoms consistent with mercury poisoning — has approved claims from more than 300 applicants who suffer from tremors, loss of muscle co-ordination, slurred speech and tunnel vision.

The mercury poisoning of the residents of Grassy Narrows and the fish they eat has been well documented after the old Dryden pulp and paper mill, operated then by Reed Paper, dumped 10 tonnes of mercury into the Wabigoon-English River system between 1962 and 1970. The rivers and lakes were contaminated for at least 250 km, according to a report by the disability board.

Mercury was used at the Dryden mill in the 1960s in the process that bleached pulp for paper. The metal does not break down in the environ-

ment and can build up in living things, known as bioaccumulation, “inflicting increasing levels of harm on higher order species,” according to Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Bacteria that thrive in wet, low-oxygen environments such as lake bottoms turn mercury into its most toxic form, methylmercury. The methylmercury

migrates up the food chain to fish and then the locals who eat the fish.

The robust fishing tourism industry, especially at famous Ball Lake



Lodge, was decimated. The commercial fishermen and guides went on welfare.

What many residents of Grassy Narrows have, according to Japanese scientists, is Minamata disease — also known as methylmercury poisoning. It was first discovered in 1956 in Japan and takes its name from the area around Minamata city in Japan. Illnesses were linked to the industrial waste water from a

chemical factory that dumped between 200 and 600 tonnes of mercury into the water system.

“The fishing, the jobs, stopped. It was not safe. It was devastating,” Steve Fobister, who was chief in the 1990s, said of the mercury fallout.

There have been other recent developments.

In late May, a provincial government-funded report commissioned by Grassy Narrows was released. It cautioned that despite the passage of time, mercury levels in sediments and fish downstream are still dangerously high. The report also said it was possible to clean up the mercury in the waterways.

Then, last month, two provincial government ministers visited the community to discuss more water tests and cleanup options. The government pledged \$300,000 to support water, sediment and fish sampling in a stretch of river that Grassy Narrows Council has identified as a top priority. The government has not yet committed to a specific course of action to clean up the river.

Fobister's father has run out of patience. “Look at me, I'm a sick old man. . . . My community is sick. People have been born since the mercury pollution and have only lived on welfare since the day they were born. . . . Morale is very low. We just had a child that committed suicide.”

“My life is gone, it's been destroyed,” he said. “I hope the future generations can have a better life than what I have.”



Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening

Drama, Tears Washed Away at Rededicated Toronto Peace Garden

Adapted from the article
by Michael Swan
in the Catholic Register
May 25, 2016

The \$40-million redevelopment of Nathan Phillips Square at city hall marked a milestone with a rededication of the 32-year-old peace garden in its new location along the western boundary of the square May 18. The ceremony drew the curtain on a decade of drama, tears and anger over the city's plans to move the garden away from its central location and modernize its design.

"We stand on holy ground," Fr. Massey Lombardi told about 300 people gathered at the new peace garden before he and Mayor John Tory relit the eternal flame from Hiroshima and added water from Nagasaki to the reflecting pool.



Mayor John Tory and Father Massey Lombardi re-light the Eternal Flame

From 1982 to 1984, it was Lombardi, as head of the Archdiocese of Toronto's now defunct office of justice and peace, who led a campaign to have the peace garden placed in front of City Hall, where nobody could miss it. Lombardi travelled to Japan to collect water from the fountain which commemorates 75,000 killed by the nuclear attack on Nagasaki. He worked with

Canadian Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow to persuade Hiroshima mayor Takeshi Araki to share his city's eternal flame at ground zero with Toronto.

The first shovel of sod for the garden was turned by then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. The garden was officially inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth II. The eternal flame was lit and the water of peace added by Pope John Paul II in 1984. "To remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace," the sainted John Paul said in 1981, "Let us promise our fellow human beings that we will work untiringly for disarmament and the banishing of all nuclear weapons."

The pavilion, designed by city architect Ken Greenberg, with its symbolically damaged roof and missing walls made explicit reference to the destructive power of nuclear weapons. It still stands beside the eternal flame and the flowing water as a warning about the cost of war in the nuclear age.



Silent Walk with Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Non-Violence



John Dear of Pace e Bene



Medea Benjamin of Codepink



Walk to the Bomb Labs



The Sackcloth of Repentance

Vigil at Los Alamos 6 & 9 August 2015



Silent Prayer for Peace



The Ashes of War

Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity



Failure to Comply with the Merchants of Death

*Homes Not Bombs occupies
Global Affairs and protests against
CANSEC weapons show.*

(CANSEC: Canadian Association of
Defense and Security Industries.)

By Kevin Shimmin

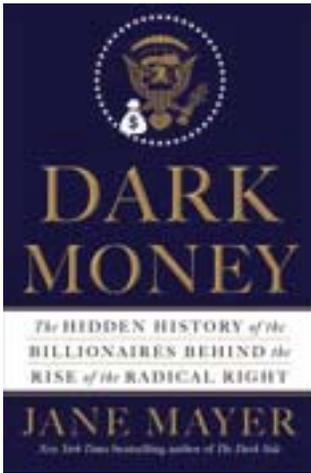
It began with a welcome by Elder Evelyn Commanda to the unceded and unconquered territory of the Algonquin nation. Her powerful statement reminded us why we were gathered: “We walk on our ancestors. And the dust of my ancestors is being used for war.” Her protection gave us courage to resist the purveyors of war: “I will be laying down tobacco for you today and tomorrow to welcome you to our territory.”

On May 24 to 25, 2016, members of Homes Not Bombs – along with the Ottawa Raging Grannies, Christian Peacemaker Teams, NoWar/Paix, and Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade – utilized a variety of creative means to protest against CANSEC, the annual war and weapons show in Ottawa. CANSEC has been a blight on Mother Earth for 16 years running, bringing together the world’s worst human rights violators with the producers of today’s deadliest weaponry. The return of a Liberal government has in no way altered the wholehearted support of the PMO for CANSEC. No less than six members of Justin Trudeau’s cabinet enthusiastically participated in this year’s glorification of death and destruction. Having recently signed the export permits on Canada’s \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, Trudeau has signalled he is ready to do business with some of the world’s most brutal regimes.

*Kevin Shimmin is a union organizer and
a founding member of Homes not Bombs.*



Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening



When The Catholic University of America in 2013 accepted a million-dollar gift from a foundation affiliated with Charles and David Koch, 50 leaders at other American Catholic colleges and universities signed a letter pointing out the gulf between Catholic social teaching and the Koch brothers' ambitions and actions. Jane Mayer's *Dark Money* makes clear that the dangers that worried these leaders run deep, derive from a broader strategy than was widely known at that time, and pose great risks, not only to Catholic University's mission, but to the nation itself.

Mayer traces the deliberate, often concerted, and largely successful efforts of enormously wealthy and conservative families to reshape the American political, economic and cultural landscape to further enrich themselves at the expense of the poor, working and middle classes.

Many of these families can trace their roots back to the founders of the John Birch Society and other right-wing groups in our nation's past that sought to reserve prerogatives for the privileged. Today, they work through think tanks and political action committees.

Mayer argues that these "superrich" pursued a three-stage strategy to greater wealth and influence.

First, they sought to steer debates about public policies toward their economic interests by establishing

Dark Money

The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right

By Jane Mayer

Reviewed by Timothy Kelly

very conservative think tanks, such as the Cato Institute, and funding conservative endowed chairs at universities.

This is what raised concerns about the Kochs' purposes in donating so much money to Catholic University.

But that donation paled in comparison to the money that poured into such places as George Mason University and Ivy League schools. The universities used these donations to establish institutes and centers that nurture and promote conservative ideology.

Folks in these positions then championed laws and policies that lowered taxes on the rich, weakened regulations on the enterprises that enhanced their wealth, and reduced services for the middle, working and poorer classes.

Next, the superrich funded political organizers and operatives to generate fake-grassroots organizations to turn the ideas championed in the think tanks and universities into legislation.

We all know that the tea party burst onto the scene in time for the 2010 midterm elections, but Mayer points out that Koch-funded organizers

had been stimulating such groups for years before, and even used the tea party label in a handful of failed efforts to create popular organizations.

With FOX News' vigorous promotion and the Koch brothers' funds, the tea party took off. The tea party took the deep popular resentment against economic and political elites in the wake of the 2008 economic collapse and channeled it into attacks on the very regulations designed to keep those elites in check.

Perhaps most significantly, the superrich funded the legal challenges to laws that restricted the use of their vast wealth in elections. *Citizens United* allowed the affluent to pour money into political races anonymously.

The hundreds of millions of dollars that the superrich pumped into the 2010 election cycle propelled Republicans to control of many state legislatures. These bodies then redrew congressional districts to allow Republican minorities to dominate

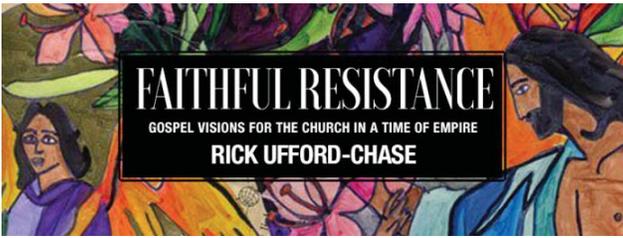
the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012 and beyond. In Pennsylvania, for example, Democratic candidates for Congress won 51 percent of the votes but earned only five seats, compared to the Republicans' 13 seats.

Finally, economic elites used their newfound influence to control not only the Republican Party, but also the House

and Senate. With the help of the radically conservative Supreme Court majority, they "privatized" the federal and state governments in the same way they had privatized the political process.



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A review posted by West-Park Press

With his new book, *Faithful Resistance*, Rick Ufford-Chase has made an important and significant contribution to the growing body of literature on the future of the church. (And how to get there). It is significant that Rick's primary focus is not how do we save the church but how do we live as faithful followers of Jesus in this empire-dominated day and what role does the church have and what kind of church is needed in the struggle. The church is thus a means to faithfulness, not an end of and to itself.

The book is also an example of liberation theology praxis. It is intended not only as reflection and analysis but as a workbook to help the faithful be about this work themselves. It is especially intended to be used in groups, groups that help sustain each other in mutual support and solidarity in difficult days ahead. In that, Rick follows in the footsteps of the Latin American liberation theologians who brought a Freiran approach to the doing of theology in their Christian Base Communities.

Rick draws on his experiences as a seminary drop out, adult volunteer, border justice worker, moderator of a historic denominational church with international partners, peace activism and co-chairing an ever evolving study center with interfaith intentional communities.

In broad strokes, Rick does several important things:

- * Names and discusses the power of white privilege and other cognate privileges of class, gender, orientation, etc...

- * Produces one of the first real discussions I've seen for the implications of this new reality for theological education.

- *Tackles such issues as confronting empire at the border, the importance of ecojustice, nonviolence as a principle and practice, worship, the meaning of solidarity, being a church that is "small but fierce." Oh, and the intriguing exploration of the idea of responsible living in a "watershed."

Rick's bottom line is one that appeals to me at the deepest level: "I am interested in creating a community where those who have been rejected in every other space can come and feel safe." Amen.

Dark Money

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What Mayer means here is that just as economic elites had effectively marginalized the Republican Party in the selection of its candidates and the positions that they took in the runup to elections, the candidates who became senators and representatives worked against the common good in service to their economic sponsors. They attacked environmental and other regulations that impinged on corporate profits, curtailed worker rights, created special tax reductions for various industries and elites, and threatened to shut down the federal government and cause it to default on its loans.

This is a discouraging story, brightened only by some of the more memorable moments when the huge sums of "dark money" failed to deliver. President Barack Obama's

re-election tops the list, as the Kochs' donor network spent \$407 million in its failed effort to elect Mitt Romney. Sheldon Adelson spent \$150 million of his own money in the same cause.

It is also quite remarkable to see what the death of one Supreme Court justice has done to temporarily – and perhaps more profoundly should Hilary Clinton win in November – blunt the superrich's agenda.

Perhaps even more startling have been the recent campaigns for the Republican and Democratic nominations for the presidency. None of the candidates favored by either the superrich, dark-money backers or the fading Republican establishment garnered much support in the primaries. Donald Trump's rise as the "presumptive" Republican nominee has reportedly unsettled the Koch brothers, though Trump is unlikely to push legislation or public policies that challenge the class from which he

hails.

On the Democratic side, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders ran his campaign essentially in opposition to the developments that Mayer lays out in such detail in *Dark Money*. Though election laws allow much of the money funding campaigns to remain "dark," the American public is far more aware of the role that it has played in eroding the economic security that the middle class once enjoyed.

Mayer's book goes a long way to shining a light on this pernicious practice, and helps us to understand more fully why institutions such as The Catholic University of America might consider the broad range of implications of accepting money proffered toward these aims.

Timothy Kelly is department chair and professor of history at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pa. This review appeared in the NCR July 15-28, 2016 print issue under the headline: Book exposes strategy of the

Movies: Drained, Dysfunctional and Already Been Done

"...willing suspension of disbelief to achieve a catharsis." (Aristotle: Poetics)

By Neil Hibberd CSB

Deceit and duplicity of every clever kind were used by the early Greek tragedians and comic playwrights through Shakespeare's masterpieces to the "Silents" and 'Talkies' and entertaining movies which managed at least a minimal emotional involvement and response. Everyone was "in" on the obvious artifice of deceit, and willing to "suspend." Today, weary, dysfunctional portrayals and blatant stereotypes have replaced these ingredients as tools for attempting to provoke even a minimal emotional involvement. Joined with remakes, tiresome, drawn-out I,II,III's (e.g. Shrek IV) and the relentless pilfering and draining of classic sources and authors, makes movie-going a chore. Even earnest documentaries are verging on evoking boredom with their 'uppity' stance of rigid righteousness and extremely narrowly focused, one-eyed vision, passing for civic duty and insight. Once often mocked for being ultra "learnly" they have lately been found to reek of noxious stultification, no longer able to pass muster through their category title alone. And, yes, they are boring.

So, don't go to see *Maggie's Plan*. Maggie, a single professional woman decides she wants a baby. She discusses the worthiness of male donors with a male friend whom she meets at the local fruit and vegetable market. This man is the number one prospect for contributing to the procreational endeavor. He is available and willing. Maggie meets and marries the husband of the character played by Julianne Moore (her beauty and acting brilliance wasted in this cartoonish role). After two years of marriage, Maggie schemes to drive him back into the arms of his first wife. So. It's beautiful to look at and the acting is mostly okay, but there's nothing here. Is it a comedy? A cute commentary on modern relationship values? At best, it's merely a willowy wisp of sheer wasted time. An unnecessary trifle. Not a spark of willing suspension of disbelief required; not a jot of emotional engagement achieved.



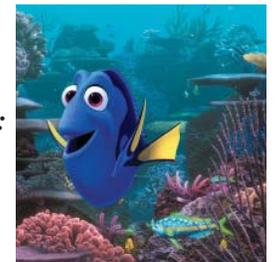
Can't wait for the the new, female *Ghostbusters*? Shame on you. Hoped that *Our Kind of Traitor* measure up to the book by the gifted spymaster John Le Carre? Instead, disappointed by the blandness of the movie production.

How many more spin-offs of Jane Austen's great fiction will be squeezed out, now that the movie industry has begun to throttle the very life from them? Too many. Actually, *Love and Friendship* is quite a smart, well-acted movie, readily identifiable as a comedy, based on Austen's *Lady Susan*. Will audiences never tire of pretty, dress-up films? It is funny. The cast is respectable, but the now trite cliches of breeches, bustles, buttons and bows, poor relatives and tight manners are stultifying, frothy.



The Legend of Tarzan gives evidence that even the elongated chassis and sculpted "abs" of the latest throb to portray Lord Greystoke are not enough to save a hackneyed, trumped-up revival, with a story line which could have been written by Edgar Rice Burrough's great grandchild. This is, count 'em, the forty-ninth (49th) derivative movie about the 'Lord of the Jungle.' Enough! Give it a pass.

So, where might a movie fan find inviting and satisfying fare? Suspending one's belief will be a prime disposition to bring to the Odeon. Heaps of catharsis will occur, mostly accompanied by tears of laughter, and also, by sudden, unexpected twinges of sympathy and insight. See, *Finding Dory*, and *The Secret Life of Pets*, and when it comes out soon, *Ice Age: Collision Course*, with old, tried and true friends, Manny, Sid and Diego. You will be entertained, pleasantly seduced into a willing suspension of disbelief, and even possibly edge up on a catharsis or two. Animation is more and more brilliant. These films are exactly what they are meant to be, and, as such, are more authentic, without a taint of dysfunction, than the inflated pretenders cluttering up screens, claiming to be "A" movies.



Footnote: I realize that this review is a cranky harangue, excoriating most of films and documentaries in current release. This is absurd, of course. It is however a possible waking up from dozy stasis. I would invite reaction, challenge and commentary. Neil