

## **TRC Montreal Reflection – Dave Heinrichs**

Profound. It's the only word that I can think of that has any chance of beginning to convey my experience at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Quebec National Event I attended in Montreal. Eleven of us, Mennonites from different denominations, generations, genders and provinces attended this event over 4 days at the end of April with the purpose taking our experiences of the Montreal TRC and sharing them upon our return in order to encourage the people in our congregations and spheres of influence to attend the TRC when it comes to Vancouver on September 18 – 21.

Profound. It's the word I settled on before I returned home that would be my response when people asked me, "How was your trip?" You see, I've asked that question before too, and it can be an honest inquiry to know more, an invitation to tell about things that one experienced, what one learned, or how one has been changed by an experience, but I also know it can also carry the same unintentional insincerity as when people ask "How are you?" They are seeking the obligatory responses of "good" or "fine" in order to fulfill the normal social conventions. The Montreal TRC wasn't just good or fine, it was how Justice Murray Sinclair described it, "You've heard of contact sports, this is like head-on collision sports, afterwards you're going to feel battered and bruised, but it's good and important". What I experienced at the TRC was life-changing. It challenged how I looked at the world through my dominant, settler society set of lenses and helped me exchange them for new ones that I hope help me see more clearly. It has continued to change how I see Canada's indigenous people, moving me from my stereotypes and preconceived ideas to a deep respect and empathy for people who have courageously endured much pain and suffering. My experience at the TRC has been soul-shaping. I saw reflections of Jesus in the forgiveness and humility expressed by many of those who testified to being subjected to atrocities that no one should have to endure, and yet I also saw Jesus in the some of the anger and desire for justice I witnessed. I chose to respond to "How was your trip?" with "profound" because it was just that, but also because responding this way has caused many people to pause and ask why. They want to hear more of what I witnessed, how I was changed as a result, and, to my surprise and joy, in the few days following my return, many of those who asked me why it was profound have said they want to go with me when the TRC comes to Vancouver so that they too can experience what I've experience and be changed how I have been changed!

One the profound things I experienced was on the first day of the TRC. One of the commissioners shared that the theme of the Quebec event was humility. I was astounded; humility is the kind of theme you might expect at a Christian convention, but this is not the theme I expected from an event where survivors of residential schools would be sharing their testimonies of brokenness and pain. Themes of healing, moving on or even justice were more along the lines of what I expected, but upon hearing the theme of humility and the call for each one there, both native and non-native, to come together with a posture of humility, I started to have an inkling that Jesus had something unexpected up his sleeve to teach me over the next 4 days. Though I heard from some

who were angry and outraged, the majority I encountered expressed humility like the aboriginal man, Oscar, I met in the food court. Oscar was so thankful for this wonderful event, he expressed his thankfulness to me and Brad (one from our group) for attending and being a part of it, and he blessed us. Oscar said to me, "It's good for all of us to be here, we're healing together, we're doing good work." I couldn't agree more. Because of my experience at the TRC, I've been able to share profound moments like my encounter with Oscar and others who blessed me. I'm encouraged to continue walking in humility on this journey of healing and reconciliation with others who have suffered much and who extend this invitation to me and to everyone. It is a profound experience, I hope you'll join me.

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission comes to Vancouver September 18-21 at the PNE grounds. For more info contact [dave@erbf.com](mailto:dave@erbf.com)