

**Report of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO)
to Ipperwash Inquiry Commission following a consultation
at Zurich Mennonite Church on January 14, 2005**

1) Purpose of consultation at Zurich

Our purpose for hosting a consultation was:

- to reflect on involvement of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) with the people of Stoney Point and Kettle Point following the violent confrontation between police and Native protestors at Ipperwash Provincial Park in September of 1995;
- to hear the experiences of those from the neighbouring Mennonite churches who reached out in friendship;
- to invite feedback from Stoney Point people;
- to do this in a forum where others can learn from our experience; and
- to promote further healing for all those affected by the events at Ipperwash.

Our hope was to show firsthand how ordinary people can be effective in reducing tension in a volatile situation, simply by extending friendship and building relationships rather than using armed confrontation.

See appendix A for the letter that was sent to those invited to the consultation.

The following people attended the consultation:

Sidney Linden – Commissioner to the Inquiry
Nye Thomas, Noelle Spotton – counsels for the Inquiry
Carolyn (Cully) George Mandoka – resident of Stoney Point (former army base)
Sidney and Viola Ramer, Della Gascho, Bob and Linda Hendrick – members of Zurich Mennonite Church who got involved in supporting the Stoney Point people
Jon Umble – an MCCO gardener at Stoney Point during the summer of 1996
Joel Klassen – member of CPT, involved at Ipperwash following the shooting
Jim Potts – Native liaison officer for the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), following the shooting
Rick Cober Bauman, Don and Kathy Procter – representing MCCO
Maurice Martin – reporter for Canadian Mennonite
Ryan Erb, Margaret Nally, Hardy Schroeder – members of MCCO board

2) Format of the Consultation:

All participants at the consultation sat in a circle. Don Procter explained the procedure that would be followed. A stone was used as a talking piece and everyone was asked to speak only while they held the stone, so that all would get an equal chance to speak, without interruption, and all would be treated with respect. Rick Cober Bauman opened in prayer to the Creator.

Each person was then asked to introduce themselves and say briefly what their involvement was, then pass the stone to the next person. After the first round of introductions, the stone was passed around again, beginning with Rick Cober Bauman telling his own story of his involvement with the people of Stoney Point as a staff person with Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.

3) Summary of MCCO's involvement before and after the shooting of Dudley George (statement by Rick Cober Bauman spoken at the beginning of the consultation):

I grew up in Southwestern Ontario, just over an hour from the beaches that have come to be known as Ipperwash, never knowing that someone else called the land Aazhoodena, never knowing that the little military base was once home to a community that was forced out so my country could train for war, never knowing that many promises had been made to return the land to its original owners.

In my work as MCCO's "Native Concerns Staff" in the mid-nineties, I had just returned from Labrador, where militarization of Aboriginal lands was public issue number one, and within a few weeks of returning to Ontario while wandering at a pow wow I met a Stoney Point member whose car hood was covered with maps and research studies. Within an hour I was introduced to a new history of Lake Huron shores. I was shocked.

The role of MCCO Native Concerns [later renamed "Aboriginal Neighbours"] in Ontario included solidarity work with Aboriginal groups under pressure from outside forces, as well as doing public education. As staff, I could not do any education without a much deeper understanding. I began visiting the community and meeting the people who had returned from World War II to find their houses gone, who had worked for over a decade to have their access to the land re-instated. I was walked through dunes and forests along the edges of this lost land, told about areas contaminated by unexploded ordnance (which I assumed was a problem in Southeast Asia following the Vietnam war, not on the Lake Huron shoreline of Ontario), and reminded constantly of the dream of this scattered community, to go home.

Then I got the news that they did go home. A small group had opened a fence off Highway 21 and gone home. Now when I went to visit, I was taken along the stunning beach, I was walked right alongside the mortar testing ranges, and given a tour of the secluded campground reserved for ranking officers. There was a joy in this group. And why not...they had come home.

It was time my broader MCCO community learned the stories they did not know. So we invited Stoney Point speakers to our gatherings and meetings. And we arranged for groups of our people to come, to this contested, occupied place, to hear land stories, stories they were not used to hearing from their nearby neighbours.

As the group entrenched their occupation, I began to get requests for support - so we began helping to get building materials to the community for winterizing cabins. Volunteers came to raise walls and put in windows. Then a plan emerged for the Stoney Pointers to walk to Ottawa as a call for the federal government to act on the land return promise. From our home in

Shakespeare, to the basement of Mennonite churches in Kitchener and Stouffville, these walkers met MCCO people who provided supper, shelter, and encouragement in response to the stories...stories most of course had never heard.

So by September of 1995 this unknown community of strangers on the Huron shore had ceased to be unknown to us. Their stories and dreams had been shared with us. We had begun to become neighbours.

The radio report [of the shooting of Dudley George by Ontario Provincial Police] on September 7 came while I was helping my young son get his shoes on for his first day of school. I wept.

The next days were a mix of simply being at the funeral with a small group of our constituents to be caring neighbours, and long discussions about how we, who now were not strangers, but neighbours, could offer anything more that would be helpful.

Tensions were very high. We realized only after watching the late news that we had been the only non-Native people at the funeral. How could we act responsibly with the fact that we had a relationship with a community that now was surrounded by heavily armed police and neighbours whose anger and mistrust were nearly explosive. What was the role of a Christian faith community when the threat of more violence was on every mind?

From their Chicago headquarters, we got a call from CPT wondering if they should come to set up their violence reduction presence...but they were unknowns to the community...it was we locals who had the responsibility of having knowledge, and relationship. So continued the discussions of how we could contribute to reduced tension, how we might reduce the likelihood of more violence, how we might convey to the people of Stoney, barricaded in fear from the neighbours they used to shop and play ball with, that there were some in the community who wished them no harm and wanted to continue, in spite of the tragedy, to be in a relationship with them.

My next days were spent camped out on the floor at the Kettle Point United Church, along with a rotating supportive group of MCCO volunteers, attempting to be a calming, observing, presence in conversation with many parties, hoping for and calling for non-violent resolution. These days were also filled with discussions with local emerging Stoney Point leaders [I am still honoured and humbled that I was welcomed into the Base in these days fraught with fear and mistrust]. Talk gradually turned to the idea of an Observer Team of volunteers trained to be present in a visible and unaligned way, and to document any activities of concern. We talked also with local police to see whether we could have some measure of acceptance from them. From one Stoney Point leader we heard, "Do your Observer Team thing...they are your police so you should be watching them!"

From here the story grows far beyond MCCO to you who responded. It becomes your story. It grew to include local pastors and church people who believed we needed to be there the day the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) began its investigation. It grew to include more church people who were willing to be trained, to be ready to act as they could to diffuse tension and prevent further violence. It grew to include quilters who sat across from Stoney Point women in

friendship. It grew and today we want to hear how.

4) Input from other participants at consultation:

The stone was passed to Linda Hendrick who was very active in supporting some of the people of Stoney Point after receiving training through MCCO. She said, “It felt like a war between police and Native people – I remember talk of how to get to Stoney Point to support the people there if police were to block the bridge on Highway 21.” [one main bridge between Zurich and Stoney Point]. Linda attended court with Stoney Point people and said she assumed that justice would be served, but later realized that was naive thinking. Her observation was that the outcome was not just. She discovered a real sense of community and a deep faith among the people of Stoney Point, along with a willingness to share with friends and neighbours. “We looked for ways to support and connect with people at Stoney Point. We went with readiness to learn, to meet people of the Native community. We just met and befriended people; found common interests, such as quilting, and joined with them, shared meals; attended court as observers, provided some meals; apologized for what had happened and shared in the grief.”

One person that Linda shared a common interest in quilting with was Carolyn (Cully) George Mandoka. Cully enjoyed quilting with Linda and others. It helped to take her mind off ‘the war.’ She said, “It helped to know that there were some from outside our community that still accepted us as friends – they accepted me, treated me normally.” She felt that even some of the other Native people had turned against them, so it was comforting to know that someone accepted them. She recalled stepping outside her door and feeling like a target for the police because she was wearing a white T-shirt; but, when Jon Umble moved in next door in the spring of 1996, she felt safer because she didn’t feel she would be shot at as long as Jon was there. She said these friends helped her to get the strength to stay [on the base] and is very grateful that they are still her friends. “It helps me to keep going.” Cully also reported how important the land at Stoney Point is to her. She recalls walking through the forest as a child. Her father was denied the right to live there; she hopes she will be allowed to build her home at Stoney Point.

Jon Umble shared how accepting and hospitable people at Stoney Point were to him when he arrived, as part of MCCO’s “Native Gardening” program, to support people with their efforts to start gardening on the former army base. He felt safe living with them and they felt more secure because he was living with them. He said he was ‘blown away’ by their kindness. They always took time to visit with him and joke with him and showed their appreciation by presenting him with many gifts that he cherishes. The relationships continue into the present.

Della Gascho shared, “I felt it was nice to go there [to Stoney Point], people were so friendly. I got a different perspective. I grew up in the area, but had little contact with that community before.”

Jim Potts was in North Bay when he got the call to help resolve the crisis at Ipperwash. He told how he called a pipe-carrying fellow officer to join him. They set up a sacred circle consisting of 19 people at the Oakwood Inn at Grand Bend. They conducted a smudge and passed an eagle feather around the circle, listening to one another for two and a half hours as the beginning of a healing process. “Police need to have a better working relationship [with the First Nations

community] all the way around – must be community-minded,” said Jim Potts. Actions of the police destroyed trust, replaced it with fear and anger, making it very difficult to rebuild trust.

Joel Klassen told how he arrived at Stoney Point in 1998 together with other members of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) on the invitation of MCCO. They visited Stoney Pointers and people at Kettle Point as well as cottagers in the area. They got to know people and told them they would be available to respond if tensions heightened again. They also worked at building support for a public inquiry.

Joel Klassen was invited to explain who Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is. MCCO invited CPT to join this consultation because they were also involved at Ipperwash following the crisis there. Because it is the mission of CPT to respond with observer teams in areas of conflict (when invited to do so) to work in nonviolent ways to reduce the risk of violence, MCCO was in conversation with them about having a presence at Stoney Point. It was decided, however, that, because MCCO already had a relationship with the people of Stoney Point and CPT members did not have such a prior relationship, it would be better for MCCO to train and work with volunteers from the local Mennonite community who had some awareness of the issues and would be able to have an ongoing relationship, rather than importing a CPT team from elsewhere. Later, in 1997, MCCO invited CPT to prepare people to assist in reducing the risk of violence at Stoney Point and in other Aboriginal communities in Ontario. This led to the first CPT regional training in Ontario in May 1998. Since then CPT has worked in several Canadian communities to reduce violence.

See Appendix B for a more extensive report on the history and work of CPT.

5) What MCCO learned from this experience?

We learned how much it meant to Cully George when people from the Mennonite community were willing to be friends with her and her people - to do things like quilt with them, garden with them, eat with them, visit with them, and attend court with them and provide meals for them. These simple activities went a long way in reducing the tensions and lessening the fears at a time when they felt very vulnerable and targeted.

Cully said, “We tend to fear what we don’t know; therefore we react – once we get to know each other, fear is diminished.” She would like to see more teaching (by First Nations people) of First Nations’ cultures – more teaching of history and geography from First Nations perspective – more teaching is needed on present day lifestyles, beliefs, circumstances, and struggles of Aboriginal peoples. Bob Hendrick said that getting to know the Stoney Point people gives him a desire to learn more about Aboriginal people, so it is important to facilitate opportunities for non-Aboriginal people to get to know Aboriginal people, as well as other minority groups.

We heard how much the land at Stoney Point means to Cully (and others that grew up there) and what it feels like not to be welcome or allowed to use the land that they see as rightfully belonging to them. We need to find ways to settle outstanding land claims and land disputes.

We also learned how important it is for people to have an opportunity to tell their stories in a safe environment where people are ready to listen with their hearts as well as their heads, and are willing to respond in friendship and support.

We saw the benefit of having some prior working relationships with First Nations communities before a crisis breaks out. Knowing people ahead of time and having established some trust allows some helpful interaction to occur during the crisis. This would be more difficult without such a prior relationship.

6) What do we have to offer to police and/or government?

We think that the consultation and our experiences with the people of Stoney Point have confirmed our belief that if, we want to prevent violent and unproductive outcomes, we need to work at building relationships. Confrontation results in defensiveness, fear, anger, and retaliation. Violence on either side is the result of fear and anger and mistrust. When we are defensive or aggressive, we stop listening and stop learning, and start building walls. When we become vulnerable and show an interest in honestly listening and learning, we break down walls and start to develop trust. Without trust we cannot expect positive outcomes. This means we first need to address our fears and the fears of all those involved. We need to see one another as equals and stop using weapons or power to intimidate or threaten people. Intimidation may bring temporary resolution, but will not bring long-lasting peace.

There is a need for more education concerning First Nations' history, culture, spirituality, rights, restorative justice, peace teachings, etc. As we get to know about First Nations and, even more important, as we get to know First Nations people as friends and neighbours, we will change in our attitudes; we will begin to show respect for each other; we will begin to improve relationships and conditions for all of us.

One of the questions we asked ourselves was whether we (MCCO/CPT) have something to offer to the government and/or police by having observer teams trained to respond in situations of high tension between, for example, police and Native protesters. This requires a level of trust on both sides. In order to gain or maintain the trust of the Aboriginal communities we cannot be seen as an arm or tool of the police. On the other hand, when we align ourselves with First Nations, we may not be trusted by the police and/or the government. Police may see us as simply another group that they are responsible to protect, making their job more difficult. We choose to stand with First Nations in order to create a more equal balance of power. That doesn't mean that we are opposed to the police or government, but it does mean that we are opposed to the abuse of power. We believe that First Nations people have the right to have their concerns heard and to be respected. We much prefer to be involved before violence breaks out rather than after. How can we be of assistance without being seen as a threat? Why do governments and police often see First Nations as a threat?

APPENDIX A

December 8, 2004

To: Cully George Mandoka, Pierre George, Terry George, Clifford George, Marcia Simon, Kevin Simon, Sidney and Viola Ramer, Ken and Della Gascho, Don and Sharon Gingrich, Bob and Linda Hendrick, Dave and Ruth Siebert, Gary Good, Mary Mae Schwartzentruber, Ruth Smith, Jon Umble, Dean Peachey, Doug Pritchard, Nina and Matthew Bailey-Dick, Joel Klassen, Hedy Sawadsky, Dan Epp-Tiessen, Jim Potts, and possibly others...

Each of you is receiving this letter because you were involved with MCCO in some way at Stoney Point following the shooting of Dudley George. While that may seem like many years ago, you are by now no doubt aware that the province of Ontario has launched a public inquiry into these events. MCCO has been granted standing for Part 2 of the Ipperwash Inquiry and the mandate of Part 2 is to make recommendations directed at avoiding violence in similar circumstances. We, at MCCO, have felt that our strength has been in people-to-people engagement; so rather than writing briefs as part of our involvement at the Inquiry, we have proposed a consultation.

The Commissioner, Honourable Sidney Linden, and two of the Commission counsel, Nye Thomas and Noelle Spotton, have agreed to join us in a consultation in Zurich, Ontario, on Friday, January 14. We are inviting people from area Mennonite churches who spent time at Stoney Point, visiting with people there after the shooting of Dudley George. We are inviting people from Stoney Point to join us and talk together about how the active presence of these neighbours helped to calm fears and reduce tension. We want to show firsthand how ordinary people can be effective in reducing tension in a volatile situation, simply by extending friendship and building relationships rather than using confrontation. Nye Thomas and Noelle Spotton have already heard testimony, via telephone conference call, from Phil and Julie Bender, former pastors at Zurich Mennonite Church, before they left for China.

We are including, in this invitation, members of Christian Peacemaker Teams, who go into situations where tensions are very high, as volunteer observers trained and committed to non-violence, in order to reduce the risk of a violent outcome. We would like to hear testimony of how, by contributing to a better balance of power, these observers are able to create an atmosphere where a negotiated settlement is more likely.

Agenda:

- sit in a circle
- introductions
- some will be invited to share their own experiences in the reduction of tension
- Commission counsel will have opportunity to ask questions
- roundtable discussion on questions such as:
 - What kind of things did you find to be most effective?
 - What can police and others learn from our experiences?
 - What can we learn from Aboriginal teachings on conflict resolution?

We would like you to join us at this half-day consultation on January 14 at 9:30 a.m. at Zurich Mennonite Church, west of Zurich on County Road 84.

Lunch will also be provided, and funding is available for travel.

Please contact us with your response and any questions or suggestions.

Don Procter and Rick Bauman

APPENDIX B



Christian Peacemaker Teams

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SUBMISSION FOR IPPERWASH INQUIRY

March 28, 2005

CPT Mission Statement

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) offers an organized, nonviolent alternative to war and other forms of lethal inter-group conflict. CPT provides organizational support to persons committed to faith-based nonviolent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy.

CPT seeks to enlist the response of the whole [Christian] church in conscientious objection to war, and the development of nonviolent institutions, skills and training for intervention in conflict situations. CPT projects connect intimately with the spiritual lives of its constituent congregations. Gifts of prayer, money and time from these churches undergird CPT peacemaking ministries.

History

In a pivotal speech in 1984, Ron Sider, professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) and member of the Brethren in Christ Church, challenged Mennonites to become more engaged with current events by returning to the prophetic traditions of the Bible. In his keynote speech, "God's People Reconciling," at Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg, France, he said:

"Unless we are ready to die developing new nonviolent attempts to reduce conflict, we should confess that we never really meant that the cross was an alternative to the sword . . ."

This call awakened vigorous conversations in churches across North America. Peace church people were seeking new ways to express their faith. Grass roots wars had broken out in many places including Central America, and in North America the U. S. government repeatedly was identified with the elite groups of outmoded oppressive systems. The understanding was emerging that by using the creative energy of nonviolence in organized groups, ordinary people could stand in front of the guns and encourage less violent ways for change to happen.

Short-term delegations and longer-term projects were set up in Jérémie, Haiti,

Washington, D.C., and Hebron, West Bank. By 1998, with the achievement of a 12-person Christian Peacemaker Corps, CPT was able to sustain two full-time projects and other less work-intensive projects. Current directions include major development of training for the development of local reservist groups and the further development of the full time Christian Peacemaker Corps in order to sustain six to 10 projects. From an initial base of peace church support (Mennonites and Quakers primarily), other church groups have joined, including Presbyterian and Baptist groups. Individuals from many other church traditions have also become involved.

The CPT experience has demonstrated that teams of four to six people trained in the skills of documentation, observation, nonviolent intervention, and various ministries of presence -including patience - can make a striking difference in explosive situations. Full time teams in places like Hebron are needed where the contending parties simply cannot be convinced to make changes in the distribution of power so that the road to peace becomes clear. Hebron typifies a conditions in which one party has most of the power and the other has little. Until both parties have hope for a fair relationship that begins at the negotiating table the conflict appears unresolvable. CPT workers try to emphasize or encourage nonviolent methods for redress and get in the way of violence when they can.

CPT believes that similarly organized groups of trained peacemakers in urban and rural settings around the world can provide important intervention in local conflicts. Often these conflicts are accentuated by abusive behavior of law enforcement or other security forces. In other cases police and soldiers are the front end of fundamentally unfair policies.

CPT is a grassroots effort and most of its support comes from church members, congregations and meetings. Full-time workers are compensated according to need. This pattern allows for enormous flexibility and financial frugality. The original call for a Christian Peacemaker Teams was informed by the scriptural encouragement for creative public ministry and enemy loving in the spirit of Jesus. The Peace Churches have brought an important gift to the table; namely, the absolute refusal to kill in situations of conflict. As others join this movement to find ways for justice to happen without killing, they will bring their own special gifts to build the work. As Christians lay aside the weapons of destruction usually controlled by the culture of the mighty, the surprising power for transformation becomes a miracle available to redeem all of human kind and the earth itself.

Projects in Canada:

Aazhoodena (Stoney Point ON)

Starting in 1998 with the founding of a CPT Ontario group, CPT supported Aazhoodenaang people in their call for a full public inquiry into the events at Ipperwash. See MCCO report (above) for more details.

Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishnabek (Grassy Narrows ON)

The old growth boreal forest on the traditional lands of the Asubpeeschoseewagong

people is being clear-cut by Abitibi-Consolidated Inc. On December 3, 2002 members of this Anishnabek (Ojibway) community 80 kms north of Kenora in northwestern Ontario, set up a camp on the main logging road and began turning away trucks involved in the clear-cut logging. CPT was first present in this community in a fact-finding mission in May of 1999 and continued to bring delegations to hear from Asubpeeschoseewagong folk. For over a year, CPT had a full-time presence at the peaceful road-block, and is now establishing work in nearby Kenora to address underlying issues of resource management and racism.

Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church NB)

The Mi'kmaq lobster fishery was attacked by non-Aboriginal fishers in October 1999 following the Marshall decision in Canada's Supreme Court which affirmed Mi'kmaq fishing rights. Following a fact-finding mission in January 2000, CPT was invited by Esgenoôpetitj fishers to be present in the community for the 2000 and 2001 lobster fishing seasons from April to October. CPTers spent time getting to know local people, both native and non-native. They observed and reported on the actions of the DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) – actions many of which led to people's lives being endangered. As well, they organized and/or supported various public actions, many of which involved prayer and fasting, to draw attention to the injustice of Canadian government policy. *A listening project*, involving door-to-door visits of nearby non-native communities to hear people's views, was undertaken. Feedback at the end of the various fishing seasons suggested that Mi'kmaq people felt much safer because of the presence of CPT and other like-minded groups, as well as numerous First Nations people. Many were convinced that CPT presence dramatically reduced the likelihood of somebody dying during the crisis. CPT presence in the community was concluded in August of 2002.

Caldwell First Nation (Blenheim ON)

In December 1998, the Canadian government and the Caldwell First Nation announced an Agreement-in-Principle to settle outstanding land claims which would now allow the Caldwell to purchase land for a reserve. Hostile neighbours posted 1,000 "Not for Sale" signs on surrounding lands and the Caldwell property was vandalized in February 1999. The chief of the Caldwell asked CPT for a protective presence and CPT maintained a 3-person team on the band office property from Feb. 12-26, 1999. Since then, CPT has visited with the Caldwells' neighbours several times to discuss their signs as the Caldwell proceed to a ratification vote on their agreement.

CPTers have also participated in the Caldwells' "Walk Against Racism" in the spring of 2000 and 2001.