



## Canada's Residential Schools— NOW WHAT?

*There is a 160-year history of residential schools in Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) came as a result of that history. 150,000 Indigenous children were sent to those schools—139 of them in all, and all of them run by churches.*

*Susie Kicknosway Jones was 4½ years old, her brother six, when they were taken from their home and sent to a residential school in Sault. Ste. Marie.*

*When Susie was 35, she went to a Baptist church. She was afraid at first because she figured they were holy rollers. What she found instead was a church where people actually studied the Bible. It took her 10 years but she found the Lord.*

*In April of this year, Susie shared her story with First Baptist Church, Petrolia. Wanda Pratt listened and learned. She filed this story with live magazine in August.*

“PUNISHMENT. Cold water baths. Beatings. Mouse droppings in oatmeal. If you vomit it up, that is OK—just eat it again.” With these words and many others, Susie Kicknowsway Jones showed us what her life was like at the residential school in Sault Ste. Marie. Now we know. It did really happen. It was awful. To this day, Susie cannot eat breakfast, far less oatmeal.

Residential schools have caused damage to those who went there. Susie—the fourth generation to attend—can see residual effects in her children and grandchildren. Since she wasn’t nurtured with love from the age of 4½ to 16, she didn’t know how to nurture her own children. And now they don’t know how to nurture their children—seven generations affected.

So what *do* we do now that the TRC has sent out its recommendations and we know that the hurt and damage are real?

Susie offers recommendations for us to consider. Her first is that we search our own hearts before God and really look at the attitudes we may have toward Indigenous Peoples and other minorities. Respect makes a good starting point for reconciliation.

My job going forward, and perhaps yours too, is to consider some of the TRC’s recommendations, and Susie’s and to pray, asking God how to put them into practice in our daily life. Let’s become missionaries in our own communities. ■

*by Wanda Platt, First Baptist Church, Petrolia, with files from Cheryl Cassin*

Wanda lives near Petrolia, Ontario. Many First Nations communities lie within an hour’s drive of Wanda’s house. “Susie’s presentation brought home very clearly that most of us don’t know or understand the First Nations way of life.”

*Susie Jones*



### SUSIE’S RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Learn**

- Read and research Indigenous culture
- Learn about Indigenous communities and the differences between ceded and non-ceded lands.
- Also research schools on First Nations reserves—they are funded by the federal government, not the provinces. What difference does that make?
- Volunteer at a First Nations community centre
- Join with others to form a right relations group to work out how to make a new relationship with our First Nations neighbours
- Memorize a couple of native words.  
*Minobemodzewin* means “living the good life.”  
*Bamapii* means “see you later” in Ojibway.

#### **Welcome**

- Welcome newcomers without pressuring them to take an office right away.
- Be a safe place for people to come and be themselves with no judgment.
- Find and display some pamphlets that explain similarities between Christians and Indigenous Peoples.
- Explore some of the Indigenous prayers to see if they could be used at church events such as worship services, Bible study groups, Sunday School or youth events.
- Learn about the common points of agreement between Christianity and Indigenous spirituality. “They are walking together side by side.”