THE 2011 BECHTEL LECTURES

"There was no one here when we came": Overcoming the Settler Problem

The 11th annual Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies were given on March 17 and 18, 2011 at Conrad Grebel University College by Professor Roger Epp. Introducing the speaker on both occasions was Henry Paetkau, President of the College. In his remarks before the first address, Paetkau suggested that the audience would be "embarking on a journey these two evenings that probes Anabaptist/Mennonite identity and relationships. . . . I expect we will be taken into what, for many of us, may be somewhat unfamiliar, perhaps even uncomfortable territory, both literally and figuratively." He recalled learning about treaties in high school and had come to think of them as defining relationships. "The dictionary defines 'treaty' as a noun," he observed, "but there is the rare instance when 'treaty' is used as part of a compound moniker, as in 'Treaty Indian.'" Paetkau added that "I have been called a variety of things in my life. As a German-speaking person born in Paraguay to Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union, that has included terms like 'square head' and 'DP' (Displaced Person), not to mention 'Russian Mennonite.'" But, he said, "I don't recall ever having been described, or defined, as a 'treaty person', never mind thinking of myself in those terms. So I'm particularly interested in what I might discover this evening!" The next evening he said the first address had reminded him of the cartoon character Pogo's famous words, which he paraphrased as "We have met the problem, and it is us!" He briefly highlighted key points made in that address, especially "the history in which we are entangled," our desire for "absolution by amnesia," and the impact of "the cultivation myth." He spoke for everyone in acknowledging how much the speaker had given them to consider and ponder — something that was true of the second address as well.

THE 2011 BECHTEL LECTURES
"There was no one here when we came": Overcoming the Settler Problem

Roger Epp

Lecture One
What is the 'Settler Problem'?

Entangling History

In the cold wintry weeks of January – with these lectures very much in mind – I took part in two solemn, sacred gatherings. One of them was an aboriginal round dance on my home campus. I will have more to say about it later. The other was my uncle's funeral in Saskatchewan. He was lowered to sleep with his ancestors in the historic country cemetery at Eigenheim, the oldest continuing Mennonite congregation in the Canadian northwest. My father is buried there too. It is sacred ground, our family's compass point, though most of my generation did not grow up there. *Eigenheim* – literally, a home of one's own – was the name given to the district in which my paternal ancestors were among the first settlers. They came from Russia after a successful scouting trip. They accepted the geographic order of the dominion government's square survey grid, more isolating than the old country villages, but they filled its spaces with gathering places and outlandish German names filled with desire: *Frieden, Hoffnung*. My grandfather was among the first babies born in the community. My great-great grandmother, Judith Epp, the family matriarch in North America, was among the first to be buried in the Eigenheim cemetery. A handsome column rising straight above the January snow still marks her grave.

Historian Frances Swyripa, in a new book, *Storied Landscapes*, describes the significance for settlers of such "places for the dead" – her words – "where the certainty that they would rest apart from their ancestors, their bones being literally part of a new land, drove home the finality of their

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decision to uproot and relocate."[1] The European settlers' cemeteries, their churches, schools, and halls – and the names they gave them – claimed, defined, and "storied" the landscape in familiar terms. But, Swyripa adds, with gentle understatement, that "[n]ewcomers often failed to realize that western landforms had aboriginal names that told stories, explained the universe," and oriented people's travel. This displacement of names was not so much a matter of conquest as it was the sense of absence: "In fact, the words settlers used to describe the West – empty, virgin, alien, unpeopled – ignored the indigenous presence as they set about . . . claiming this space as their own."[2] This is the point at which Jacqueline Baker begins her novel *The Horseman's Graves*, set in a German Catholic immigrant community tucked up against Saskatchewan's Great Sand Hills. Her narrator observes that by the time the settlers arrived, "the ghosts that had once walked the hills had vanished or were, at least, imperceptible to those already burdened by the past of another country."[3] For ghosts, think stories: the formative stories, sometimes unspoken, that tell us who we are, who is "we," who is not, and what to fear.

From the Eigenheim churchyard it is less than 25 kilometers due north to Fort Carlton, the Hudson's Bay Company provisioning post on the North Saskatchewan River where in 1876 – only 18 years before the Epp family arrived – Treaty 6 was negotiated and signed in the presence of Cree lodges. It was at Fort Carlton in 1885 that the Cree leader Big Bear, one of the early holdouts, surrendered to the authorities who had had been looking everywhere for him as one of those responsible for the Métis and Cree uprisings. His show trial and imprisonment quickly ensued.

From Eigenheim in 1897, it was possible to hear the cannon fire across the river to the east, directed at the poplar bluff where the alleged Cree cattle thief Almighty Voice was captured to be hanged at Duck Lake – a story, at once, of hunger, daring, and settler fears. From Eigenheim, it was not far to the corner of the closest reserve that had been set aside for the Willow Cree people. But it may have been too far to hear the small dramas that preceded

[1]Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: Univ. of Manitoba Press, 2010), 44.
[2] Ibid., 45.
[3] Jacqueline Baker, *The Horseman's Graves* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007), 1.

the departure of generations of children for the residential school, most likely in Duck Lake.[4] The Mennonite settlers had troubles enough of their own. In his fine history of the Eigenheim congregation, Walter Klaassen writes that the Cree "were on the fringes of our life and consciousness." Contact was incidental or else instrumental: peddling firewood, hiring out at harvest-time: "The two communities have lived side by side for a century, but no lasting bonds have been developed between them to this day."[5] His observation can be read either as an indictment, softened just enough to fit into a congregational history, or as an expression of regret, or simply as a neutral statement about the kind of near-solitudes so characteristic of newcomer-aboriginal relations in North America.

In my family history, the most dramatic story of side-by-side isolation is one I began to tell in an essay that appeared in its first form in *The Conrad Grebel Review*.[6] The story began with two grandmothers remembered in the intimacy of long, unbraided hair. The first was the writer Scott Momaday's grandmother, as he described her in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, his account of the Kiowa of southwestern Oklahoma. The other was my maternal

[4] St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Duck Lake (1892-1964) was one of more than 100 operated across Canada between the mid-19th century and the late 1960s as a partnership between the federal government, with its interest in assimilation, and both Catholic and primarily the major Anglo-Protestant denominations, for which the schools were an extension of missionary activity. The last school was closed in 1996. Indian, Métis, and Inuit children were often forcibly removed from their families and home communities, and typically were forbidden from, among other things, speaking aboriginal languages in the schools. Many also experienced physical, emotional, and, in some cases, sexual abuse. In 1998 the federal government made its first formal statement of regret and "offer of reconciliation," including compensation, which a successor government in its 2008 apology (see fn. 12 below) reinforced in much more precise language. Church bodies have also issued various apologies in recent years. Among standard histories see J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: Univ. of Manitoba Press, 1999); and Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1988).

[5] Walter Klaassen, *The Days of Our Years: A History of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church Community, 1892-1992* (Rosthern, SK: Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1992), 28.

[6] "Oklahoma: Meditations on Home and Homelessness," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 16. no. 1 (Winter 1998): 61-69. An expanded version is found in my *We Are All Treaty People: Prairie Essays* (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta Press, 2008).

grandmother as I remembered her, missing Oklahoma, the place she had been a girl, the place she and her family and her future husband left in 1918 and 1919 for Canada, for Eigenheim, in the face of war and the local nativism unleashed under its respectable cover against German-speaking pacifists, native Americans, socialists, and others. My family had settled in Washita County, if "settled" is the right word for a quarter-century, in the land rush that followed the redistribution of tribal lands in the name of civilization, progress, and individual property. Here my great-grandfather Jacob Klaassen came with his brother, lived with his livestock in a sod shack, and built the impressive farm about which he had dreamed in the watermelon fields of southern Russia. Here he grieved a wife, an infant daughter, a son crushed beneath the loaded grain wagon he was driving – all of them buried in the country cemetery of the Herold Mennonite Church, where he was also an ordained preacher. Here he grieved, not least, to leave for Canada, to join his sons but to live thereafter as a stranger.

This family story is set in the same small part of the world into which the Cheyenne, like the Kiowa, had been compressed after a series of post-treaty brutalities. They included the massacre at Sand Creek inflicted by Colonel Chivington's Colorado Volunteers in 1864 and then the surprise attack in 1868 by General Custer's Seventh Cavalry along the banks of the Washita River, where the Cheyenne peace chief who had received President Lincoln's flag and medal was among those killed. I did not know, however, how small a world it was – or why I couldn't let go of these parallel stories of displacement – until our family drove to southwestern Oklahoma one summer. This was scarcely a mainstream vacation destination. It was in the county museum in Cordell, north of the courthouse where a hostile judge routinely sent Mennonite boys to military prison – my grandfather's cousin, indeed, was shipped home dead from Fort Leavenworth, wearing the uniform he had refused in life – that I found a county map dated 1913. It was full of surprises. Within two or three miles of the river, the map is a checkerboard of alternating Mennonite and Cheyenne landowners. Among the latter, there was also a familiar name. White Buffalo Woman was a girl in 1868 when the Seventh Cavalry attacked the Cheyenne camp. Her description is an important part of the oral history of that event. In 1913 – though I still cannot say beyond doubt it is the same person – White Buffalo Woman is

listed as the owner of two 80-acre blocks of land. One runs alongside the river. The other borders my great-grandfather's farm.

That discovery gave new clarity to the understanding that the story of my family in North America could not, and should never, be disentangled from that of the Cheyenne or the Cree. I am a product of Indian policy on both sides of the 49th parallel. I am a treaty person. Like my grandparents and parents, I have lived most of my life on Treaty 6 land in Saskatchewan and Alberta. For reasons I cannot really explain, it has been given to me to ask what it means to live where I do as the descendant of settlers, what sort of inheritance and obligation, what sort of thinking and acting, it entails.

The Settler Problem

In these lectures, I want to do that thinking in a way that is mindful of their location and the very contemporary local conflicts over land and treaties along the Grand River in Ontario. In approaching this subject, it is necessary to be tentative but not timid. Perhaps "humble" is a better word than "tentative." For one thing, I am out of place in southern Ontario. I know only what I have read about Caledonia, the Haldimand Tract, the two-row wampum.[7] For another, I am acutely aware that the very mention of those words – or other words like "aboriginal," "treaty," "land claims" – will likely evoke weariness or anger or guilt in any Canadian audience.[8] Why can't we

[7] In 1784 Governor-General Frederick Haldimand, representing the Crown, issued a proclamation granting land along the Grand River for the settlement of Haudenosaunee/Six Nations people following the American Revolution, in which they had fought alongside the British. While the legal status of the proclamation and subsequent land transactions remains a matter of contention, and the subject of numerous claims, large portions of the tract have been opened to non-Six Nations settlement – including Mennonite settlement – starting at the end of the 18th century. The most recent flashpoint has been a housing development in the community of Caledonia that prompted an occupation and eventually compensation paid from the provincial government to homeowners. One scholarly historical account from a Mennonite perspective is E. Reginald Good, "Lost Inheritance: Alienation of Six Nations Land in Upper Canada, 1784-1805," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 19 (2001): 92-102.

The two-row wampum is a traditional purple-and-white beaded belt rooted in the Haudenosaunee diplomatic protocols that Europeans once had to learn in order to conduct relations with an important political federation. The belt signifies a relationship based on principles of friendship, peace, and respect between peoples who are distinct – hence the two rows – yet woven together by agreement.

[8] For a sense of non-aboriginal impatience around the Caledonia situation, see journalist

just put the past behind us? Why can't we just all be Canadians? It is hard to find a fresh approach to the subject that encourages rather than polarizes or paralyzes its audience.

So it is necessary for me to begin personally, by locating myself and my inquiry in terms of particular places and stories; it is important not to tell stories that are not mine to tell. Above all, I do not want to participate in the patronizing talk that has offered various solutions to what Duncan Campbell Scott, the poet-bureaucrat who was Canada's Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs in 1920, famously called the "Indian problem."[9] My interests lie instead in what I have called the "settler problem" and in the complementary claim – one I have borrowed for a book title – that in this country we are all "treaty people."[10] The latter phrase has become familiar, if still provocative, in parts of the prairies. I first heard it in a classroom 15 years ago from a middle-aged aboriginal woman. Like it or not, she said, we are all treaty people. She meant it as something other than a statement of solidarity. Rather, it is the right we exercise by living where we do. It is the history in which we are entangled, though not, of course, in the same way or with the same need to remember it.

Christie Blatchford's *Helpless: Caledonia's Nightmare of Fear and Anarchy, and How the Law Failed All of Us* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2010). Newspaper excerpts and promotional appearances by the author in late 2010 had served to rekindle and polarize public discussion in the months prior to these Bechtel Lectures.

[9] See Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1986).

[10] While my publisher and I have a certain investment in this phrase as a book title, I am aware that it is not free of contention in some aboriginal circles. Taken literally, it may be perceived as excluding Métis peoples, who generally were denied treaty and therefore fall outside the relationship it implies. Additionally, some First Nations elders insist their treaty relationship is with the Crown, not their settler neighbors. Both concerns are a reminder of the limits of language. But note that historian J. R. Miller has made the case that we must all recognize ourselves as treaty people – as participants in and beneficiaries of treaties – in the conclusion of his *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2009), 306, 309. The same phrase is used to promote the work of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan, established by agreement between the Government of Canada and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to work independently to advance land entitlement agreements and public education. See, e.g., the Office's video, accessed on June 12, 2011 at www.otc.ca/WE_ARE_ALL_TREATY_PEOPLE/.

If we are all treaty people, what is my work, our work, to do? In part, I have proposed, it is to reverse Duncan Campbell Scott's powerful act of verbal displacement and ask: What is the settler problem? In that inquiry, in other words, we become the subject under scrutiny. The question is no longer about what "they" want – land, recognition, compensation – and therefore what "we" can live with. Instead, it is about what Taiaiake Alfred calls the "colonial mentality, moral indifference and historical ignorance"[11] that stand in the way of a different relationship. It is about the stories we tell ourselves. It is about the fears and emotions so close to the surface.

In a new book, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Paulette Regan takes up the same problem. She writes: "The singular focus on the Other blinds us from seeing how settler history, myth and identity have shaped and continue to shape our attitudes in highly problematic ways. It prevents us from acknowledging our need to decolonize."[12] Regan has served as Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was established by the courts as part of the settlement in a class-action lawsuit brought by residential-school survivors and supporting groups.[13] It is safe to say the Commission is unknown to most Canadians. Its work in hearing and archiving the stories of residential school survivors may have gained profile at least momentarily as a result of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's formal apology in 2008 for the abuses suffered and perpetrated. That apology was itself surprisingly frank and unequivocal. Judging from the reactions of aboriginal people, it was received for the most part as genuine and powerful. It said that the burden of what survivors had experienced – above all, the state-sponsored, church-delivered attempt to strip peoples of their languages and cultures by taking their children out of their communities – needed to be borne by the Government and the country, and the attitudes that inspired the residential school system had "no place" in contemporary Canada.[14]

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[11] Taiaiake Alfred, Foreword, in Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 2010), x.

[12] Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, 11.

[13] For information on the Commission, see www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3.

[14] Government of Canada, "Statement of Apology – to former students of Indian Residential Schools," June 11, 2008. www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/rqpi/apo/sig-eng.pdf.

Regan's point, though, is that the apology did little to "transform the settler," or to reverse the "rush to put the past behind." She wonders why Canadians had known so little of this history – or had "selectively forgotten it" – even while they lived alongside of its survivors, and therefore whether they can consider the apology as a genuine opening to "rethink our past and its implications for our present and future relations."[15]

The settler problem in this formulation shows itself as what another scholar has called a "longing for oblivion – for the luxury of forgetting . . . for the absolution of amnesia."[16] All this is true, I think, and the consequence is that our own past is not fully available to us. We are afraid of it, or afraid of the contention it invites. But so far we have not gone far enough in our inquiry, and we are unlikely to have moved those whose reflex is to resist. It is natural enough that outcomes should be framed in terms of settlements and resolution when so much of the aboriginal-settler relationship is now, often by political default, mediated by the courts. Arguably, the residential school story has elicited a certain degree of empathy among Canadians – enough for the current government to have made the apology it did. Canadians could understand something of the harm inflicted, even while worrying about how much financial compensation would follow.

Land and land claims, however, are a different matter altogether. Here the longing for closure, the willful amnesia, is embedded more profoundly in the mythology and legal fiction of *terra nullius* – no one's land – whose grip on the colonial imagination has been renewed as opportunity in every settler generation. If anything, that grip has tightened with the passage of time and the realities on the ground. It is unthinkable, threateningly so, that the status of land ceded once and for all should be placed in doubt by peoples thought to have been safely quarantined and destined for obsolescence. There is no issue more volatile in this country. Why?[17]

"In the beginning," wrote the 17th-century English philosopher John Locke, "all the world was America."[18] In this crude political creation myth, the

[15] Regan, *Unsettling the Settler*, quotations at 42, 6.

[16] Keavy Martin, "Truth, Reconciliation, and Amnesia: Porcupines and China Dolls and the Canadian Conscience," *English Studies in Canada* 35 (March 2009): 61.

[17] The next several paragraphs offer a condensed version of the argument made in the title essay of *We Are All Treaty People*, esp. 127-35.

[18] John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government.* 1690. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), ch. V, para. 49.

case for limited government and private property rested on a social contract that had delivered some of our ancestors from a state of nature that was either barbaric, insecure, or merely inconvenient because it left us to enforce our own justice. Locke's America signified the world before government and property, though it bore little resemblance to reality. It was a philosopher's thought experiment, a singular developmental anthropology that needed a primitive state against which to make its point. In that developmental story, the justification for property was efficient use – that is, cultivation – so that God's creation, given in common, could meet human need most abundantly through the work of appropriation from nature and then trade.

There is a direct line to trace from this state-of-nature story to the arguments made in 18th-century international law: namely, that the "wandering tribes" who "roamed" North America's "vast tracts of land" – more than they could ever occupy or "use" – had no right to keep it to themselves. They could be confined legally to smaller tracts.[19] Versions of this intellectual argument are still made. Professor Tom Flanagan, for example, has claimed that the march of civilization is marked by two characteristics: first, the rule of organized states over stateless societies and, second, the displacement of hunter-gatherers by cultivators. The last act of this great civilizational drama, as he puts it, is "the spread of agriculture around the world."[20] The fact is that the first planters in the Americas, if we accept this hierarchy – and I should add that western ranchers never have – were not Europeans. Not even close. And on this St. Patrick's Day we might note that it was the indigenous peoples of the Andes, not the Irish, who gave us the potato in multiple varieties through the application of practical knowledge.[21]

The settler mythology, however, is more powerful and ideologically attractive than any corrections proposed by historians. For it has continued to offer something more profound: a "sacrament of innocence,"[22] a "new world,"

[19] Emmerich de Vattel, *The Law of Nations, or the Principles of Natural Law*, 1758. Trans. Charles Fenwick (New York: Oceana Publications, repr. 1964), 7, 81, 207-09.

[20] Thomas Flanagan, *First Nations, Second Thoughts* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2000), 39.

[21] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998), esp. ch. 9.

[22] Sheldon Wolin is particularly insightful on the attraction of social contract theory – memoryless, dehistoricized – as it has been shaped in the North American experience. See

a fresh start, a clean slate, and a justification of hard work. The mythology is much the same in Canada, in South Africa, in Israel – wherever settler people say, "There was nothing here when we came, and we made something of it."[23] *Terra nullius*. Empty land. Vacant, uncultivated, unproductive. Somehow lacking or incomplete. Frances Kaye has made the provocative point that homestead settlers in the American and Canadian west saw the land as "deficient" and "felt entitled to reclaim [it] from deficiency."[24]

An important theological dimension is common to the settler mythology as well. While the Government of Canada may have recruited many thousands of immigrants to the prairie West for the material purpose of export grain production, accommodating to that end the desire for ethnic-religious bloc settlements, versions of the idea of "new Jerusalem" were quickly projected onto the region by many of those communities: "covenant people establishing the Kingdom of God in virgin country."[25] The biblical story of chosen-ness, exile, and deliverance has been ready to hand in European settler societies. The peoples of God do not identify with, or play the part of, the foot soldiers of Assyrian or Babylonian colonization. They are those who take possession of what is promised or restored to them. The Mennonite story from the 16th century forward is one of migrant peoples who themselves did not fit easily into the religious and geopolitical imperatives of early modern Europe. For all that, their resettlement often followed closely and unproblematically on another people's dispossession. In North America, however, they did not necessarily need to be outsiders in the project of cultivation so long as the land and its productivity were to be wrested not from the nobility but, or so it seemed, only from nature.[26]

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his *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989), esp. chs. 2 and 8.

[23] Trevor Herriot, *Grass, Sky, Song: Promise and Peril in the World of Grassland Birds* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2009), 226. Herriot's point is that the story that there was no one here when we came and we made something of it involves a lingering, parallel disrespect of aboriginal peoples and of the land itself.

[24] Frances W. Kaye, *Goodlands: A Meditation and History on the Great Plains* (Edmonton: Athabasca Univ. Press, 2011), 5.

[25] See, e.g., B. G. Smillie, ed., *Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983); quotation from the editor's introduction, 2.

[26] See also the essay, "Statues of Liberty: The Political Tradition of the Producer," in *We Are All Treaty People*, esp. 78-80.

On the Sunday morning that our family worshiped in the Herold Mennonite Church in Washita County, Oklahoma, beside the country cemetery where my great-grandmother lies, the preacher's text was the promise in the book of Joshua that the land would be given to those delivered from oppression in Egypt. There was no one here when we came, and by hard work we made something of it. That's what Canadian thinker George Grant called "the primal spirit of North America."[27] That's the settler problem.

For all its power, though, the simple mythology of emptiness and entitlement is confounded by the reality that aboriginal peoples are still here. It must continue to obscure the complex entanglements of history as they are threaded through places and families,[28] and to discount the small acts of cooperation and coexistence that happened wherever real settler and aboriginal communities lived side-by-side. Correspondingly, the retrieval of those entanglements and small acts is itself a step beyond the settler problem. They make it possible to imagine a different reconciliation than mere forgetting.

It may help you to know, for example, that the young Almighty Voice not only risked his life to cross the South Saskatchewan River at spring breakup to bring food to the desperately poor Mennonite Emilia Wieler and her children, living on a homestead well beyond the circle of her "own kind," but also that she fed him, a fugitive, when he stopped at her cabin.[29] It may help to remember similar acts of reciprocity along the Grand River in Upper Canada (Ontario) between Six Nations people and Mennonites, each displaced there by war. And it may help to know, in shifting from the

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[27] George Grant, *Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969).

[28] Among the best of entangling personal histories is Vernon Wishart's *What Lies Behind the Picture? A Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2006). Wishart, a retired United Church minister, chronicles the "family secret" of his Cree lineage that came to light only after his father's death. I have also been privileged to receive and read a powerful, entangling work of creative non-fiction by Naomi McIlwraith, "*Nitohta anohc. Nâkatohke*. Now Listen. Listen Hard: A Creative Study of *Nehiyawewin*, the Plains Cree Language, and the Reasons for its Preservation" (M.A. thesis, Department of English and Film Studies, Univ. of Alberta, 2007).

[29] This fascinating story is told in two parts by Carl A. Krause, "A Woman of Stamina and Courage," and "Emilia Wieler and Almighty Voice," *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian*, April 2007, 21-24; July 2007, 15-17.

historical to the contemporary, how unremarked it was that on that bitterly cold morning at the Eigenheim cemetery, three of the grandsons who carried my uncle's coffin from the hearse to the grave were aboriginal.