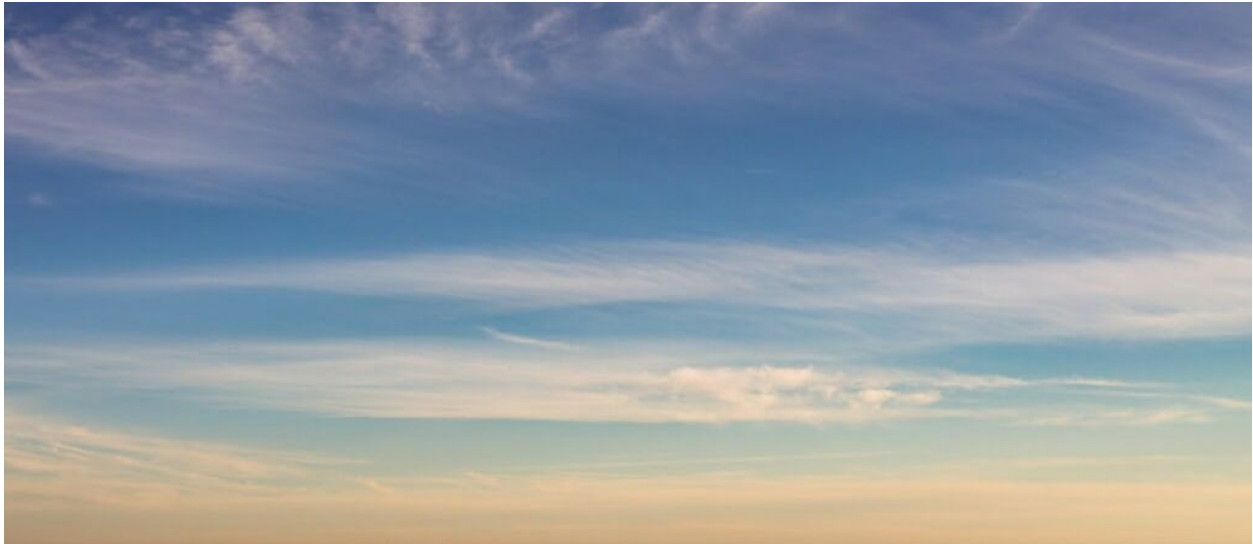


Haunted Histories and Hope for Healing

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By Heidi Regier Kreider, WDC Conference Minister

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During a brief sabbatical leave at the end of 2021, I joined an online group study of the book *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers. This is a workbook about our histories of colonialism, racism and genocide, and ways to address the structural injustice and personal harm perpetuated by this legacy. It is organized around three major themes:

- Landlines – The places where we and our ancestors have lived, and how movement from place to place is related to patterns of conquest and colonization.
- Bloodlines – The people who have shaped and socialized us through racial, ethnic and gender formation, social and economic status, cultural traditions and legacies we inherit.
- Songlines – The practices, stories, songs, and rituals of justice, compassion, liberation and resilience that inspire us to resist injustice and heal wounds.

As a sabbatical focus, I used this book as a guide to explore how my family story intersects with Western District Conference (WDC) history as it relates to settler colonialism and indigenous communities. I studied family history and letters, and read about the history of WDC and Prussian Mennonites, indigenous peoples of the Great Plains, the Doctrine of Discovery, and Mennonite mission among the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. I also pondered stories held by the land. On a trip to Colorado, our family stopped at the Sand Creek Massacre national historic site visitors' center, a sober memorial to the death of Cheyenne and Arapaho people in an attack

by U.S. soldiers in 1864. On a driving trip to Montana to visit family, my husband and I remembered the trek of Northern Cheyennes in 1878 escaping forced relocation in Oklahoma and seeking to return to their homeland in the north. In Busby, Montana, we visited pastor Willis and Nadine Busenitz at the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church, to learn more about Cheyenne Mennonite mission history and church life, and connections between the Northern Cheyenne and Southern Cheyenne people.

These travels, studies and conversations prompt me to continue exploring questions and stories I encountered in my sabbatical. For example, which family narratives do we choose to tell, and why and how do we tell them? The story that has shaped my life most strongly – and reflects WDC history – is that of my Mennonite ancestors who came from Prussia and Russia to Kansas in the 1870s-1880s, and were charter members of early congregations in WDC. This history has been told favorably as the story of faithful Mennonites who emigrated in order to maintain their religious convictions of pacifism and avoid military conscription. As frugal and hardworking farmers, they purchased land in Kansas and soon established farms. They started new congregations, educational institutions to nurture their faith, and extended the gospel through supporting “foreign” missions to American Indians and overseas.

However, in my family story it was not often told that my ancestors inhabited and plowed up land from which the Kansa, Osage, Wichita, Cheyenne and Arapaho people had been forcibly removed to “Indian Territory” (now Oklahoma) by the U.S. Government, following decades of broken treaties, unjust federal policies and military action against Native Americans. The land was given to railroad companies that aggressively promoted sales to new settlers, giving the false impression that the land was empty and available. The assets passed on from generation to generation in my family – from which I benefit today – grew out of my immigrant ancestors’ opportunity to acquire and cultivate stolen land.

And in my family story, it was not often told that Mennonite mission efforts among Native Americans not only shared the gospel, translated scripture, and met physical needs but also sought to “civilize” and assimilate Native Americans to white culture through mandated forms of agriculture, clothing, education and lifestyle. In spite of well-meant intentions, Mennonites’ assumptions of cultural superiority and collaboration with U.S. military and government agencies also resulted in Mennonites participating in the destruction of Native American culture and livelihood.

As an inheritor of these “haunted histories” I believe that I as a white Mennonite am accountable for telling the truth about our past, and pursuing justice going forward. In the face of this challenge, *Healing Haunted Histories* provides compassionate and practical guidance for practicing restorative solidarity, working toward systemic change and seeking healing for survivors and perpetrators of injustice and their descendants. Though I am not responsible for what happened in the past, I see this ongoing process of learning and transformation as part of my “response-ability” as a white settler church leader. I look forward to connecting with others who are already carrying out this work in WDC and the wider church.

If you are interested in learning more, here are some resources to consider:

Stories from WDC

- Florence Schloneger and Pauline Sharp share their story of restorative solidarity and land reparation, Feb 9, 2021 – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrTtvUtv9KQ>
 - “Stories from the Petter Photos” by Weldon Schloneger in *Mennonite Life*, Issue 2019, Vol. 73 – <https://ml.bethelks.edu/2019/06/04/stories-from-the-petter-photos/>
 - “Exploring Race and Ethnicity in Western District Conference” (Workshop at WDC Annual Assembly, August 5, 2017) – by John D. Thiesen in *Mennonite Life*, 2018, Vol. 72. At <https://mla.bethelks.edu/ml-archive/2018/exploring-race-and-ethnicity-in-western-district-h.php>
 - “History, Accountability and Healing” by Raylene Hinz Penner in *Mennonite Life*, Issue 2021, Vol. 75 at <https://ml.bethelks.edu/2021/06/30/history-accountability-and-healing/>
 - *Searching for Sacred Ground: The Journey of Chief Lawrence Hart, Mennonite* by Raylene Hinz Penner (in the WDC Resource Library)

Other books in the WDC Resource Library

- *Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* – Bible reflection and study guides
 - *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers
 - *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States for Young People* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese
 - *The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* by Sarah Augustine
 - *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* by Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah

Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition – <https://dofdmenno.org/>

By Heidi Regier Kreider, WDC Conference Minister

Historias Desafortunadas y Esperanza de Sanidad

Durante una breve licencia sabática a fines de 2021, me uní a un grupo de estudio en línea del libro *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* de Elaine Enns y Ched Myers. Este es un libro de trabajo sobre nuestras historias de colonialismo, racismo y genocidio, y formas de abordar la injusticia estructural y el daño personal perpetuado por este legado. Está organizado en torno a tres grandes temas:

– Tierras: los lugares donde hemos vivido nosotros y nuestros antepasados, y cómo el movimiento de un lugar a otro se relaciona con los patrones de conquista y colonización.

– Linajes: las personas que nos han moldeado y socializado a través de la formación racial, étnica y de género, el estatus social y económico, las tradiciones culturales y los legados que heredamos.

– “Songlines”: las prácticas, historias, canciones y rituales de justicia, compasión, liberación y resiliencia que nos inspiran a resistir la injusticia y sanar las heridas.

Como un enfoque sabático, usé este libro como una guía para explorar cómo la historia de mi familia se cruza con la historia de la Conferencia del Western District (WDC) en lo que se refiere al colonialismo de los colonizadores y las comunidades indígenas. Estudié la historia de la familia y cartas, y leí sobre la historia de WDC y los menonitas prusianos, los pueblos indígenas de las Grandes Llanuras, la Doctrina del Descubrimiento y la misión menonita entre los pueblos cheyenne y arapaho. También reflexioné sobre las historias en poder de la tierra. En un viaje a Colorado, nuestra familia se detuvo en el centro de visitantes del sitio histórico nacional de la Masacre de Sand Creek, un sobrio monumento a la muerte de los cheyenne y arapaho en un ataque de soldados estadounidenses en 1864. En un viaje en automóvil a Montana para visitar a la familia, mi esposo y yo recordamos el viaje de cheyennes del norte en 1878 escapando de la reubicación forzada en Oklahoma y buscando regresar a su tierra natal en el norte. En Busby, Montana, visitamos al pastor Willis y Nadine Busenitz en la Iglesia Menonita White River Cheyenne, para aprender más sobre la historia de la misión menonita Cheyenne y la vida de la iglesia, y las conexiones entre los cheyenne del norte y los cheyenne del sur.

Estos viajes, estudios y conversaciones me impulsan a seguir explorando las preguntas e historias que encontré en mi año sabático. Por ejemplo, ¿qué narrativas de la familia elegimos contar, y por qué y cómo las contamos? La historia que ha dado forma a mi vida con más fuerza, y refleja la historia de WDC, es la de mis antepasados menonitas que vinieron de Prusia y Rusia a Kansas en las décadas de 1870 y 1880, y fueron miembros fundadores de las primeras congregaciones en WDC. Esta historia ha sido contada favorablemente como la historia de fieles menonitas que emigraron para mantener sus convicciones religiosas de pacifismo y evitar el reclutamiento militar. Como agricultores frugales y trabajadores, compraron tierras en Kansas y pronto establecieron granjas. Comenzaron nuevas congregaciones, instituciones educativas para nutrir su fe y extendieron el evangelio mediante el apoyo a misiones “extranjeras” a los indígenas americanos y en el extranjero.

Sin embargo, en la historia de mi familia no se cuenta a menudo que mis antepasados habitaron y araron tierras de las que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos tras décadas de tratados incumplidos, políticas federales injustas y acciones militares contra los nativos americanos. El terreno fue entregado a compañías ferroviarias que promovieron agresivamente la venta a nuevos colonizadores, dando la falsa impresión de que el terreno estaba vacío y disponible. Los patrimonios pasados de generación en generación en mi familia, de los que me beneficio hoy, surgieron de la oportunidad de mis antepasados inmigrantes de adquirir y cultivar tierras robadas.

Y en la historia de mi familia, no se decía a menudo que los esfuerzos misioneros menonitas entre los nativos americanos no solo compartían el evangelio, traducían las Escrituras y satisfacían las necesidades físicas, sino que también buscaban “civilizar” y asimilar a los nativos americanos a la cultura blanca a través de formas obligatorias de agricultura, ropa, educación y

estilo de vida. A pesar de las buenas intenciones, las suposiciones de los menonitas sobre la superioridad cultural y la colaboración con las agencias militares y gubernamentales de los EE. UU. también dieron como resultado que los menonitas participaran en la destrucción de la cultura y el sustento de los nativos americanos.

Como heredera de estas “historias desafortunadas”, creo que yo, como menonita blanca, soy responsable de decir la verdad sobre nuestro pasado y buscar la justicia en el futuro. Frente a este desafío, *Healing Haunted Histories* brinda una guía compasiva y práctica para practicar la solidaridad restaurativa, trabajar hacia el cambio sistémico y buscar sanidad para los sobrevivientes y los perpetradores de la injusticia y sus descendientes. Aunque no soy responsable de lo que sucedió en el pasado, veo este proceso continuo de aprendizaje y transformación como parte de mi “capacidad de respuesta” como líder de una iglesia de colonos blancos. Espero conectarme con otros que ya están realizando este trabajo en WDC y la iglesia en general.

Si está interesado en aprender más, aquí hay algunos recursos para considerar:

Historias de WDC (*Todas las historias están solamente en inglés*)

- Florence Schloneger and Pauline Sharp share their story of restorative solidarity and land reparation, Feb 9, 2021 – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrTtvUtv9KQ>
 - “Stories from the Petter Photos” by Weldon Schloneger in *Mennonite Life*, Issue 2019, Vol. 73 – <https://ml.bethelks.edu/2019/06/04/stories-from-the-petter-photos/>
 - “Exploring Race and Ethnicity in Western District Conference” (Workshop at WDC Annual Assembly, August 5, 2017) – by John D. Thiesen in *Mennonite Life*, 2018, Vol. 72. At <https://mla.bethelks.edu/ml-archive/2018/exploring-race-and-ethnicity-in-western-district-h.php>
 - “History, Accountability and Healing” by Raylene Hinz Penner in *Mennonite Life*, Issue 2021, Vol. 75 at <https://ml.bethelks.edu/2021/06/30/history-accountability-and-healing/>
 - *Searching for Sacred Ground: The Journey of Chief Lawrence Hart*, *Mennonite* by Raylene Hinz Penner (in the WDC Resource Library)

Otros libros en la Biblioteca de Recursos de WDC – (*estos recursos están solamente en inglés*)

- *Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* – Bible reflection and study guides
 - *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers
 - *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States for Young People* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese
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Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition – <https://dofdmemo.org/>

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