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Kanata

Dear Friend

Right from the get-go, our Indigenous neighbours helped shape Canada. When Frenchman, Jacques Cartier, arrived in 1535 to what is now Quebec City, the Indigenous inhabitants referred to their homes as Kanata, which means village. Jacques translated Kanata into Canada and decided to give that name to the whole country. Little did he realize the size of this new Canada. So, our very name was supplied by our Indigenous neighbours.

June 21 is National Indigenous Heritage Day. It's a good time to reflect on how we got to where we're at. In 1494, monarchs of Europe sent explorers in every direction to find riches. In their back pocket they carried a document co-authored by the monarchs and the Roman Catholic Church called the Doctrine of Discovery. This agreement meant any European country could claim ownership anywhere they landed where Christianity did not exist. Several countries claimed Canada, but the Brits won out.

As for riches, the first were Cod. Cod were the original fish and chips wrapped in newsprint. The Brits loved them. But Cod were found only in the oceans. The really big riches were beavers. Everyone in Europe wanted a beaver hat. The territory of the beavers pretty much indicates the territory of Canada. It's no wonder the beaver is on our coat of arms; the beaver opened up Canada. But it was our indigenous neighbours who made that happen.

In order to find beavers, the Europeans needed the co-operation of the Indigenous nations. Through this period, companies such as Hudson's Bay were formed to co-operate with the Indigenous nations in this burgeoning fur trade. Hudson Bay Company trading posts were established. Some, like those at Montreal, Winnipeg and Edmonton have become major cities. By no means did the Europeans treat the Indigenous nations fairly; remember what they had in their back pocket. But they knew they couldn't develop the fur trade without these Indigenous partners. So, the earliest treaties recognized an equality between the European nations and the Indigenous nations.

How far we've come! From a time when Indigenous and European nations came together co-operatively to form this great Canada, through centuries of betrayal and selective memory loss, we now find ourselves in 2022 trying to figure out ways to rectify our embarrassing history. Why does HBC to some mean "Hudson's Bay Company", and to others, "Here Before Christ"? How did Tecumseh and his associates keep us all from having roofs instead of rooves, gutters instead of eavestroughs and sofas instead of chesterfields? As well as First nations, and Inuit, what is our third Indigenous nation? Is it hard to imagine that our last residential school closed in 1996; those students would now be only in their late twenties. Which two provinces did not ever have residential schools? How would we feel if your child didn't come home from school and you never learned what happened to them?

Have you wondered what you might do to rectify this embarrassing history? I suggest it's beneficial knowing more from the Indigenous perspective. There is a **free course**. On your computer, click on the link where you find information; for instance, Explorer. Type [Indigenous Canada University of Alberta](#). Follow prompts to the free course, [Indigenous Canada](#). The lessons are given by Indigenous instructors. There are verbatim notes if you wish to follow what the instructor says. Photos and maps illustrate the lessons. After each unit, there's a multiple-choice test; they're fun. If you need assistance, call Peter or Trish Challen: 519-238-5508 or pchallen@hay.net or tpchallen@hay.net.

Much love to you and your whole family.

Until next time....Trish and Peter

Reference: For inspiring this Letter of Hope, thanks to Indigenous Canada, University of Alberta and to John Scott of the Right Relations Working Group at HSUC.

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

