

“Starlight” — 47 - 05

PAUSE TO CONSIDER: REFLECTIONS ON SESSION #5

1. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Godfrey family as they mourn the passing of Carlie Jean. We have been so grateful for Eldon and Carlie Jean’s participation in our Monday Night Book Study over the years and for their faithfulness to St. David’s in general.

Thank you, Helen, for opening our session last night.

2. Last night, we started Book Two of Starlight — “Deer Stalker” and, in addition to learning more about our six main characters, we began to sense the reason behind the title of “Deer Stalker.” Frank has adapted his “old skills” to the art of photography and his ability to capture the essence of the animals he ‘shoots’ is quite phenomenal, according to Elmer Deacon, his friend and agent, and Roth who is quoted in Chapter one of Book Two saying:

“You talk like what I do is magic.”

“It is, chum. It is. You and the land and them creatures are perfect. You go out there and bring back magic Deacon puts in a frame and, pow, you change people, rearrange ’em so they come to understand something more about this world and this life than they ever figured on. That’s what an artist does, I figure. And a magician.”

3. Chapter three, however, takes a more sinister view of “Deer Stalker” and applies it to the hunting down of Emmy and Winnie in an act of vengeance. Cadotte says:

“Why we still doing all this, Jeff?” Anderson asked.

“You know how to hunt,” Cadotte said.

“Yeah. And that hooks up to this how?”

“You become what you hunt.”

and adds in conclusion, “Follow the game trail then...”

2. During my research into the thinking and writing of Richard Wagamese I am open to all sorts of input. My query has been centered around the question, “What did Native people really lose?” — a question posed by Wagamese in his discussion of the book, “Indian Horse” and the main character Saul. I want to share with you a summary written by Fr. Richard Rohr in a Center for Action Meditation last week that informed my thinking about the question:

Richard: It’s possible to trace the movement of Christianity from its earliest days until now. In Israel, Jesus and the early “church” offered people an **experience**; it moved to Greece, and it became a **philosophy**. When it moved to Rome and Constantinople, it became **organized religion**. Then it spread to Europe, and it became a **culture**. Finally, it moved to North America and became a **business**. This isn’t much of an exaggeration, if it’s an exaggeration at all. The original desire or need for a “Jesus” experience was lost, and not even possible for most people. Experience, philosophy, organized religion, culture, business—in each of those permutations and iterations, Christianity was seen as above criticism. It simply was *the* religion, *the* philosophy, *the* culture.

Those are the big historical reasons that we look to different places for our authority. We gave it to emperors and kings and presidents instead of the Gospel, pretending Jesus was Lord but we didn’t really mean it. Now, I know it’s easy to be cynical, to look at the disastrous effects of Christianity’s complicity with empire and want to give up on the whole endeavor, but I also want to proclaim that the flow of grace is a truly wonderful thing. Even inside of each of those iterations, misguided as they were—and we still are today—humble, loving people emerged—in every one of them.

Were Residential Schools, forced assimilation... etc. about the “Experience” of Christianity or about the business of land acquisition, beaver pelts, natural resource extraction.... Hmmmmm??? It is interesting that former P.M. of Canada, Jean Chretien who at one time was Minister of Indian Affairs says he never heard criticism of residential schools during his years in office??

4. John, Medicine Hat, offered a great idea in an email following our session #5 with regard to possibilities for Break Out Room discussion. He suggested a technique (that I oftened used with my students) and which he uses with his. His suggestion for us would be to form a question or two as part of our preparation for each session to be raised in the break out group. Great idea!! P.S. Our readings this week take us into the lives of Frank, Emmy and Winnie, in Chapters 4-6. I look forward to hearing some really tough challenging questions to shape our discussions next week!!

5. From Chat:

Fran mentions how 2 chapter one, in particiular, includes “indicators of abuse’ that were missing earlier in the story. Mike adds about the indicators, “Psychic, as much as physical.”

John highlights that Frank is such a natural healer and Mike celebrates that Wagamese is such a vivid storyteller - “As life is being breathed into Emmy’s and Winnie’s lives, life is being drained from Cadotte’s and Anderson’s.”

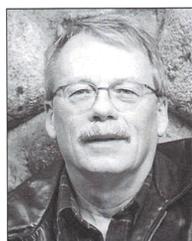
Margie adds, “So true. As mom and daughter are nurtured and supported they start to blossom. As the two men are driven by hate, they are diminished and become shadows of men.”

As well, Margie has included the study to which she referred near the end of our session:

Neural Markers of Resilience in Adolescent Femals at Familial Risk for Major Depressive Disorder. Adina S. Fischer. MD, et al. Here is the link to the study: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29562053/>

We watch the resilience of Winnie, for whom life has been so chaotic and difficult, as she works with Frank, Eugene and her mom, who finally is discovering a sense of calmness and confidence.

Bill Robertson



6. Closing: Thank you, Betty, for sharing so much wisdom with us last night. I was not aware of the complexity and depth in the U of S Indigenous programming. I tried to find a link to a reading by Bill but I did find that he has published a book of poetry, entitled “Decoys.”

7. I have included the readings from the audiotape of “Starlight” — chapters one to three in Book Two, which can be listened to here or on the sduc.ca website /

Ministries Adult Spiritual Development Ministry page:

8. Truth before Reconciliation: 8 ways to identify and confront residential School denialism.

So far we have explored “Cultural Genocide,” “Schooling” and “But they learned new skills,” “They had good intentions” — this argument used to justify residential schools Senator Lynn Byyak. It was argued that the educational (and religious) institutions had good intentions. Denialism #5 involves:

■ **“You’re ignoring all the good things”:** Anything at all that made life bearable under a dominant violent context of staff-inflicted cruelties, deprivations and separations from friends, family and home is cited by denialists as a “good” of residential schooling to absolve churches of culpability. Denialists insist on focusing on a minority of

individualized, positive recollections from the schools as part of a strategy to discredit those who draw attention to the overall, systemic genocidal effects of the IRS system. Even the Anglican Church of Canada, which ran approximately 30 per cent of residential schools across the country, has clarified that “there was nothing good” about a school system that sought to “kill the Indian in the child.”

■ The article is located at: <https://theconversation.com/truth-before-reconciliation-8-ways-to-identify-and-confront-residential-school-denialism-164692>

Last night I listened to the audiotape of **Book Two — chapters 4-6** and, continued to ask myself as I listened (and read) **what does this reading say to me about Canadian cultures, their meaning and values..... To this I added listening for the challenges of child poverty, battered woman syndrome, urban loneliness, the importance of good people in our lives and how Wagamese treats these issues in his book.**

Chapter Four offers a guideline to Kitchen Renovation. Ironically, my daughter reminded me about our kitchen renovation in 2011 and tells me that her Ikea kitchen arrives on Thursday, complete with appliances and many unassembled kitchen cupboards!! Frank is feeling the outsider in the process of Emmy’s renovation and domestic housekeeping and, yet, he finds time to be alone amidst the confusion. So important in our lives today.

Chapter Five has Frank teaching Emmy and Winnie the fine art of hiking, fishing and “orienteering” — which way is home is a game we play with our grandchildren often!! We learn the “Cougar Prowl” and a great lesson in developing our peripheral vision. More importantly for us is Frank’s discussion of “Communion” and its meaning to him.

Chapter Six reveals continuing 'learnings of the land' that Frank introduces to Emmy and Winnie. She has fabricated her own hiking shoes like Frank's. Emmy and Winnie's skills are expanded greatly and Winnie demonstrates the Resilience that Margie mentioned last night. P.S. I'm tempted to go for a run!!!

Enjoy your read. See you next week.

Thoughtfully yours,
Brenda