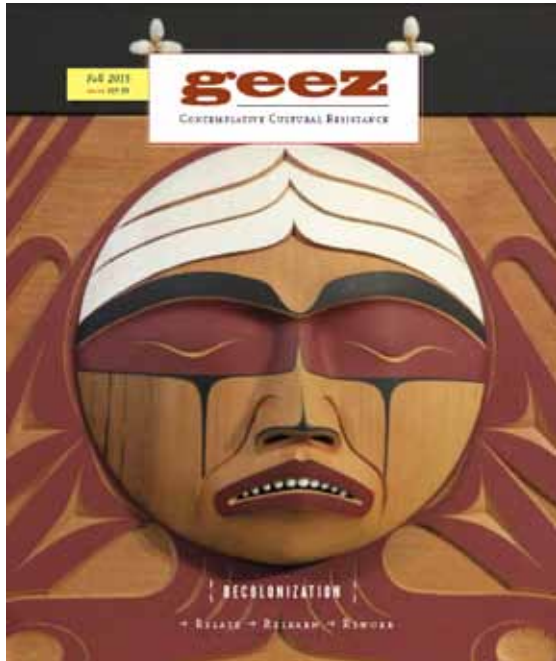


Geez MAGAZINE ✎ STUDY GUIDE



‘Might this be a time when
humility and respect will lead us
to new covenants?’

– Stan McKay,
Geez (Fall 2015),
page 6

DECOLONIZATION
ISSUE 39 //// FALL 2015



ABOUT GEEZ MAGAZINE

WE’VE SET UP CAMP IN THE OUTBACK of the spiritual commons. A bustling spot for the over-churched, out-churched, un-churched and maybe even the un-churchable. A location just beyond boring bitterness. A place for wannabe contemplatives, front-line world-changers and restless cranks. A place where the moon shines quiet, instinct runs mythic and belief rides a bike (or at least sits on the couch entertaining the possibility).

We explore the point at which word, action and image intersect, and then ignite. So let’s blaspheme the gods of super-powerdom, instigate spiritual action campaigns and revamp that old Picture Bible.

Why? Because it’s time we untangle the narrative of faith from the fundamentalists, pious self-helpers and religio-profiteers. And let’s do it with holy mischief rather than ideological fire-power.

About this study guide

We’ve selected a few key articles as a suggested reading list and provided possible discussion questions. Feel free to modify and expand upon these.

The guide has three parts; feel free to go through them all at once or take more time.

You may wish to experiment with shared leadership. E.g., one person could facilitate discussion, and one or more others could summarize readings or offer responses.

Introduction

AT THE BEGINNING OF *GEEZ* 39, *Decolonization*, you’ll find a pretty bold statement from a Christian who has come to realize the oppressive legacy of his tradition:

The truth of the matter is that, as white Christian settlers, we are much more aligned with the Egyptian than the Hebrews/Israelites, since we have benefitted from a history of colonial violence, genocide, deception, exploitation, and racism. – Dave Diewert, page 3

For non-Indigenous people, especially people with Christian roots in Europe, this is hard to hear.

In this issue of *Geez*, we focus on the ways in which the Settler-Indigenous relationship is fractured because of our history of colonization. We look at ways our current systems continue to oppress First Nations peoples and benefit settlers. We offer pathways to move forward.

PART I: RELEARN



Tania Willard, *Seeds of Revolution*, Linocut on paper, 2004 (Geez 39, page 3)

For settlers to do our part in reconciling with Indigenous peoples, we must relearn our way of thinking about our place in North America. Rather than seeing ourselves as inheritors of a vast and fruitful land, we need to reposition ourselves as occupiers of unceded territory. What does it mean to think of each citizen to be bound by a treaty relationship?

Questions for discussion

1. How do these articles shift your perspective in what it means to be a settler in colonized lands?

2. Annette Furo talks about the excuses her students have made when learning about their position in settler society. Have you ever made any of these excuses? Did you stop and, if so, what led to you changing your perception?

3. Steve Heinrichs uses the idea of a “guest-host” relationship to describe our settler relations with Indigenous peoples. In what ways can you see yourself as that “guest running the house and dictating the rules”? What cultural biases do you have?

4. Niigaan Sinclair proposes that treaties are life-giving relationships that produce family.

a. For Canadian readers, what was your perspective of treaties before reading this article? Now that you have a new perspective on the agreement between the government and First Nations peoples, do you see how that relationship is fractured?

b. For U.S. readers, do you know what agreements your government has with Native Americans? What do these agreements entail, and is the government meeting its end?

Reading suggestions

Page 4: “Opening Words with our Guest Editors,” by Leah Gazan and Steve Heinrichs

Page 10: “A Treaty is a Gift,” by Niigaanweewidam Sinclair

Page 12: “10 Totally Transparent Settler Excuses,” by Annette Furo

PART 2: RELATE

PHOTO: MOSES FALCO, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA



Walk for Reconciliation, May 31, 2015, Ottawa, Ontario. (Geez 39, page 16)

It's easy to dismiss strangers when we don't know their stories or experiences. But when we get to know our Indigenous neighbours, we will better understand how we can build community with them. It's hard to take responsibility for, or even acknowledge, our position as oppressors. But once we do, we can take steps to make things right.

Questions for discussion

1. How might these stories help you better understand your role as a settler and how you can relate to First peoples?

2. Andrea Glen calls for Christians to stand in for the perpetrators of injustices carried out in the name of Jesus (for example, taking children from their families and communities). What are ways Christians or churches can take responsibility? How could you take personal responsibility?

3. Katrina Stock learns about and reclaims her heritage as a descendent of the Míkmaq people. This includes learning about the land she is connected to. What do you know about the history of the land on which you live, or the peoples who used to live there? How could you find out more?

Reading suggestions

Page 30: "Colonizer and Colonized,"
by *Andrea Glen*

Page 28: "Interwoven: A Story of
Healing," by *Katrina Stock*

Page 32: "Settler 'Response-ability,'"
by *Elaine Enns*

4. Elaine Enns describes her study of settler attitudes towards Indigenous peoples, like the idea that the lands of North America were vacant before Europeans settled them, or that we focus on heroic stories of our past while omitting shameful facts about how we took land.

a. How might our stories look different if we include the "ugly" bits as well? What new stories would we have to tell?

b. Compare the "limited" and "larger" narratives on pages 33-35. Which history are you most familiar with? What surprised you?

} PART 3: REWORK }

Real change happens when people put into practice what they have learned. Once we've acknowledged our position as colonizers, understood our role in continuing injustice, and resolved to work towards right relations, we must make tangible changes in our habits, lifestyles, and faith practices.

Questions for discussion

These examples of people trying to decolonize may give you ideas about what you can do.

1. Emily Bulmer has taken it upon herself to learn Gitskanamix, the language of the Gitskan people in whose lands she lives. She quotes her teacher: "When people better understand the language, they are better able to understand the issues of our people."

How can language connect to the issues that are important to a people group? If you sought to learn the language of the First Nations peoples in your city or region, how would you proceed?

2. Terry LeBlanc talks about how he and his wife, Bev, lost money when they chose to disinvest in companies whose practices with Indigenous peoples were unjust.

Whether or not you have investments, how can you use your money to support decolonization efforts? What about other resources or skills you have?

3. Briefly review some or all of the 18 possible ideas for action on pages 60-61.

Identify one thing you could easily do, one thing that would take more effort, and one thing that would be very difficult, but worthwhile.

Reading suggestions

Page 50: "Gitskan Lessons,"
by Emily Bulmer

Page 55: "Integrity Comes at a Financial Cost," by Terry LeBlanc

Pages 60-61: "Ideas for action"

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