

Small group guide for “Walk With Us” video series

MMIWG2S/ JUNE 2022

Walk With Us: A Call to engage with the crisis of MMIWG2S

Thank you for participating in this 3 week focus on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2-spirit people. This study has been prepared in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2-Spirit People Calls to Action.¹ The 231 Calls to Action found in the final report are divided into 18 sections, addressing different sectors in Canadian society. All the Calls to Action deserve the attention of the Church but the section titled “Calls for Justice for All Canadians” has been selected for the Church to do its part to help restore shalom to a broken and needy world.

Walter Brueggemann wrote in his book *Peace*, “The vision of wholeness, which is the supreme will of the biblical God, is the outgrowth of a covenant of shalom (Ezekiel 34:25), in which persons are bound not only to God but to one another in a caring, sharing, rejoicing community with none to make them afraid.”² May this study spur you on to be bringers of shalom to your community and nation.

Calls for Justice for All Canadians³

As this report has shown, and within every encounter, each person has a role to play in order to combat violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. Beyond those Calls aimed at governments or at specific industries or service providers, we encourage every Canadian to consider how they can give life to these Calls for Justice. We call on all Canadians to:

15.1 Denounce and speak out against violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

15.2 Decolonize by learning the true history of Canada and Indigenous history in your local area. Learn about and celebrate Indigenous Peoples’ history, cultures, pride, and diversity, acknowledging the land you live on and its importance to local Indigenous communities, both historically and today.

¹ https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf

² Walter Brueggemann, *Peace*, Understanding Biblical Themes Series (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), 15.

³ Pg. 85,86 https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf

Small group guide for “Walk With Us” video series

MMIWG2S/ JUNE 2022

15.3 *Develop knowledge and read the Final Report. Listen to the truths shared and acknowledge the burden of these human and Indigenous rights violations, and how they impact Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people today.*

15.4 *Using what you have learned and some of the resources suggested, become a strong ally. Being a strong ally involves more than just tolerance; it means actively working to break down barriers and to support others in every relationship and encounter in which you participate.*

15.5 *Confront and speak out against racism, sexism, ignorance, homophobia, and transphobia, and teach or encourage others to do the same, wherever it occurs: in your home, in your workplace, or in social settings.*

15.6 *Protect, support, and promote the safety of women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people by acknowledging and respecting the value of every person and every community, as well as the right of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people to generate their own, self-determined solutions.*

15.7 *Create time and space for relationships based on respect as human beings, supporting, and embracing differences with kindness, love, and respect. Learn about Indigenous principles of relationship specific to those Nations or communities in your local area and work and put them into practice in all of your relationships with Indigenous Peoples.*

15.8 *Help hold all governments accountable to act on the Calls for Justice, and to implement them according to the important principles we set out.*

VIDEO #1

1. Before watching the video series, have your group share their current response to the question, “Who are indigenous people?” Also, can you name the reserve closest to your location? Do you know the history of Indigenous people in your area? Do you know or share a friendship with an Indigenous person?
2. Karen mentions 3 important things to the Indigenous community: a.) family b.) community and c.) connection to the land. Which of these three most resonates with your own heritage? Why?
3. Where were you in July 2014? Do you recall hearing about Tina Fontaine? What aspect(s) of that story causes you the most pain? What aspect(s) of that story cause Indigenous people the most pain? Are you familiar with any similar stories in your area?

Small group guide for “Walk With Us” video series

MMIWG2S/ JUNE 2022

4. How was the understanding of Indigenous people expanded because of what you heard in the first video? Share a few insights from what you gleaned.

“Do yourself a favour and learn all you can; then remember what you learn, and you will prosper.” Proverbs 19:8 (GNT)

“Whoever derides their neighbour has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue.” Proverbs 11:12 (NIV)

VIDEO # 2

1. In the Canadian census of 20106 around 1,670,000 individuals in Canada self-identified as Indigenous people, which corresponded to 4.9% of the total population at that time. That percentage is likely higher now. With that in mind, do the statistics of MMIWG2S in Canada, shared by Glendyne, surprise you? Why or why not? What do the statistics being shared suggest to you? Are statistics enough to prompt you to respond to the need?
2. Have you ever had a family member go missing? i.e. A child that got lost at the mall. What was that like? In looking for your missing loved one, what would it feel like to need to ask for a shovel as a part of your search?”
3. How does the “invisibility” of a people group contribute to their identity crisis? How does the church begin to pay attention and raise the visibility of so called “small nations” especially when, as a Christian, one considers you will engage them in Heaven?
4. The need to belong is a universal need. Have you experienced the loss of identity through the loss of language, culture, or ceremonies? If so, what does that feel like? How does that affect how you relate to the loss of these things among Indigenous people?
5. Karen talks about Residential Schools and how being taken away from “your family, your community, your land, is extremely traumatic in itself” and this trauma is also inter-generational. How does this inform your knowledge of trauma experienced by the Indigenous people of Canada? Have you had experience with inter-generational trauma?
6. “Cumulative [compounded] Grief may occur when an individual experiences multiple losses either all at once or before processing an earlier loss. When you have experienced multiple losses within a short time period, you may begin to wonder how

Small group guide for “Walk With Us” video series

MMIWG2S/ JUNE 2022

much more loss you can endure.”⁴ Have you ever experienced cumulative grief? What helped you through it? Did you learn anything that could apply to the families of those who have gone missing or been murdered?

7. Most parents are familiar with the direction provided in Proverbs 22:6 which says “Train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he grows older, he will not abandon it.” (NAS) Discuss how you would feel as a parent if that responsibility was suddenly taken away from you and you no longer had any input into your child’s life?

“The key to leadership is making the inaudible become audible and the invisible become visible” Leonard Sweet

“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. “Colossians 1:16 (NIV)

VIDEO #3

1. “How could we not have known?” Is ignorance bliss in this situation? Are we happier not knowing the truth? Should the church hold to this thinking? Why or why not? Is the church “sleeping” right now? (Mark 13:35-37)
2. During the interview Karen and Tobi both suggested that the church is not comfortable with the ideas of ‘lamenting’ and “suffering”. Do you agree with their observation? And, if so, how does that begin to change? (i.e., how does the church begin to embrace discomfort with this situation?) (Psalm 102)
3. “Jesus would go to the poor, needy, and marginalized.” Understanding that the key directive behind the Great Commission (Matt 28:28-30) which some have re-framed as “the 3rd Great Commandment) is GO, how does the church begin to get ready to “go”?
4. What would it look like for you/ us to walk among Indigenous people as Jesus would? What does the good news look like in that place?
5. Given the great list of things provided by Karen and Tobi during this final video, how does the church begin to set effective expectations? Can you find an

⁴ <https://www.queencyhospice.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/cumulative-grief-handout.pdf>

Small group guide for “Walk With Us” video series

MMIWG2S/ JUNE 2022

Indigenous person to begin to build a relationship with? How can the church help with that?

6. Does Karen’s request, “Do not try to fix us?” change your approach to coming alongside Indigenous people? How do we as a church avoid colonial attitudes in walking with Indigenous people?
7. Earlier in this series of videos Glendyne used the word “crisis”. Pastor and author Leonard Sweet in his book “Summoned to Lead” writes this, “Crisis doesn’t make a person. It reveals you for what you are,” Perhaps the most important survival questions the church can ask is, “Can we stay where we are?” Can we?

“The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.” Psalm 145:9 (NIV)

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following contributors to this small group guide:

Hailey Brown (RSW) is engaged to Saurabh with a wedding coming soon. She is the Community Impact Ministry Coordinator at Beulah Alliance in Edmonton, Alberta. She has a passion for seeing people who are marginalized experience freedom and empowerment through the love of God. She is honoured to be part of a project that strives to create awareness and education for churches across the nation.

Julia Ellergodt (BRE) Julia has been a member of the Defend Dignity Advisory Team since 2010. She enjoys facilitation – from board room situations to small groups. She loves traveling, reading & baking cinnamon buns! And her lovely eight grandchildren are a great source of joy! Julia currently resides in Moose Jaw, SK, where her & her husband Bruce own several businesses.

Glendyne Gerrard (BBS) – Director of Defend Dignity since 2010. Glendyne loves to learn from and network with survivors of sexual exploitation, government and NGO leaders, Indigenous people, and churches. She is married to Doug, and they have three married children and eight grandchildren and live in Oakville, Ontario.

Rev. Larry Hurst (BA, MDiv, ThM) – Larry is married to Sharon and has two children and three grandchildren. He has served in pastoral ministry at five churches, and as a dean and instructor at Nipawin Bible College.

Rev. James Wheeler (BRE, MA) James has been a pastor for over 25 years in the Christian Alliance. He resides on Treaty 7 land and is grateful for the stewardship of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut’ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations and the Métis

Small group guide for “Walk With Us” video series

MMIWG2S/ JUNE 2022

Nation. He is married to Rhonda and has three grown children, Jessica (Ried), Ethan and Samuel. James enjoys reading theology books and getting out to Kananaskis country to hike and visit with friends.

Stephen Wright is married to Debbie, and they have four daughters, and four grandchildren, all of whom keep him on his toes and young at heart. An avid reader and baseball fan, he is a member of Wellspring Church in Burlington ON, where he has served with the weekly Men’s Group for more years than he cares to divulge.