

# A Better Understanding of Christianity...

- Struggle with Christianity: some of its religions' treatment of Indigenous Peoples
- Colonization of Indigenous Peoples through RSS
- Partnership with government to “assimilate” children into colonial society
- “Take the Indian out of the child” by converting them
- Instilling spiritual beliefs were inferior, demonic & immoral
- Violence to achieve these ends
- Happened to ancestors & immediate family members
- Live with impacts of collective trauma
- Canadians know by now via TRC
- No more excuses
- Struggled to come to terms with what been done & not hold Christians today responsible
- Christian friends/relatives sometimes difficult to separate from actions of others
- Explored liberation theology to see there are forms of Christianity that seek justice

# A Better Understanding of Christianity

- Interconnectedness stands out rather than tool of colonization
- Bible has directives & examples of need to dismantle oppressive systems & support wellbeing of all people
- Jesus Christ's parables speak about social justice for all
- Bible call on people to live in harmony with all creation
- Pope Francis spoken about urgent need to stop climate change
- In line with Indigenous forms of spirituality
- Teach we are all connected in that if earth dies, we all die
- All forms of spirituality & religion have vocabulary in common: interconnectedness, healing & relationship
- "Social healing": describe collective healing within communities
- Social work practice aligned with Christian spirituality as it brings people together in groups & community organizing
- Emphasizes people's strengths & teaches people how to support one another

# Spirituality as Ethics in Action

- Interconnectedness between spirituality, self and other implies a moral and ethical connection with others, including the natural world
- A critical conceptualization of spirituality explores justice-seeking as a spiritual-political endeavour rooted in social work ethics that focus on structures of power
- Spirituality permeates our worldview and directs our actions in the world in every realm of life
- The key spiritual concept of connectedness is intrinsically social, therefore, spirituality is concerned with social justice as a sacred and necessary condition for life and dignity (Thompson)

# Spirituality as Ethics in Action

- Western liberal tradition underpinning social work emphasizes individualism and personal responsibility, obscuring power relations
- A broader view of ethics beyond the one-to-one client-social worker relationship encompasses issues of economic fairness, social equality and equity, ecological sustainability, human rights, and more
- Spirituality opens us to discerning what is moral and ethical in our personal and professional lives
- Spirituality as ethics entails critical emotional and intellectual inquiry, including examining the power relations that constrain us as social workers

# Spirituality & Love Can Lead to Activism...

- Bringing people in rather than isolating them
- Assisting people to get in touch with spirituality
- Joining others to achieve purpose, meaning & belonging
- Social justice, resistance & activism enacted from places of love, rather than anger, “us and them”
- Activism emphasizes “a calling out culture” which names oppressive language & behavior
- Calling-out with intention of engaging in social change
- Can be form of oppression which gets in way of building more just world
- Sometimes holding each other accountable means punishing each other whereby we’re acting out of fear & pain
- Using same tactics of oppression we’re trying to move away from
- Afraid that others notice one is not perfect activist, divert attention by shaming someone else for doing it “wrong”

# Spirituality & Love Can Lead Activism

- Address harm without looking for opportunity to tear each other down
- Lessening shame
- Message into social justice whereby social workers support communities to create safety
- Sense of belonging & opportunities to share stories
- Political & spiritual cannot be separated
- Includes peaceful dissent & reconciliation
- Spirituality as compassion in action
- Chapter on Islam and Social Justice: “social justice requires that we decolonize our perspectives and our knowledge, and that can only occur when we acquire the humility to learn from the vast diversity of human civilizations” (pg. 148)
- Significant teaching on how to go about activism

# Political Dimensions of Spirituality

- Politics concerns the use of power to create and maintain a particular vision of life, involving the process of change and the efforts people make to bring about, influence, or resist change (Spretnak)
- Critical spirituality unites spiritual/religious values and meaning systems with social and political agendas
- Spirituality and/or religion can be used to justify, legitimate, critique, or challenge any particular social order
- Critical spirituality can help strengthen moral and ethical distinctions and actions and locate us within a larger collective of resistance and action for meaningful change