

the Catalyst

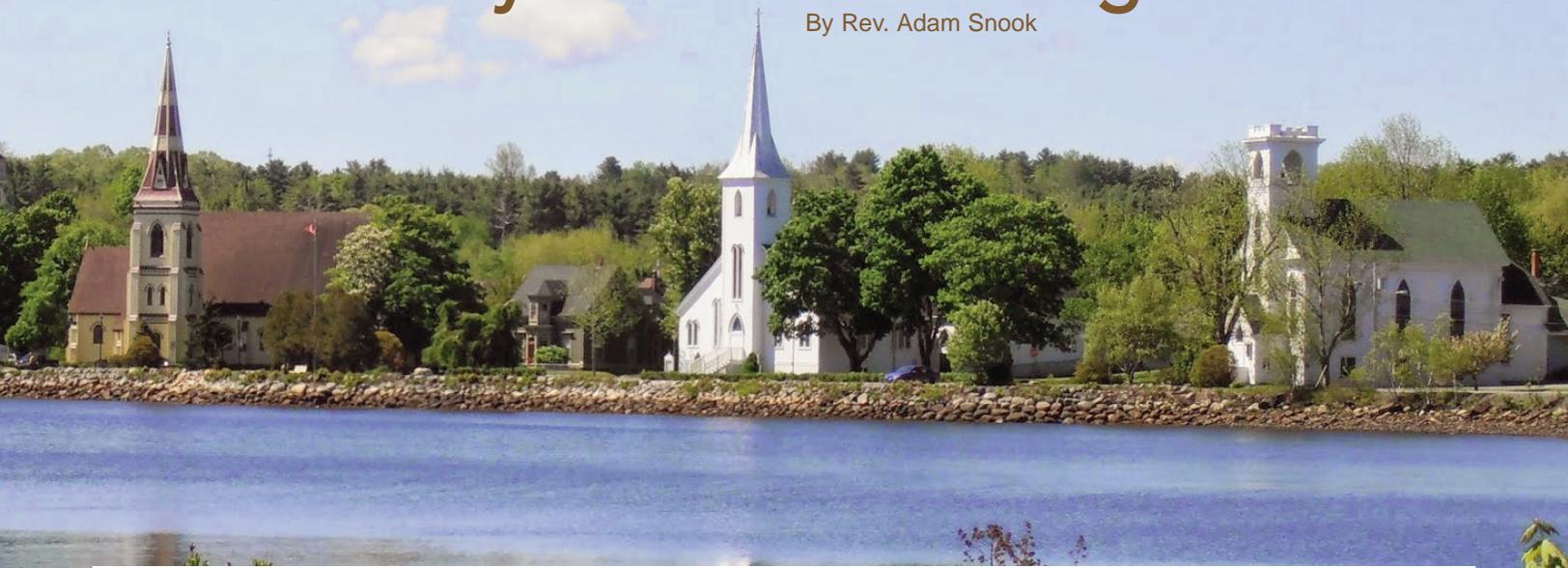
Citizens for Public Justice

Summer 2016

Pub. Mail Agreement no: 40022119

My Town Is Flooding

By Rev. Adam Snook



The town of Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia is home to three picturesque churches. Just across the harbour sit St. James' Anglican, Trinity United, and St. John's Lutheran, where I serve as pastor. The town is an enclave of imaginative artisans and inspired crafters. It is steeped in rich history and is a hub of activism and activity.

And Mahone Bay is also flooding.

We are not alone. Many of the East Coast's shoreline communities are also facing these harsh truths. Environmental degradation has contributed to rising sea-levels and altered tides. By 2060, the water level in Nova Scotia is expected to be 20 to 60 cm above 2010 levels.

Like many of these other communities, Mahone Bay is now addressing the impacting legacy of pollution, irresponsible stewardship, and disregard for creation.

The threat of catastrophic flood levels is projected to engulf the entire village. And so the town engaged community members and a team of engineers to develop a plan that will protect it from further degradation. We are now committed to creating a living shoreline. This model will re-create lost breakwater formations. It will also incorporate nature's salt marsh design and native vegetation. This will help to protect eroding shorelines, prevent dramatic flooding, and prepare

for increasing storms and higher waves. Our approach is reactive, but our continued commitment is to become more proactive.

In the coming months, we will seek to protect ourselves against the wrongs that have been done. But we will also ask questions that address our continued practices and their environmental impacts. Why are there areas still using straight pipe sewage systems? Why are our shops, restaurants, and public places resisting green practices? Why is it so difficult to find proper recycling facilities in our tourism-driven community?

In essence, the onus of responsibility is on us. We may not find pictures of our Atlantic haven splashed across news outlets or national publications. But we have participated (and in some ways, continue to participate) in the habits and short-sighted practices that contribute to this destruction.

As a faith leader in this community, I am encouraged by the spirit of ecumenism here. Together we are seeking not only to address these urgent issues, but also to faithfully fulfill our call from Hosea 4 to live in respectful harmony with all of creation. These beautiful ocean tides are an expression of our God's creative power. In protecting them, we not only preserve God's artistry, but we also invite our God to continue creating with each new day.

Our town is flooding. But we are committed to rising above.

Adam shared this story with the federal government through CPJ's online form. Learn more about the federal government's climate consultations on page 3.

Rev. Adam Snook is a husband, father, and Lutheran pastor in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. He is the co-editor of CPJ's book, *Living Justice*.

In Review

On the Hill

Darlene O'Leary, CPJ's socio-economic policy analyst, has been busy with meetings on Parliament Hill this spring raising the importance of a national anti-poverty plan. Together with our Dignity for All partners, Canada Without Poverty, she has met with Liberal MPs **Judy Sgro** and **Wayne Long**, Conservative MP **Karen Vecchio**, and NDP MPs **Brigitte Sansoucy**, **Irene Mathysen**, **Jenny Kwan**, and **Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet**. Darlene has also been active at meetings of the All-Party Anti-Poverty Caucus.



Senior policy analyst **Karri Munn-Venn** has led CPJ staff in meetings with Liberal MP **Deborah Schulte**, chair of the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development and MP **Ed Fast** (pictured above), the Conservative critic for the Environment and Climate Change. CPJ staff also met with **Dan McDougall**, the Assistant Deputy Minister in the Strategic Policy Branch of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

CPJ's Board of Directors met with Minister of the Environment and Climate Change **Catherine McKenna** to present her with our brief on Canada's climate plan.

In the Community

In April, CPJ co-hosted events in Ottawa and Toronto with **Steven Guilbeault**, co-founder of Équiterre. Guilbeault, who attended the COP21 Paris climate talks, spoke about how we can support climate action and advocacy efforts here in Canada.

CPJ co-sponsored two events in Toronto with the Henri Nouwen Society. In May, we welcomed **Anne Lamott** to speak about social justice and spirituality. Then in June, the Henri Nouwen Society presented *Way of the Heart*, a conference to celebrate the life and work of **Henri Nouwen**.

In June, CPJ was at the Cahoots Festival in Ridgetown, Ont. **Darlene O'Leary** led a workshop on poverty in Canada and **Miriam Mahaffy** moderated a discussion on climate justice.

Darlene also travelled to Edmonton where she participated in the Vibrant Cities national summit, "Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead." She met with Alberta NDP MLA **Annie McKittrick** who spoke in the Alberta Legislature about CPJ's history in Edmonton and its impact on her decision to run for public office.



Annual General Meeting

CPJ's AGM in Ottawa was very well-attended this year. We were honoured to have **Claudette Commanda** (pictured above) and **Verna McGregor** lead us in discussion, reflection, and song. Senator **Murray Sinclair**, who was initially scheduled to speak, was unable to join us because the Senate was debating Bill C-14, legislation on assisted dying.



Welcome Amie!

CPJ is very glad to have **Amie Nault** interning with us this summer. Amie will be assisting CPJ in our research on Aboriginal reconciliation and exploring intersections between Indigenous justice, climate change, and poverty in Canada. Read her article on page 11.



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Citizens for Public Justice's mission is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of creation.

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Cover image: The three churches of Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. Photo Credit: Adam Snook.

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Consulting on Climate: Let's Make Our Voices Heard

By Karri Munn-Venn

"What do you think?"

It's a phrase we often use with friends when checking an idea or seeking advice. And it's the question our federal government is now asking us as it develops Canada's climate action plan.

Our government will use this action plan to meet its commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change. This global agreement aims to "hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels." It further commits us to pursue "efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C."



CPJ's Board of Directors presents our brief to Catherine McKenna, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Read our brief at cpj.ca/public-justice-climate.

The Process

To understand the value of the consultation process, we need to know how it works – and why it represents such a critical moment.

Across multiple levels of government, there is now an unprecedented convergence of attention on climate change as well as a new commitment to action.

Add your voice to Canada's Climate Action Plan with CPJ's easy-to-use online tool at cpj.ca/climate-consultation.

Throughout the summer, working groups are exploring options in four areas. They will look at emissions reduction; clean technology, innovation, and jobs; the impacts of climate change; and carbon pricing. The groups are consulting First Nations and have invited municipalities, community organizations, and citizens to offer input.

Meanwhile, Members of Parliament (MPs) and community groups are encouraged to collect ideas as well. They can do this through community town hall meetings and by submitting them online. (A list of local events is available at cpj.ca/climate-local). Informed by the submissions received, the working groups will present reports to the federal, provincial, and territorial environment ministers in September. The ministers, in turn, will present recommended options to the prime minister and premiers for consideration in October. They will establish a pan-Canadian climate plan that will be put into effect in 2017.

These consultations offer a unique opportunity for all of us, as Canadians and as people of faith, to help shape climate policy. We have until the end of August to submit our ideas. Our next best chance is unlikely to come before the 2019 federal election.

CPJ's Actions

We believe that God calls us to love and care for all the Earth; to respond to the human and ecological devastation of climate change with love and justice.

CPJ has submitted our policy brief, "A Public Justice Vision for Canada's Climate Action Plan," to Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna. We've also created a tool that allows people of faith to easily engage in the consultation while reflecting on our place in creation. And we have developed an infographic (see page 4), discussion guides, and worship resources.

CPJ staff have participated in town hall consultation sessions and our Board members have been engaged in their communities. At CPJ, we're committed to ensuring that the voices of Canadian Christians are heard.

By mid-June, over 250 people of faith submitted ideas using CPJ's consultation tool. That's almost 10% of the submissions recorded on the government portal.

The Value of Consultations

CPJ is actively promoting citizen engagement in the climate consultations because we think that climate change is the moral issue of our time and that people of faith have a particularly valuable perspective to bring to this discussion. We recognize that if citizens, churches, or anyone else fails to get involved now, they forego the right to criticize later. We also worry that without the participation of people of faith, offering good analysis and requesting ambitious action, any consultation conclusions may well be less than creation requires.

We extend this invitation to participate with our eyes wide open. This is a new government with a new style. They're working to establish themselves as more open, transparent, and responsive.

Still, CPJ will be watching when the government unveils its new plan in the fall. We want to see how citizens' concerns and recommendations for bold climate action are actually reflected. We want to know which emissions reduction mechanisms are accepted; the extent of investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and mass transportation; and how those vulnerable to both the impacts of climate change and climate action are supported.

Because here's the thing: when a friend asks us, "what do you think?" we expect them to take our ideas and perspectives into account.

It is tremendous that our government is seeking the input of scientists, Indigenous peoples, faith groups, and citizens. And we hope that these consultations will prove to be meaningful.

"What do you think?"



Karri Munn-Venn is CPJ's senior policy analyst.

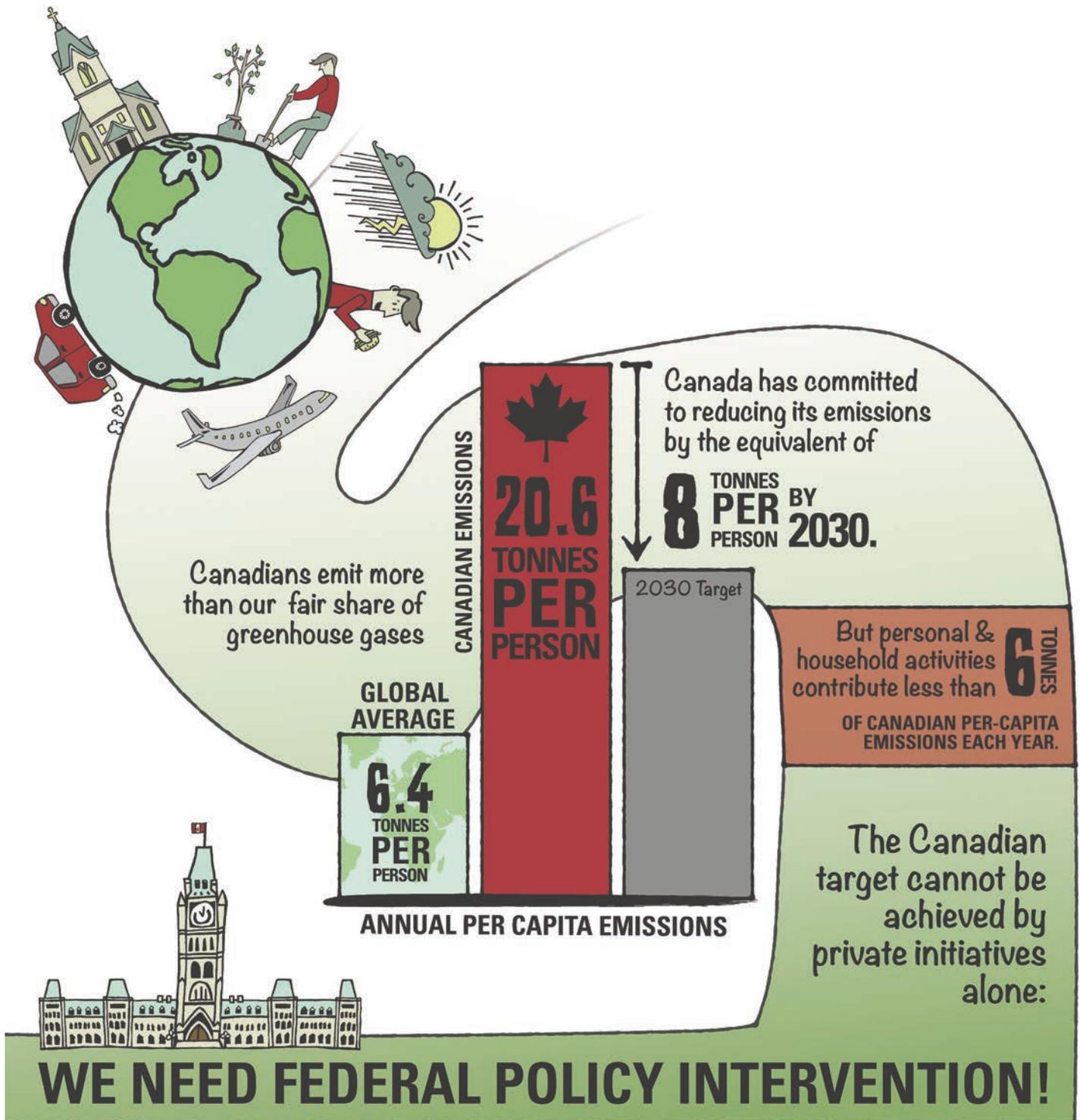
We Are All Connected to Climate Change

An infographic by Miriam Mahaffy

CPJ has developed this infographic about the need for federal action on climate change to help faith communities engage in the federal climate change consultations. You can see and share a full version of this infographic at cpj.ca/climate-infographic.

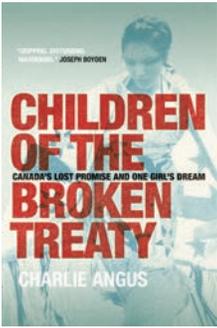
CPJ is calling for a federal climate action plan that will:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions using a carbon tax and regulation.
2. Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and develop a low-carbon economy.
3. Provide justice for those most directly impacted by climate change.



Book Reviews

Summer book suggestions from Citizens for Public Justice



Children of the Broken Treaty: Canada's Lost Promise and One Girl's Dream

By Charlie Angus
University of Regina Press, 2015

Reviewed by Will Postma

Children of the Broken Treaty is a highly readable account of the indigenous young people of James Bay. Angus outlines their struggle for an education equal in quality and funding to that of other Canadian youth.

But the book is much more. It lays out the premises for establishing First Nations residential schools in the late 1800s. It paints pictures of officials, indigenous leaders, and legislation (including the story of Treaty 9), and tells the story of promises delayed or simply not delivered. The book is a window into the determination of young people for fairness and justice. Angus provides an important frame that gives context to the news stories not only of First Nations children and the struggles they continue face, but also the dreams they pursue.

One such dream-pursuer was Shannen Koostachin, a 13-year-old, grade eight Cree student from Attawapiskat. Her school had been condemned and closed because it was deemed unsafe for children. In 2008, Shannen began a campaign for a new school to replace the dilapidated set of classroom portables they had been using for eight years.

Shannen died tragically in a car accident in 2010. But Shannen's Dream—the youth-led campaign—became much more. It led to a unanimously-approved 2012 Parliamentary motion to close the funding gap faced by First Nations children. Angus' storytelling comes alive by virtue of his long interaction with the youth of Attawapiskat and other Northern Ontario communities. He has served as MP for Timmins—James Bay since 2004.

Children of the Broken Treaty weaves together thoughtful narratives and stories of young people. It also includes the stories of many other Canadian schools that supported Shannen's Dream with their own letter-writing and fundraising activities.

Angus believes strongly that governments at all levels are key actors in upholding responsibilities to all, especially the most vulnerable. But this is not about pity; rather it's about equity, justice, and staying true to promises and laws made. Only then can we ensure that First Nations youth are given opportunities to contribute to a better Canada.



Disarming Conflict: Why Peace Cannot Be Won on the Battlefield

By Ernie Regehr
Between the Lines, 2015

Reviewed by Jennifer Wiebe

"Peace, no less than politics, is the art of the possible," writes Ernie Regehr (O.C.). Regehr is widely respected as a peace researcher, security and disarmament specialist, and co-founder of Project Ploughshares. In this book, he unravels our deeply-entrenched assumptions about both the inevitability and efficacy of military force in resolving conflict.

Regehr's personal convictions naturally inform his work. But the thesis of *Disarming Conflict* doesn't hinge on moral arguments against war. Therein lies its strength. It is meticulously researched and rigorous in its analysis. Regehr is concerned with what actually works for achieving peace and stability.

The first half of the book examines the ways in which military force has been "predictably ineffective" in settling highly complex political disputes over that last quarter century. After spreading loss and destruction, the overwhelming majority (85%) of intrastate and international wars end in a desperate military stalemate. They are then settled at the same negotiating tables avoided at the outset.

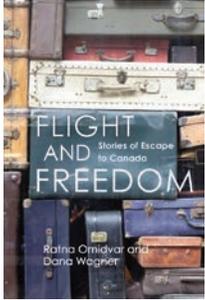
The second half of the book shifts to Regehr's central theme of "disarming conflict." It lays out practical prescriptions for preventing and de-escalating war. This includes political diplomacy, human security, small arms control, nuclear disarmament, and the protection of vulnerable populations through peace support operations.

For any self-proclaimed "realist" who may be inclined to dismiss anything written by a peace activist, this is no work of utopian fantasy. *Disarming Conflict* is evidence-based and entirely practical. It challenges the myth that there are no real alternatives to violence for achieving regional, national, and global interests.

Effectively realizing these alternatives requires a major shift away from devoting the lion's share of our political and financial resources on the preparation for, and conduct of, war. Instead, we should invest in the kinds of nonviolent approaches and initiatives all-too-often sidelined in our national capitals. "It means building the conditions of positive peace as if our lives depended on it," Regehr argues.

This book is essential reading for peace practitioners, military personnel, policy makers, ordinary citizens, and skeptics alike!

Book Reviews



Flight and Freedom: Stories of Escape to Canada
By Ratna Omidvar and Dana Wagner
Between the Lines, 2015

Reviewed by Kathryn Teeluck

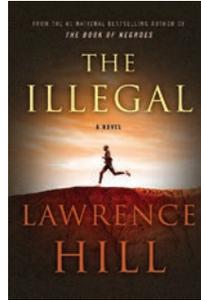
In *Flight and Freedom*, Ratna Omidvar and Dana Wagner give a human voice to what has become a political issue. An issue that has been lost in a barrage of incomprehensible statistics and photos of faceless crowds crammed into boats. They weave together a narrative of the common themes faced by many refugees. But the authors still maintain the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each individual's experience.

Flight and Freedom demonstrates that tyranny and persecution are not restricted to certain regions or groups. By including stories that stretch as far back as the Ottoman Empire, we are faced with the fact that refugees are not a recent phenomenon.

Omidvar and Wagner give us access to the most intimate and often humiliating experiences a human being could ever face. We journey with protagonists as they make the excruciating decision to flee their home country. We see their terror and uncertainty as they search for safety. And finally, we experience the wave of emotions they feel as they arrive in Canada, unsure of what to expect, but ready for a new beginning.

Flight and Freedom also gives us insights into the unique contributions refugees make to Canadian society once given the opportunity. In the end, we are left with an undeniable admiration for their resilience.

Canadians are struggling to decide how best to respond to the plight of refugees. *Flight and Freedom* is an invaluable resource to assist us in coming to an informed decision.



The Illegal
By Lawrence Hill
HarperCollins, 2015

Reviewed by Trixie Ling

In *The Illegal*, Lawrence Hill brings to light the plight, struggles, and resilience of undocumented refugees. The author of *The Book of Negroes* uncovers the prejudice, racism, discrimination, and corruption in the immigration and political systems.

Through different stories and perspectives, Hill weaves together the voices of those who live on the margins of society. He shows the human power of compassion, forgiveness, and courage.

In this moving novel, the main character, Keita Ali, is a long distance runner. But he is running for his life and his family's survival. Keita was forced to flee from his home to another country. Here, he has no family or friends. No one knows his name or would notice if he lived or died. Keita is "a stranger in a strange land whose only transgression was to exist in a place where his presence was illegal."

The Illegal gives us a glimpse into the harsh reality and barriers faced by many refugees.

"The wall had a door, the door had a lock, and the lock needed a key. Some people had keys to this world, but Keita was not one of them," Hill writes.

Throughout the story, Hill reminds us that we live in an interconnected world. He challenges us to open our hearts, minds, and hands to welcome and support our refugee neighbours.



The Reason You Walk: A Memoir
By Wab Kinew
Viking Canada, 2015

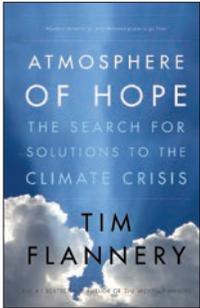
Reviewed by Danielle Rowaan

"It is hard to hate someone after you take them as a brother or sister," writes Wab Kinew in one of the most moving scenes in *The Reason You Walk*. Kinew's father, a residential school survivor, is adopting a Catholic archbishop as a brother.

Several themes of the book come to a climax in these few pages. We see the reconciliatory power of the *nabagoondewin*, the Anishinaabe adoption ceremony, as well as and the strong example of reconciliation the elder Kinew sets for his son. But Kinew also shows us the person-to-person relationships that can exemplify reconciliation between the Church, Indigenous peoples, and the rest of Canadian society.

The book is billed as Wab Kinew's memoir, but his father Tobasonakwut is the true main character. Kinew paints a complex picture of a man who was deeply marked by the experience in the residential schools. Yet he practiced his Anishinaabe ceremonies, taught his language at the university level, and developed a deep friendship with an archbishop. He is far more than a victim.

I have to admit that this picture of a residential school survivor was one I needed to read. Again and again, I must repent of my white saviour complex—the subtle superiority that develops when we see another as a victim to be rescued. This book and its rich depictions of Anishinaabe culture helped me again to remember that when one of us is oppressed, we are all impoverished. When the fabric of Creator's shalom is broken, it is broken for all of us.



Atmosphere of Hope: The Search for Solutions to the Climate Crisis
By Tim Flannery
HarperCollins, 2015

Reviewed by Miriam Mahaffy

Atmosphere of Hope gives us a clear and concise overview of the current climate crisis. Tim Flannery, the Chief Councillor of the Australian Climate Council, wrote this book before the Paris climate negotiations in December 2015. In it, he explains the technological solutions needed to meet our energy needs and reduce carbon emissions.

Governments have made cumulative pledges under the 2009 Copenhagen Accord. But Flannery says they would only cut half of the emissions needed to avoid more than 2°C of global warming. And humans are almost certain to overshoot a safe amount of emissions. So Flannery hopes in the development of technologies that can remove carbon from the atmosphere.

In the last several chapters, Flannery explains several of the most feasible carbon removal technologies and explores the costs of scaling them up. He is honest about the monetary costs and possible side-effects of these developments. And he is adamant that these technologies must accompany, not replace, deep cuts in emissions from fossil fuels.

Flannery's account of climate science and technologies is well-organized, accessible, and informative. This book could have considered the barriers or benefits the market will put on these technologies as they become commercialized.

But it does cite a broad range of peer-reviewed sources and presents a balanced exploration of contentious issues. The reader is inspired and equipped to contribute to current conversations with a concrete understanding of what solutions to climate change could look like.



The Ultimate Guide to Green Parenting
By Zion Lights
Between the Lines, 2016

Reviewed by Karri Munn-Venn

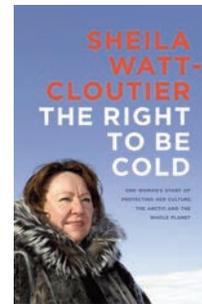
Full disclosure: I am through the birthing and baby-wearing stages of parenthood. With kids aged 12, ten, and four, I'm looking for a different kind of guidance than what I found in *The Ultimate Guide to Green Parenting*. Though full of potential—and a few gems of information—this guide is quirky to say the least.

It opens with valid warnings to limit screen time among children. But it then spends the next 120 pages focused almost exclusively on newborns and toddlers. Several sections also get bogged down with far too many details on things that only remotely connect with environmental decisions. For example, Lights discusses the presence of men at childbirth, breastfeeding positions, and when/how to introduce solid foods to babies.

The scientific rigour that is strongly touted in the introduction is also somewhat weak. Some points refer to just a single small study. And the UK edition (from New Internationalist Publications) is printed on uncommonly thick paper.

Fortunately, the final chapters present several clear, well-documented options for families at all ages and stages. They include helpful suggestions for mindful, green living focused on travel, play, and greening your home.

But most of Lights' advice can be summed up in three simple points. First, buy local and secondhand as much as possible for items such as diapers, clothing, household furnishings, and vehicles. Second, avoid unnecessary chemical additives in clothing and food. Finally, buck the prevailing consumer culture.



The Right to Be Cold: One Woman's Story of Protecting Her Culture, the Arctic and the Whole Planet
By Sheila Watt-Cloutier
Penguin Random House, 2015

Reviewed by Christine Boyle

For decades, environmentalists have worked to rouse people into compassionate action with images of suffering animals and denigrated ecosystems. The images were real, and important, but they only told a portion of the story. Sheila Watt-Cloutier's writing places people—particularly the Inuit—into the story.

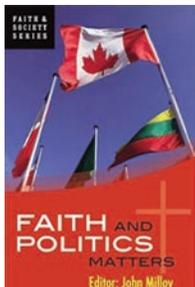
Watt-Cloutier invites readers into her life's stories. She begins with an understanding of the Arctic of her childhood. Next, she brings us through the changes brought by residential schools and increased southern influence. Finally, she outlines and explains her political and advocacy work on behalf of her people.

The current climate crisis overlaps with this country's history of colonization in numerous ways. The changing Arctic is perhaps the most vivid example. It is an important part of Canadian history to understand and a timely call to action. Both the urgent work of climate change and reconciliation compel bold, faithful responses.

Watt-Cloutier asserts, as both a cultural and a spiritual belief, that "everything is connected." Her life's work, her international success, and her community's struggles are a compelling testament to that belief. Her honesty, humility, and determination humanize her massive accomplishments. But she is clear that there is still work to be done.

I'm glad I didn't procrastinate any longer in reading this book. As spring heat waves and forest fires in the West made me despair for our collective future, Watt-Cloutier's book fired me back up. Climate justice and reconciliation are our shared work. Everything is connected.

Book Reviews



Faith and Politics Matters

Edited by John Milloy
Novalis, 2015

Reviewed by Joe Gunn

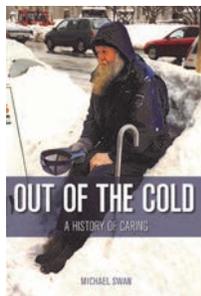
Some Christians grew up believing (with Abraham Kuyper) that “not a square inch of human existence stands apart from the sovereign claims of Christ.” But in John Milloy’s Catholic upbringing, “almost everyone’s parents told them that religion and politics were topics (along with sex) that never made for polite conversation.”

Perhaps Milloy was disobedient to his parents! He worked in Jean Chrétien’s PMO, was later elected as an Ontario cabinet minister, and is now a professor at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. His provocative series of short essays makes the case that people of faith do not need to check our religious beliefs at the door in order to engage politically.

So, *how* we are to engage is a better question for Christians than *if* we are to act. Having had the experience of elected office, it is not a surprise that Milloy defends “the incremental progress that is such a part of politics today.” More challenging for him are unwavering stances encountered on issues like abortion and gay rights.

Another contributor, Lutheran pastor David Pfrimmer, directs his gaze to how faith communities can best engage faith and politics. His answer lies in what he calls “public ethics,” where “communities of moral deliberation” help each other describe, discuss, and fully understand our most profound societal concerns and sources of meaning.

This is often hard work for pastors. It is why faith-based groups like Citizens for Public Justice, independent and more agile than church bureaucracies, are so necessary today.



Out of the Cold: A History of Caring

By Michael Swan
Catholic Register Books, 2015

Reviewed by Zachary Grant

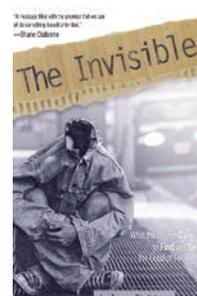
Community service in Canada is changing. A new model for assisting the disenfranchised has been built on a foundation of tough, performance-based funding requirements. Organizations look to make the biggest measurable change with the smallest amount of resources possible. And they compete against each other in a race for relevancy.

But what is being lost in this shift? What about generations of folks who saw the social problems in our society as personal and moral challenges? Those who worked to satisfy a restlessness of their faith?

In *Out of the Cold*, Michael Swan emphasizes the importance of this perspective. Through the history of the Out of the Cold program, he reminds us of the passion that led to the creation of one of Canada’s most important homeless outreach programs.

Yet it served a greater purpose than providing shelter. Each participant who used Out of the Cold and each volunteer and institution that opened their doors on a winter’s night contributed a piece of themselves to the vision of empathetic communities. Communities that didn’t just include, but pushed forward, the most disregarded in our society.

In Swan’s recounting, we see the value of a program that organically and spontaneously serves. One that grows to meet the needs of those who search it out. The people involved in Out of the Cold knew that it did not fit into defined program goals or strict funding requirements. But rather in simple faith they knew that if they listened and served selflessly, good can, and will, spring from those acts.



The Invisible: What the Church Can Do to Find and Serve the Least of These

By Arloa Sutter
Wesleyan Publishing House, 2016

Reviewed by Darlene O’Leary

The Invisible is an exploration of Arloa Sutter’s experiences working in street ministry in Chicago.

Sutter aims to provide a “deeper theology about how to care for the poor.” She shares of encounters with those served at Breakthrough Urban Ministries. But *The Invisible* also frames these stories with scriptural lessons from church leaders who have led movements for social change. Sutter reflects on being drawn by the work of the Spirit and bringing people together to provide support for those in need.

The Invisible highlights a model of church that is motivated by compassion and a sense of social justice. It outlines “breakthrough practices” that would transform churches through deeper engagement with those who are poor.

The book is compelling in its reflection on God’s call to serve those in need. It shows how following this call changes people and communities for the better. The stories of those who are served at Breakthrough are moving. They remind us of the depth of suffering those in poverty endure as well as the depth of humanity they embody.

There is reference to social justice and the need in particular for “racial understanding.” But this book repeatedly falls back on a charity model. Even discussion of addressing root causes of poverty and the need for a plan leads back to a recommendation to follow the Spirit and support charities. And there is no mention of changing public policy. This reflection and analysis take us part of the way to a justice approach, but the book does not get there.

A Discussion on Basic Income

Two CPJ supporters explain their arguments for and against implementing a basic income, a system where the government ensures that everyone in Canada receives a certain level of income.

Now Is the Time for a Basic Income

By Jamie Swift

Many see a basic income as a social justice tool to help people trapped in poverty. It is that. But it's much more. It's a big idea, steeped in radical hope. An idea that can do much more than government policies that tinker at the fringes.

Now is not the time for tinkering. We need to confront two daunting challenges: sharing Canada's unequally divided riches and stopping global warming. We need to usher in a low-carbon economy in which wealth and work are shared more fairly.

Canada is becoming ever richer. Meanwhile machines are displacing workers, jobs are being exported, and food banks are getting busier. Clearly, we face a crisis.



According to Milton Friedman, an intellectual godfather of neoliberalism, "only a crisis, real or perceived, produces real change. When a crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around." Well, basic income has been lying around for a while. As our Kingston Action Group for a Basic Income Guarantee says, "now is the time."

A basic income should be comprehensive and should emphasize social justice. This may seem like a politically unlikely alternative to Friedman's survival-of-the-fittest logic of market fundamentalism. But it offers hope, not only for those trapped in poverty but also for the growing class of Canadians trapped in temporary and part-time work.

A basic income can be part of a transformative program that rejects austerity and neo-liberalism. It would promote the idea that a life is no longer tied to a job. Or two jobs. Or three. And it would offer a fresh new common sense, valuing the *nature* of work, not its *profitability*.

It must provide a livable income. Not a minimum income. It cannot subsidize employers by topping up low wages at public expense. Rather it needs to be part of an inclusive social support system. One that embraces affordable housing, child care, dental care, and pharma care.

The LEAP Manifesto put it well: "*Since so much of the labour of caretaking – whether of people or the planet – is currently unpaid, we call for a vigorous debate about the introduction of a universal basic annual income.*"

A basic income will help us make common cause for the common good.



Jamie Swift is the author of *The Vimy Trap: Or How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Great War*. He works for the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul in Kingston, Ont.

A Basic Income May Make Us Worse Off

By Mary Boyd

Canada's existing social programs are full of potential. And they can be improved quickly to serve peoples' needs and eliminate inequality and poverty. For example, the Canada Child Benefit promised last fall was rolled out on July 1 of this year.

Meanwhile, there are still many questions about the feasibility of a basic income. The math just isn't there. An annual basic income of \$15,000 per person would cost Nova Scotia \$14.1 billion. Yet poverty currently costs \$1.5 to \$2.2 billion. The province's total revenue is \$10.3 billion, of which only \$6.5 billion is raised directly.

Check out CPJ's infographic, *The Case for a Guaranteed Income*, at cpj.ca/gli-infographic.

A nationwide basic income would cost roughly \$540 billion out of the total government revenue of \$745 billion, according to Dr. Christine Saulnier of CCPA Nova Scotia. And if it were taxed or clawed back, a family could find themselves worse off than before.

Will a society based on a basic income model provide better work? The jury is still out. Significantly fewer people work in agriculture today than did a hundred years ago. And machines are taking over many others' jobs. But this threat is not a crisis. There are still many existing needs that must be met by workers. These include improved care for the sick, the frail elderly, the severely handicapped, and the mentally ill. But we also need workers to provide better quality day care, improved public education, and a host of recreation needs such as new public parks with programs and security. And, with investments in a green economy, we can create millions of good, well-paying jobs.

But we don't need a basic income to do this. Instead, we must pressure our governments to fulfill the common good, reduce our carbon footprint, and provide the above-mentioned services as part of our social justice obligation.

Why not, as the CCPA's Armine Yalnizyan suggests, invest in six key programs to improve health (housing, early childhood education, oral health, pharma care, public transit, and post-secondary education) at a total national cost of \$14.1 billion?

A basic income pilot project would be difficult to set up and evaluate, and perhaps impossible to scale up to a national level. It would also employ well-paid professionals over long periods of time while people in poverty would wait for uncertain results that might leave them worse off.

But key investments in these six areas are much more feasible, less expensive, and they are needed now.



Mary Boyd is the founder and coordinator of the MacKillop Centre for Social Justice in Charlottetown, PEI.

Ski With the Cree

By Katherine Walsh



Photo: Don Hetherington

Rounding the corner of the cabin, suddenly protected from the ferocious wind, I looked up to see five pairs of eyes staring into mine. They belonged to a team of huskies sitting alertly, tethered around their dog sled outside the cabin door. I took off my skis and nervously slipped past them and into the one room cabin. An older woman, Frances Sutherland, gave me a welcoming smile and offered me a chair and a cup of tea.

As I sat feeling the warmth of the tea and wood stove, I soaked in the sense of well-being this family exuded. We chatted with Frances, her daughter, and her daughter-in-law. Her teenage granddaughter sat on a bed working on an art project. Meanwhile her two younger granddaughters bounded around the room blowing soap bubbles. Completing the magic of this warm refuge, a tropical pineapple sat upright, the centerpiece on a table atop a rug showing a map of the world.

Fifteen of us from Montreal were on a “ski with the Cree” trip arranged by Kim Cheechoo, the Tourism Officer for the Moose Cree First Nation, and Bill Pollack, an 80-year-old forester and our intrepid organizer.

We had arrived via the Polar Bear Express train from Cochrane, Ont. to the Cree community of Moosonee. The seven-hour train trip was a time filled with excited chatter and anticipation. Many Cree families were returning from homes in the south to their northern homes for the Ontario school holiday. At one point, the train stopped in the bush and a family got off to go to their camp. At a second stop, I peered out the window into the faces of toddlers in a sled and could see their father picking up supplies carried to them by the train.

On our arrival in Moosonee, we drove across the snow road to Moose Factory, an island located in the Moose River which flows into James Bay. Moose Factory is the second oldest Hudson’s Bay Company post and dates back to 1673. It is home to the Moose Cree First Nation and the MoCreebec people, each with their own government. On our first night, we slept in the Cree Cultural Interpretive Centre among exhibits including a stuffed polar bear and a life-size diorama of traditional Cree life.

Our ski trip took us from Moose Factory to Negabou Camp, a wilderness camp 22 kilometres upriver. It was built by the Moose Cree to welcome groups and travellers. A biting crosswind was slowing our progress. After four hours of skiing, an invitation to warm up at the camp felt like a lifesaver.

Kim hosted us again at Negabou Camp. Our guides Mark Issac, Josh Sutherland (a professional chef), and Frances Moses also welcomed us. Moses is an elder who rose to the challenging task of teaching us to bead and make moccasins. Her good humour and laughter made our evening sewing bees a highlight. We feasted on moose stew with dumplings, moose stir fry, bannock, duck, and goose. With our guides’ expert instruction, we set rabbit snares and marten traps, built a teepee, and identified trees and plants. We marvelled at the number of stars and once, in the middle of the night, at the dancing northern lights. Our daytime trips had us all falling in love with the beauty of this land. We skied along snow covered lakes and rivers lined with sunlit red willows and spruce forest under the endless blue sky.

On our last night, Kim’s two sons and a friend played music for us. They are members of a drumming and singing group called the High Ridge Singers. They travel across the country to pow wows, where they learn new music. As we listened to their powerful voices and beat, we felt the strength of our new bonds with the Cree. They had so generously shared the beauty of their lives and traditions with us.

My spiritual life is based in building personal relations and protecting the environment. It was a privilege to share in the lives of the Cree, who have been guided by their social bonds within their community and with the land from time immemorial.



Katherine Walsh is a teacher in the French Cegep College system in Montreal. Learn more about these trips at moosecree.com/tourism.

Education is Critical to Reconciliation

By Amie Nault

It's been just over a year since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) published its 94 calls to action. They appeal to all sectors of society to change, to improve, and to educate. The Commission calls on us to reconcile with this nations' Indigenous Peoples so as to avoid repeating history.

I remember the day clearly. I had just started summer classes, and I was in a classroom in Saskatoon when my teacher came in with these little slips of paper in her hand. Most of us were confused, bewildered by these seemingly arbitrary numbers and statements on the page, as we each received a slip of paper. But slowly we began to understand what we were reading. She was calling us to act and effect positive change in our society. It is something that I, my classmates, and nearly everyone I know have strived to do in some fashion.

I doubt I am alone in eagerly waiting for how governments will respond, especially after the full report came out in December of last year. Recently, the Ontario government released a document titled "The Journey Together." It is, in effect, their plan and response to the TRC calls to action. The document outlines 30 steps ranging from addressing issues in the justice system to commemorating those lost to the horrors of residential schools. Upon first look, I was more than pleased with the outline. It was not comprehensive, and I did not expect it to be. But there was one noticeable absence.

I admit to surprise that nowhere in the document did the Ontario government detail its plan to respond to call to action #62. This call asks governments to develop "curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada." Ontario had quietly proposed to start addressing education back in mid-February. It was hidden almost as a footnote when the province announced that it would be implementing call to action #57 on Indigenous education for every employee in the Ontario Public Service. Since then, there has been no word on making changes to Ontario's curriculum.

There are, of course, teachers and school boards across the country that are addressing the need for education on the history of Aboriginal Canadians. In the Durham District School Board, a portion of each professional development day is devoted to the TRC. They have produced a binder to help teachers include more Aboriginal history in their grade ten history class. Students of all ages across the country participate in such programs as

Project of Heart, an artistic reminder of the victims of residential schools. And KAIROS uses its Blanket Exercise to teach the Indigenous history of Canada.

CPJ has expressed its support for KAIROS' Winds of Change campaign. This campaign is rooted in call to action #62 and Senator Murray Sinclair's statement that "education is what got us here, and education is what will get us out." KAIROS has been circulating petitions, advocating for interactions with politicians, and hosting workshops for education. They have also prepared a report card and have given each province a grade on their progress in achieving reconciliation through education.



On March 30, CPJ released a statement in response to the TRC calls to action #48 and # 62. We dedicated our organization to build on our past actions and move to deepen our policy analysis, build relationships of solidarity, and promote Indigenous rights, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication and climate justice. Read the statement at cpj.ca/TRC-calls.

It seems that Canadians have realized the importance of education in the reconciliation process. But there still needs to be a response from the government to address the call for education so that the story of Indigenous peoples is told across the country.

We as Canadians have been doing good work; we have been changing, learning, and growing.

But there is still work left to do.

Reconciliation is a process that isn't just a moment, or a handful of moments. It's a journey that we all have to walk together. Education is such an important element of that journey. Without education, we will never understand the need to walk together. Without a widespread educational change, the next generation could make our mistakes again.

As my teacher told me last summer, "we have been called to act. The choice now, is ours."



Amie Nault is CPJ's Aboriginal reconciliation researcher.



Be Encouraged to Address Poverty

By Meghan Mast

"Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all," reads Proverbs 22:2. This passage is a convicting reminder that none of us is above another. We are all equal in the eyes of our creator.

And yet, some of us undoubtedly face larger obstacles than others. In Canada, one out of every seven people live in poverty. People living with disabilities are twice as likely to live below the poverty line. In nearly every urban centre in Canada, Aboriginal people (Inuit, First Nations, and Metis people) are overrepresented in the homeless population. And one out of every two status First Nations children live in poverty. These numbers point to the shameful truth that we have failed some of the most vulnerable people in our country.

Living in poverty comes with serious health consequences. This means that people living in poverty are more likely to face health issues than people living above the poverty line. A recent study out of McMaster University showed a 21-year difference in life expectancy between the poorest and wealthiest residents in Hamilton, Ont.

It's easy to become discouraged by these statistics. But despair doesn't do much good. And there is certainly plenty we can do to help. The Bible is full of passages encouraging us to do so. In his first letter, John writes, "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with action and in truth." (1 John 3:17-18)

Action can take a variety of forms. It can be volunteer hours, monetary donations, advocacy work, and even simple acts of kindness at the street level.

A friend of mine worked for several years at Jacob's Well, a faith-based community space in the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver. She once said that when you pass by someone who is asking for money, "the least you can do is give them a smile and make eye contact. People do not deserve to be ignored." This simple yet radical thought has stuck with me.

Maybe it's easier to look away, to ignore suffering. I would

even suggest that when we look at people on the margins, we see our own perceived or real moral failings mirrored back at us. It's easier to blame someone for the situations they find themselves in, rather than recognizing the ways we are complicit. A couple years ago, Statistics Canada found that wealth and income inequality are growing. As the rich get richer, the poor get poorer.

These are complicated problems that require substantive policy changes. But we live in a democracy. One way to get involved in addressing these changes is to check out The Dignity for All campaign, led by CPJ and Canada Without Poverty. Mennonite Central Committee, where I work, also does advocacy work and raises awareness around inequality and poverty in Canada. Engaging your government representatives outside election season is especially conducive to a healthy democracy. So write your MP to ask them what they're doing to address the growing inequality in Canada.

Christ encourages us to face these difficult realities and calls us to show compassion when it is difficult, even painful. Jesus committed his life to serving those on the margins of society. He lived in poverty himself—born in a stable to a simple carpenter and his wife.

Be encouraged. Addressing poverty can be overwhelming, but you are not alone and there is so much you can do. Find strength in Isaiah 58:6-7 which tells us to "loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke," and "share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood."

Join the Dignity for All campaign this fall for our Chew on This! activities across Canada. Contact Darlene O'Leary at darlene@cpj.ca.



Meghan Mast is trained as a journalist and is a multimedia storyteller at Mennonite Central Committee in Winnipeg.