HOW DO HOW DO WE LIVE WELL TOGETHER IN THIS PLACE, ON THIS LAND, AT THIS TIME?

DAVID NEWHOUSE

David Newhouse is Onondaga from the Six Nations of the Grand River community near Brantford, Ont. He is a Professor of Indigenous Studies and has been Chair of the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies since 1993. He was the first Principal of the new Peter Gzowski College at Trent University. He is also a Professor in the School of Business and Co-Chair of the Trent Aboriginal Education Council. In 2016, he received the Trent Award for Education Leadership and Innovation. He is the founding editor of the CANDO Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development, published by the national Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers. It is the first peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to Indigenous economic development issues. Prof. Newhouse has served as the Science Officer for the Aboriginal Peoples Health research adjudication committee for the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and as National Director for the SSHRC 'Urban Aboriginal Research Network' project. He is the author of *Aboriginal Knowledge for Economic Development* (2013), co-author of *Well-Being in the Urban Aboriginal Community* (2012), and co-editor of *Hidden in Plain Sight: Aboriginal Contributions to Canada* (2011).

The following is the edited transcript of an interview with Prof. Newhouse conducted by journalist and Carleton University professor Randy Boswell, guest editor of this volume. The interview took place during the July 2022 visit to Canada of Pope Francis.

Q. The Pope is in Canada, and has acknowledged the tragedy of the residential schools and the Catholic church's role in the system. He said, "I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil" perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples. Is there a sense of satisfaction that such words have been spoken, finally?

A. Close to it, I think.

He describes the residential schools as evil. And he did ask for forgiveness for the church…

That's very unusual. In Roman Catholic theology, the church can do no wrong — it's the people who do the wrong. So, for him to ask for forgiveness for the church, and before God, is an incredibly powerful statement.

You have often discussed the use of the Two-Row Wampum as an interpretive and ethical framework for thinking about the history and relationship between Indigenous peoples in Canada, and as a way of approaching reconciliation. Could you talk about that?

Last year, I began to teach a course in Canadian Studies... I'd been struggling with how do I begin to talk about Canada, because the course was designed to talk about Canada, in all of its dimensions. And I decided, well, let's try and take — if I can — an Indigenous approach to it. I'm Onondaga, I'm from the Six Nations of the Grand River. And I grew up in the longhouse in Six Nations. I grew up also in the Confederacy. My father was (a chief) in the Confederacy. And my family has been involved for almost 100 years in terms of working with anthropologists in helping them to understand who we are, and some of our ideas that we bring to the table, that animate our political action. Yeah. And one of those is the idea of *Guswentah*, the Two-Row Wampum. And the Two-Row Wampum is the representation of a relationship — in this case the relationship between the Dutch and the Iroquois, the Haudenosaunee. It has become sort of the symbol or the frame with which one sees the relationship between indigenous people and the Europeans.

So, it's referring to a relationship that began with the colonization of what I think of as the New York City area by the Dutch?

That's right. So, it has origins. Robert Williams, who is a Native American scholar, talks about *Guswentah* and the Two-Row Wampum, as being the common early Indigenous political philosophy. So, I've taken this idea and said, OK, can we think about Canada through the lens of *Guswentah*. Why? Because *Guswentah* says, these people come together in a relationship — there are two parallel rows that represent the two parties, and there is a series of beads between the two rows that represent a set of values — peace and friendliness and respect and other various interpretations of them. But what they do is they create an ethical space, or a relationship. They also present the guiding ethical principles for a relationship. And then, so, that's how I began to see Canada — Canada as this ethical space, that is in each of its various dimensions, and been trying to ask what I call this *Guswentah* question: How do how do we live well together in this place, on this land, at this time? And so, we're working out the answer to that question over and over and over and over again. Someday, we'll get it right — or probably not — but we keep asking and thinking about it. So, then, Canada then becomes this series of spaces in which we talk about the question of, you know, multicultural space, queer spaces, gay and lesbian spaces, gendered spaces, celebratory spaces, historical spaces, etc. And so, what I began to see was that Canada was, in fact, a *Guswentah* space. We have a set of values that are interpreted variously, but they're always about how to live well together... And so, in the course, I asked this question, how do we begin? How do we answer this question in the various spaces — in the multicultural space, the gay and lesbian space or the queer space? And so the relationship that is Canada, then, is multi-dimensional, multi-spatial. And we're all in this together. I mean, the Supreme Court says that we are not going anywhere, none of us are going anywhere. So, we have to sort it out... And reconciliation is a way in which we try to answer this question again. How do we live well together?

It does fit, doesn't it?

Yeah. (In teaching a previous course on reconciliation) I found this series of lectures from the (U.S.) Smithsonian Institute on reconciliation. Native Americans from across North America came together in about 2013, talking about reconciliation. And in listening, it suddenly became clear to me that indigenous people were talking about reconciliation in terms of relationship, and something that was ongoing, and they were talking about building nations. And non-Indigenous people were talking about reconciliation as an event that was going to occur right at one particular point... What I also found was that when I went and talked to corporate leaders about reconciliation, and began to ground that talk in colonization, the conversation stopped. They had no idea how to come to terms with colonization, or what it meant. So what I did was I changed the language. And so now I talk in terms of the 'long assault' and the 'great healing'. And thinking about time — thinking about two historical periods. A lot of the assault was the attempt by Canada that started in 1851, and continued to 1971 — about 150 years — in which Canada tried to dispossess us of our lands or territories or languages and our spirituality, our knowledge — all the things that we see, and a good part of that was Indian residential schools and the damage that they've done. So when I spoke about 'an assault', then the corporate leaders and officers began to understand. I mean, they're mostly male. And so they understand the physicality of an assault, and also how long it takes to recover. So I talked about the recovery period — the 'great healing' that began in '71 and the forced withdrawal of the (Trudeau-Chrétien) White Paper... So I found a way to talk, then, about what happened in a way that people could feel about it. And the next step was now to begin to talk about a way in which they could find a place for themselves in reconciliation. And so, I talked about reconciliation comprising four elements. One focus (is) upon equity, that is improving the life circumstances of Indigenous people so that they become similar to other Canadians, right, in education and income, all that sort of stuff. The second one was what I call the harmony, that is, focusing upon improving race relations — using that frame, or improving cultural relations.

And the third one was restoration and rebuilding of Indigenous nations. That is, trying to ensure that self-determination and sovereignty were part of the conversation. And the last one was what I call critical conversations about Canada. That is then talking about, OK, what does Canada look like if you have it comprised of Aboriginal nations?... So, I had to try to find a way to help people to find a place for themselves in this national conversation. And I characterize it as a national project, because it's characterized as the largest project since the building of the railway. But it starts from an Indigenous premise, an Indigenous idea, a set of ideas that comes from our own intellectual heritage.

And which doesn't see reconciliation as a one-time thing, a moment of handshaking.

That's right... an ongoing process.

You've referred to flashpoints that arise on a regular basis, such as what we've been witnessing today and over the past year and a half or so around the residential schools. It's also been connected to controversies over commemorative landmarks and statues, and debates within the Canadian Historical

Association. How do you see those controversies and disputes within this long context that you've described?

I think about it in two ways. The first one, I guess I look at it through my sociological lens. I can talk about turbulence, turbulent times. I think of it as the struggle for a 'good mind'. We have this concept in Iroquoian philosophy or psychology called a good mind. And a good mind is a mind that has balance of reason and passion, and is always desirous of peace, is always trying to work for peace. And so when you do that, what happens is you bring people together, and they have different ideas, they have different powers. And so what is happening is that for the first time, Indigenous ideas are coming to the table, and Indigenous conceptions about what the relationship ought to be are coming to the table. And so you have the 500-year history of Europeans doing things largely based upon the doctrine of discovery. And so what you have now is a period of turbulence that's going to last for half a century or so as we as we grapple with how to rebalance, how to restore. Sometimes it's going to be civil. Sometimes it's going to be violent. Sometimes it's going to be challenging, right? Sometimes there's going to be points of agreement. Sometimes there's going to be points of disagreement. But it is going to be a period of intense debate, deliberation, conversation. And something new is going to emerge out of it, as well.

One reaction, which tends to have the effect of shutting down conversations around these issues, is to talk about knocking down statues and renaming landmarks as "erasing history." It's an argument aimed at resisting change. What are your thoughts about this conception of the issue?

We have to remember that historical markers and other monuments came out of a particular perspective, but do not include an Indigenous perspective. So they were intended to memorialize or honour particularly for people who did — in many cases — good things, or in some cases, also contributed to the destruction of Indigenous peoples, lands and territories. So it's that part of the story that is not presented in the monuments. And so the question is, how do you then present that part of the story? You need both parts of the story. That's where the debate is occurring. I think about Duncan Campbell Scott. So we need to find ways through that. We need to understand that history is a set of stories that we tell ourselves. It is not one single story.

But statues tend to be one single object, don't they?

That's right — and so the representation of a particular viewpoint, and a particular set of powers. Right. And people grow very attached to them... A group of us went to New Orleans. We took the train down from Chicago. That was quite the trip. I have a friend who lives there. She took us to see the Ninth Ward, and the destruction occurred from the floods. Yeah. But she also took us to see a few of the sites where the statues were being removed — and told us what happened in terms of the removal. They had to remove these statues — which were largely Confederate generals and soldiers — in the middle of the night. They had to have snipers on the buildings surrounding them, in order to remove them. Right? People were strongly attached to the view of history that those monuments represented. And changing them, in their view meant, erasing their history and denigrating their history. So we have to somehow find a way to negotiate that space. I looked at some of the monuments and some of the plaques that

were there. They did not always speak to the slavery that occurred. We went to the site where they were the largest slave market occurred, and there really wasn't anything — there was no plaque, there was nothing. We did go to the Whitney Plantation. And I think the Whitney Plantation did something which I really liked, which was the desire to focus upon the slaves. And so you entered the plantation not through the big house, but through the slave quarters. You only came to the big house at the end of about a two-hour tour. And so you saw the plantation through the eyes of the slaves. That was a good way of balancing what was occurring. It didn't ignore the plantation owners, but you place them in the background, and you foregrounded the slavery history, the slave experience. So you created a much more complex understanding and history of the plantation. You can't help but be moved.