

Reformed Tastes

from around the world

The Blanket Exercise

Reformed believers on most continents may never have heard of the Blanket Exercise. For many leaders in the Christian Reformed Church in Canada, however, the Blanket Exercise has become a formative experience. What is it, and how does it work? Blankets are strewn across the floor to represent the country of Canada. Participants walk on the blankets, representing native territory, while following the directions of a script that powerfully narrates the painful history of conflict between aboriginal nations and new settlers. Participants are led to feel something of the powerlessness and abuse that marked the plight of the indigenous peoples through the last couple of centuries. The purpose of the exercise is to raise awareness, compassion and the hope of a better future. Members of the church are challenged to be positive leaders in the implementation of hope founded on Christian principles of reconciliation and respect.

In November 2014 I participated in the Blanket Exercise while representing the Christian Reformed Church at the Canadian Council of Churches Governing Board meeting in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada (a suburb of Toronto). The same day as the Blanket Exercise, I took a photo of a beautiful wild deer that wandered onto the property where the meeting was being held in the heart of the city. I couldn't help but make a comparison; the habitat of the deer has changed as irreversibly as the land of the aboriginal members of our society but we must ensure that there is room for a dignified and respectful future for all. The graceful deer stepped out as an elegant symbol of hope.

For more information on the Blanket Exercise I invite the reader to the following link: http://www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_blankets.cfm

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