



photo Everett Lambert

President of the Alberta Metis Association Sam Sinclair participated in last week's First Ministers' Conference in Ottawa.

# Metis perspective on Christianity

by Everett Lambert

Slowly but surely, I want to get all those thoughts I feel are important to me down on paper. Maybe because it's Sunday or maybe because my roommate started me off on the whole thing, but recently I got to thinkin' a lot about God, or that Somebody we at times call the "Great Spirit." And I thought about how s/he relates to Native people. All in all, I have agreed within myself that Native traditional religion was a good religion(s). Before Christianity was "endowed upon us," I don't think we all went to hell. So, we must have been doing something right. Indeed, when Native traditional religion was suppressed, this in a very great way castrated the self and public esteem of Native people.

There was a time when we revered, loved, and cherished our Native Elders. We held them in the same esteem as you would hold your Pope or Mother Teresa. We were so very proud of our Native Elders.

Then Christianity was "endowed" upon us. We learned about "savagery." We had to be Christianized. We had to be taught how to love and respect our fellow man, and in the only way — the Christian way. Our traditional beliefs, our

religions, our Elders were discarded as symptoms of savagery.

Now we looked up to the RC priests and the Jesuit missionaries as our new superhumans, as our new saviors, as our elders. Our own Elders were reduced to symptoms of savagery, dinosaurs nearing extinction. We lost a great deal of pride in them. We even became embarrassed when one appeared with a silly pipe or useless medicine bundle. I have encountered many Natives who feel that Native sacred ceremonies are rubbish.

One of the worst things about the whole process though, was that we lost pride in our very selves. Our Elders are a part of us. Now I know what they mean when they say Native people have a holistic view of life and the things around them. When we look down on our Elders we look down on ourselves.

Native people in Canada today are struggling to regain their identity and a sense of well-being. Violence, high death rates, and alcohol and drug abuse run rampant amongst our people. I know.

A friend of mine once told me something, and I have to say he captured in words what I feel is the 'cure to most of our problems. He said, what Native people need to experience is a great wave of spiritualism.

We have to start looking up to our Elders and ourselves. It's kind of an unprofessional way to put it, but I doubt like hell that all Native people all went to hell. Honestly. And you think about it.

Our religions must have been effecting something right. I mean, how different is it to burn sweetgrass than it is to kneel down before sitting down on the church bench. A lot of people think our old religions were silly simply because we communicated to the spirits in a different fashion.

Love yourselves: love your Elders.

*Editor's note — Everett Lambert is a Metis who has studied political science on campus for three years. Originally from the Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement, Everett has been a journalist for two years.*

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## Students to discuss nuclear disarmament

by Brad Johnson

A group of Montreal students, all members of Students Against Global Extermination (SAGE), are to give a free public talk in SUB Theatre on April 7.

The four are taking a year off from school for their Youth Nuclear Disarmament Tour and range in age from 16 to 18 years.

According to Patti Hartnagel of Project Plowshares, the students "came across as being incredibly articulate and poised." She also sees them as "becoming national folk

heroes" from their tour discussing the dangers of nuclear war.

The students are touring high schools Canada-wide and are expected to reach about one in 20 high school students in the country. Hartnagel said their talk in SUB will give people outside of the schools a chance to hear them.

The talk is sponsored by Project Plowshares Edmonton and Temple Beth Ora. It begins at 7:30 on April 7 in SUB Theatre and is free of charge.

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