

pain and warts in its background. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about that and to institutionalize the healing process at a national level.²⁹⁵

Newcomers to Canada

For new Canadians, many of whom carry their own traumatic memories of colonial violence, racism, and oppression, finding common ground as Treaty people involves learning about the history of Aboriginal peoples and finding ways to build stronger relationships of solidarity with them. The Commission believes there is an urgent need for more dialogue between Aboriginal peoples and new Canadians. At a forum, "From Remembrance to Reconciliation," co-sponsored by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Colour of Poverty, Colour of Change, and the Metro Toronto Chinese and South-East Asian Legal Clinic, and attended by the TRC Commissioners, participants reflected on how their own histories shaped their understanding of violence, oppression, and racism, the stereotypes they learned about Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and the challenges and opportunities of building alliances together.

Akua Benjamin, who came from the Caribbean, with its history of slavery, said,

How is it that our histories ... [have] so many similarities in terms of violence? The violence of slavery is the violence of destruction in Aboriginal communities.... These are societies that are shaped by violence.... My grandmother talked about working in the fields and being beaten ... my mother carried coal on her head as a child ... so we have a lot in common.... How do we reconcile? How do we have those difficult conversations that say that you are implicated in my struggle? You have privilege that I don't. You have an education that I was not privy to.... This is a safe place for us to really have those difficult conversations.²⁹⁶

Ali Kazimi said,

I came [to Canada] from India thirty years ago.... One of the things that became apparent to me right away was that I came [here] with my own baggage of stereotypes [of Aboriginal peoples]. These were defined by what I had seen in Hollywood films and comic books.... I spent a lot of time in Toronto going to soup kitchens, hanging out with people, trying to understand what the current reality is of First Nations people in an urban centre like Toronto. It was an incredible learning experience. It really humbled me. It really opened my eyes.... I remember having those discussions with people who would challenge me, and those challenges were absolutely essential.... That led me to my own question.... How do I fit into this landscape?

Many Canadians feel that Canadian identity and cultural identity is somehow defined by this universal humanism. On the flip side, we have Prime Minister Harper who says Canada has no history of colonialism. They do the same thing. They deny colonialism and racism and [attitudes of] white superiority ... whose legacy we