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Decolonizing relief, development and peacebuilding

Colonization refers to foreign powers occupying and controlling a territory, imposing non-native norms and exploiting local people and resources for material and strategic gain. This domination is justified through colonial ideologies of superiority and inferiority, creating hierarchies in all areas of human society: governance, economics, education, infrastructure, communication, social status and organization, culture, ethnicity, religion and other dimensions of identity (Kämmerer 2018). Designed for colonizers to maintain and naturalize control over the colonized, these hierarchies of superiority and inferiority distort the image of God in each person and undermine right relationships between people, creation and the Creator. Ultimately therefore, colonialism impoverishes colonizers and colonized far beyond material loss.

MCC envisions communities living in right relationship with God, one another and creation. Yet colonial ideologies, deeply embedded in human societies, create barriers to realizing this vision. To remain faithful to this vision, MCC must pursue decolonization that is substantive, not tokenistic—work that bears real fruit. While MCC has formally committed to this deep decolonizing work, the challenge lies less in stating intentions and more in translating them into genuine impact.

This issue of *Intersections* invites readers into a constructively critical conversation about decolonization within international non-gonvernmental organizations (INGOs) like MCC: across systems, structures, practices, teams, partnerships and approaches to relief, development and peacebuilding. Each author poses challenging questions about how MCC can engage in decolonization meaningfully and actively, while highlighting inspiring examples already underway. Readers will glimpse rich discussions from partner encounters in Rwanda and Bolivia, dedication to local empowerment in India, radical land-based justice in Canada, decolonial humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives in Palestine and Israel and thoughtful engagement in scholarly writing on decolonized development. Throughout the issue, five key themes emerge:

1. *Colonization is not merely an historical event, but the foundation for colonialism,* understood as an enduring ideology that shapes identity, value systems and forms of social organization. Contributors in Latin America use the concept of coloniality (*colonialidad*) to describe this

phenomenon. MCC's decolonization efforts must go beyond dismantling political and economic structures or elevating visible minorities to also confront colonialism's deep impact on thought, culture and identity.

2. *Colonial power dynamics permeate humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding work*. Well-intentioned interventions can unintentionally reinforce colonial patterns through biases, imposed values and control over systems, knowledge and resources. MCC seeks to foster equitable partnerships and local empowerment, while also urging rigorous self-examination and responsiveness to feedback that expose lingering colonial practices and ideologies within MCC.

3. *Decolonization is complex*. Colonialism creates layered hierarchies and sophisticated forms of exploitation that reshape societies and become entrenched over time. Decolonization, therefore, does not have quick or straightforward fixes to undo the effects of colonization. MCC is called into patience, persistence and humility for mutual learning. Decolonization is ongoing, iterative and forward-moving. It makes space for lament, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation—processes essential for healing and growth.

4. *Decolonization cannot be standardized*. While colonization is widespread, it manifests itself in unique ways with distinctive and complex impacts in different contexts. Decolonization must therefore be contextualized and nuanced. Even when guided by shared principles and points of learning, tangible decolonization efforts will look different in a small town in Mexico, a city in India or a village in Uganda.

5. *Decolonization demands tangible and meaningful action*. Decolonization demands moving beyond reflection, acknowledgement and "talk-shops" to action, practice and "workshops." Colonizers acted boldly to shape today's realities, while colonial ideologies still drive destructive action in settings like Gaza. Radical action to decolonize is needed to counter and dismantle living legacies of colonialism.

As the articles in this issue of *Intersections* reflect, MCC and partner staff across MCC are in active conversation about what decolonizing relief, development and peacebuilding looks like. May the reflections here foster rich discussion and inspire MCC into ongoing action.

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Imagining shared worlds: decolonization in MCC

MCC is rooted in a faith tradition with origins in Europe, connected to a complicated legacy of Christian mission and Western-led development work with its headquarters in the heart of empire. Implementing its commitment to decolonization presents daunting challenges, with the task sometimes appearing impossible. The authors of articles in the new book, *Decolonizing Development and Religion: Theoretical Frameworks, Case Studies, and Theological Models*, however, offer understandings of colonialization and decolonization that can help MCC live out this commitment.

Learn more

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"MCC seeks to foster equitable partnerships and local empowerment, while also urging rigorous self-examination and responsiveness to feedback that expose lingering colonial practices and ideologies within MCC."

"Colonizers acted boldly to shape today's realities, while colonial ideologies still drive destructive action in settings like Gaza. Radical action to decolonize is needed to counter and dismantle living legacies of colonialism."

The authors in this volume are clear that colonization is both an historic event and ongoing process, an economic project by which nations in the Global North and their corporate proxies impose political, social and cultural order on territories in the Global South to extract and transfer resources from a racialized periphery to a racialized core (Petzey Chiviliu, et al 2023). The colonial project includes a geographically variegated but internally consistent set of racial, gender and cultural hierarchies that impose cultural understandings, systems of knowledge and visions of progress. Latin American scholars use the term *colonialidad* to describe the residue left behind by the identity-defining project of colonialism that marginalizes native organization of social life and systems of thought, where racialized categories take away the ability of individuals to define their own humanity (De Lima Silva 2011). Relief and development have been harnessed to the colonial project by defining progress through the lens of industrial development in the nineteenth century.

From this understanding of colonization, this book's authors would recommend that MCC pay constant attention to the ways MCC's policies, processes and activities may reinforce colonial hierarchies. The book's various case studies remind international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) like MCC that development processes and activities bear the possibility of either rearticulating colonialist patterns of extraction and domination or embodying decolonial resistance and creating new liberated worlds. One way that INGOs reinforce colonial hierarchies is by maintaining the status of communities as sites of extraction whose native systems of community organization, social life and knowledge need to change to achieve "progress" towards externally defined standards. From the perspective of decolonization, projects that focus on the "untapped capital generating potential" of participants by attempting to insert small-scale agriculture producers into cash crop market economies or that frame education as moving from ignorance to mainstream understandings of the world need to be viewed critically.

Taken as a whole, *Decolonizing Religion and Development* suggests that MCC's efforts to decolonize its work would benefit from rejecting western-colonialist dichotomous thinking and totalizing narratives that drive us to believe processes or activities are either wholly colonial or decolonial. For example, decolonized gender analysis in MCC avoids assuming that women's Bible study groups are simply expressions of patriarchal religious practice, while seeking to understand how women participants appropriate inherited forms and processes into their own cultural understandings and collective liberation. Power analysis in a decolonized MCC recognizes both "the light and darkness" (in the words of an MCC Mexico partner) of strong communal decision-making structures in Indigenous communities. Finally, decolonized staffing in MCC recognizes that intercultural diversity in MCC teams does not automatically produce mutual exchanges of knowledge and diverse perspectives without carefully attending to power dynamics and complex racial, ethnic, gender and national origin divides.

Importantly, the articles in *Decolonizing Religion and Development* urge INGOs to conceptualize decolonization as a mutually constructed process that uproots the historical legacies and contemporary impacts of colonization. The book's case studies remind MCC where and to whom it should look for inspiration and guidance: MCC grows in its understanding of decolonization by understanding the historical and current struggles of Indigenous communities, women and religious and ethnic minorities to

Learn more

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"Relief and development have been harnessed to the colonial project by defining progress through the lens of industrial development in the nineteenth century."

“Colonization is extraction via imposition; decolonization is co-construction via mutual learning.”

resist colonial extraction and domination and create their own visions of a better present and future. At their best, these visions neither glorify an imagined pre-colonial state nor uncritically accept imposed colonialized visions. Decolonizing INGOs recognize and strengthen the agency of marginalized communities and people, explore shared interests with partners more honestly and design and implement processes that open spaces for resistance to extraction and domination and allow communities and partners to define their own social change goals and visions of a better future. Colonization is extraction via imposition; decolonization is co-construction via mutual learning.

The answer to how INGOs like MCC can decolonize itself and its work cannot be easily summarized in a short article. Decolonization requires MCC to lean deeply into its values of flexible, culturally competent and contextually attentive accompaniment. It also requires commitment to constant critical analysis of and honest reflection on how its policies, practices and procedures open possibilities for liberation or force the marginalized to re-experience colonialist extraction and cultural domination. Decolonizing relief, development and peacebuilding is hard work, but such efforts will allow MCC to better respect human dignity, seek reconciliation and dismantle oppression.

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Decoloniality as practice in Bolivia

In this article, rather than focusing on decolonization as the counter-effect of colonialization, I explore a different process called decoloniality. I use experiences from MCC’s 2025 Bolivia partner encounter to shed light on how MCC can engage partners in discussions about decoloniality, encouraging MCC to use these learnings to integrate decoloniality into all our efforts to address colonialism’s enduring harms.

“*Colonialidad* refers to the way in which the violent and unjust processes of colonialism have become a historical and cultural heritage that shapes people’s way of being and of understanding the world.”

Colonialism refers to the way in which countries have been asymmetrically inscribed into a global system of oppression that excludes some countries from decision-making and knowledge-creating spaces and generates economic dependency on dominant systems and powers. Coloniality (or *colonialidad*) is a term used by Latin American scholars to refer to the way in which the violent and unjust processes of colonialism have become a historical and cultural heritage that shapes people’s way of being and of understanding the world (Castro-Gomez 2005). Even if we challenge colonial logics and ways of organizing, the experiences of coloniality will not disappear; they will remain implicit in the ways people assign meaning and value to their experiences and form their sense of self. As articulated by Bolivian author Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, this legacy can be understood as the *huella colonial*, or colonial imprint. (Cusicanqui 2010).

While the political process of decolonization dismantles formal colonial rule and the economic dependency it created, decoloniality focuses on the ongoing effects of coloniality in Latin American—how colonial ways of thinking continue to shape identity, knowledge and institutions. It highlights how colonial logics still influence how we understand the world and ourselves. A basic explanation of colonization’s impact on Latin America often imagines Latin America as a fixed object that existed in one state

'before' colonization and was then altered by colonization in fixed and visible ways. But this view overlooks the shifting power dynamics and changing social conditions that shape societies over time. Seeing Latin America as a subject rather than an object recognizes that the impacts and meanings of colonization also change and that Latin Americans continuously reinterpret and respond to these effects (Hernandez and Rodriguez 2012).

As part of MCC's global strategy blueprint, country programs are invited to integrate decolonization into their programs. For the 2025 MCC partner encounter in Bolivia, therefore, we proposed the topic of decolonization and reciprocity. In preparation, we explored how MCC and academia frame decolonization, asking: Why is this topic important? Who legitimizes it and in what contexts? How does the conversation differ between the Global North and South? How should MCC and its partners approach the work of decolonization in Bolivia?

In our preparation for this partner encounter, we adopted a Latin American perspective, distinguishing colonialism from coloniality and decolonization from decoloniality. Our work was guided by two considerations. First, we committed to have MCC staff learn alongside partners rather than teach or observe. This commitment was important given that many MCC staff in Bolivia are from other Latin American countries and are still learning the Bolivian context. Second, we made a methodological choice: instead of defining decolonization, we created space for reflection on how participants understand and experience it. We adopted the Program of Dialogue, a Bolivian initiative fostering intercultural dialogue and conflict transformation through experiential learning (GIZ 2019), as the encounter's methodology. The Program of Dialogue approach emphasizes attitudes and behaviors that facilitate genuine and inclusive dialogue and allowed us to establish four premises for the encounter:

1. *Decolonization requires reflection and practice.* A decolonial approach to relief, development and peacebuilding calls for opening spaces for reflection on how colonialism is not simply a historical moment but on how coloniality is a mentality that tangibly shapes people today.

Blanca Nogales holds a beet she grew in her garden in 2024. Blanca receives agroecological training and support from MCC partner organization Fundación Agrecol Andes (FAA) in Cochabamba, Bolivia. (MCC/Anna Yoder)

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2. *Decolonization only makes sense in relationship*. MCC must deliberately disabuse itself of the illusion that MCC 'knows best' how to talk about colonization and coloniality. MCC can practice decoloniality only through relational reflection with its partners—the kind of reflection that allows all involved to recognize and interrogate the colonial imprints shaping our actions and assumptions and opens space for mutual transformation.

3. *Decolonization is not linear*. Part of the legacy of colonization is that we can no longer divide the world into *local* and *global*. The local is always already bound up in global systems of colonial domination, a phenomenon scholars refer to as *glocalization*.

4. *Decolonization is not universal*. Colonialism is a collective experience, but not a universal one: it takes on contextualized forms. Similarly, responses to colonialism need to be contextualized: engaging in decolonization and decoloniality will not look the same in the United States as in Bolivia, for example.

As we prepared for the 2025 partner encounter, we brought in an external facilitator to lead the Program of Dialogue process so that MCC staff could be equal participants alongside partners. The encounter included practical exercises that invited participants to examine their positionality, assumptions and responses to conflict, revealing how colonial imprints shape everyday interactions. The methodology reaffirmed that colonization is not just an event from the past but is embedded in us through coloniality. We can track colonization's impacts by reflecting on the values and truths we defend in conflict, the assumptions driving our perceptions of others and our responses when interacting with people in diverse environments.

Over three days of dialogue and practical exercises, we found that our default, preliminary understandings of colonialism viewed it as an historical event, disconnected from present realities. Deeper conversations, however, revealed that colonial legacies continue to shape Latin American contexts. For example, Bolivia's east–west divide and census categories fail to reflect the complex identities of Bolivians who do not identify as Indigenous in a context where most people do, leaving many feeling excluded and unrooted. When participants mapped historical events across Bolivia and other countries represented at the encounter (Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay), patterns emerged: political instability, resource scarcity and inadequate institutional support in education, health and gender equity—all linked to colonial legacies.

After identifying ongoing colonial processes and power dynamics, participants in the partner encounter uncovered how those dynamics have shaped how they work with vulnerable populations. Scarcity, competition and defensiveness, all rooted in colonial history, shape conflict responses and values. Interactive exercises helped participants identify assumptions and fears driving these behaviors, highlighting how internalized colonial patterns persist.

A key insight was that structural changes alone, such as increasing local leadership or putting historically oppressed people in leadership positions, are significant but insufficient work toward decoloniality. While these actions may be well-intentioned, without critical reflection they can reinforce the asymmetries that originally shaped the relationship between

"colonizers" and "colonized." Moreover, decisions driven by guilt or anxiety can perpetuate colonial logic or reflect internalized colonial patterns.

The 2025 MCC Bolivia partner encounter affirmed that colonialism is not merely a past event, but an ongoing reality experienced by participants through coloniality. While these concepts initially felt academic and abstract to many, guided activities helped participants relate experientially and identify new ways that decolonization and decoloniality feel relevant to our lives and work. Colonialism remains a violent system, and coloniality a deeply embedded mentality. They continue to shape societies and relationships. Addressing these realities in a way that works at decoloniality requires open dialogue and self-awareness of both historically colonized and historic colonizers. Our next steps for MCC Bolivia will include deeper engagement with partners during future encounters and applying these concepts to different areas of our shared work and life.

MCC has led global efforts toward localization and has a history of amplifying local voices and leadership in countries marked with a history of colonialism (Smith Cain and Weaver 2023). Nevertheless, decolonization and decoloniality challenges remain across MCC and at every level of the organization. Adopting decoloniality as a framework, I suggest, could benefit MCC, prodding MCC to reflect on positionality, attitudes and responses to power. These conversations are uncomfortable but necessary, as they challenge privilege and internalized colonial patterns. MCC staff should be neither teachers nor listeners in conversations about decolonization, but active participants in these discussions, so that alongside partners we can move beyond tokenistic quick fixes to address underlying power dynamics and internalized beliefs. Decolonization and decoloniality are not just for the historically oppressed; they are a collective work requiring talking with people, not just to them.

Jessica Gonzalez, originally from Colombia, facilitates planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting for MCC Bolivia and Paraguay, along with efforts to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

"MCC staff should be neither teachers nor listeners in conversations about decolonization, but active participants in these discussions, so that alongside partners we can move beyond tokenistic quick fixes to address underlying power dynamics and internalized beliefs."

Decolonizing development: MCC's journey of local empowerment in India

India achieved independence in 1947 after more than 200 years of British colonization, which deeply impacted India's identity, culture, education and economy. One painful result of colonial rule was the Bengal Famine of the early 1940s, where over three million people died of hunger—a tragedy attributed not to drought but to colonial policy failures, as documented in Madhusree Mukerjee's *Churchill's Secret War*. In response to such suffering, MCC stepped in, supplying food to India for the first time. Thus began MCC's humanitarian journey in India, a response that might be viewed as a precursor to decolonial humanitarian response—supporting local recovery rather than perpetuating colonial control. While western political powers continued to use food aid as a tool of strategic diplomacy, often linking humanitarian assistance to political influence (Piana 2023), MCC's approach stood apart by prioritizing relief over leverage. This approach laid the groundwork for more equitable community development partnerships.

"Equitable community development partnerships are particularly important for decolonization work in India due to the legacy of India's caste system."

Equitable community development partnerships are particularly important for decolonization work in India due to the legacy of India's caste system.

Samdu Baghel shows a young ridge gourd (popularly known as luffa in English) growing on a vine in his two-tiered vegetable garden. Samdu and his wife Tulsa Baghel worked hard to build a trellis for climbing vines with proper spacing between plants. (MCC photo/ Pabitra Paramanya)

Though predating colonial rule, the British policies solidified the caste system, exploiting its hierarchies and entrenching its inequities. Despite official deconstruction of the caste system post-independence and ongoing affirmative action, the system's legacy continues, particularly evident in who holds power in society and whose knowledge is considered valuable. Furthermore, the caste system is still practiced informally, requiring ongoing efforts to combat caste-based discrimination. Equitable partnerships that value local knowledge and expertise and position communities as active agents of change help combat these colonial legacies.

Beginning with relief efforts in 1942, MCC's approach in India has evolved to further combat colonial legacies through equitable partnerships that both affirm local expertise and empower communities into action. Several current MCC partnerships reflect this decolonial approach.

- Disha, for example, nurtures self-help group initiatives, focused on goat-rearing, reviving traditional crops and promoting sustainable farming methods that preserve soil fertility. Disha-supported projects emphasize living in harmony with forests and rivers. Community members provide basic veterinary care and take ownership of sustainable practices.
- ISARA supports farmers' groups in managing irrigation systems and adopting eco-friendly farming techniques.
- Asha Kiran Society's farmers collaborate with the government to reclaim barren land using Sloping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) (Shah et al. 2025), form producer groups, access government programs, improve yields and secure better prices, becoming catalysts for rural development.

"MCC in India has also been a catalyst in encouraging partners to form inclusive local governing bodies, addressing gender gaps and other social divides and fostering true decision-making power."

These initiatives promote democratic decision-making, community resilience and economic independence. By strengthening partners' capacities, MCC in India fosters development that is locally driven, culturally rooted and responsive to community needs. In contrast to colonial approaches, this decolonized model enables communities to shape their own future with knowledge, collaboration and dignity. MCC's role in India remains that of

catalyst and companion, accompanying communities to nurture and affirm locally led, contextually grounded and responsive development (Scott 2024).

MCC in India has also been a catalyst in encouraging partners to form inclusive local governing bodies, addressing gender gaps and other social divides and fostering true decision-making power. This approach contrasts with the centralized, hierarchical, racialized and patriarchal legacies of colonial rule in India and has strengthened organizational competence by enabling fuller participation in development processes. MCC's support has fostered Indigenous leadership and empowered boards like the Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India (MCSFI) and the West Bengal Voluntary Health Association (WBVHA) to lead mission-driven work. The Organizational Development Assessment (ODA) workshop has also helped MCC partner governing bodies review their performance and make improvements based on their local contexts. Staff monitoring visits reveal vibrant democratic cultures among MCC's partners—regular meetings, open dialogue and active debate—reflecting ongoing decolonization in leadership.

MCC continues to advance locally led development in India by prioritizing native knowledge within its own staff team. Increasing numbers of skilled national staff are working alongside international colleagues to manage administration and support partners in planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Their shared cultural contexts and language foster trust and rapport, which facilitate open dialogue about challenges, participant needs and locally grounded response to those needs. This shift has strengthened MCC's relationships with partners, improving transparency and enhancing responsiveness to community priorities. National staff typically serve long-term and receive ongoing training that equips them with strong reporting and communication skills. A major milestone in MCC's history in India was the appointment of Indian nationals as representatives, marking a shift from over 80 years of foreign leadership. This shift affirms native leadership, deepens contextual understanding and promotes more equitable, culturally sensitive development practices.

Despite MCC India's ongoing efforts toward decolonization, challenges remain. Complex monitoring and evaluation systems and language requirements, as well as educational gaps, often make it difficult for partners to share their stories. Rigid reporting formats often feel foreign, highlighting the need for flexibility and context-sensitive methods that match the capacity of each partner. There is room for MCC's decolonization efforts to grow.

MCC India's journey demonstrates the power of decolonized development. From famine relief to nurturing local leadership, MCC has prioritized dignity, equity and contextual relevance. Support for vocational training, sustainable agriculture and inclusive governance has enabled communities to become agents of change. The shift to national leadership and investment in long-term national staff have strengthened trust and transparency. While colonial legacies still pose challenges—especially in reporting—MCC India continues to adapt with flexible, culturally grounded approaches. Development is rooted in local knowledge, collaboration and the lived realities of the communities served. MCC's role remains that of catalyst and companion, ensuring that development is not only effective but also just, inclusive and transformative.

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Learn more

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Strawberries, Thanksgiving and communion: an invitation to tangible repair

“The Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion holds spiritual significance by weaving together Haudenosaunee and Christian spiritual practices.”

The story of North America—“Turtle Island” to many Indigenous nations—is rooted in land dispossession. What we call Canada and the United States emerged through treaties with Indigenous nations. When they first arrived, European settlers were warmly invited into treaties, the foundation of Indigenous governance intended as agreements of mutual respect and shared stewardship. However, settlers imposed colonial notions of cultural dominance and private ownership onto the agreements, resulting in a mass assimilation plan in Canada that disrupted Indigenous ways of life, cultures and governance.

In Southern Ontario, Six Nations of the Grand River remain entangled in land conflict. During the American Revolutionary War, many Six Nations allied with the British. In return, the 1784 Haldimand Treaty granted them 950,000 acres along the Grand River. Today, only 5% of the Haldimand Tract remains under Six Nations control due to a well-documented history of mismanagement, misappropriation and theft by settler governments and private actors (Six Nations Council, 2008). This history of bad-faith dealings fuels ongoing land claims and conflict as the Six Nations pursue land justice.

Led by invitation, listening into action: In 2023, MCC Ontario connected with Adrian Jacobs of Turtle Clan, Cayuga. Jacobs shared his vision for a spiritual covenant between churches and Indigenous communities in Southern Ontario. This vision started during the 2006 Caledonia land dispute, when Six Nations protested the planned Douglas Creek Estates. Men stood before bulldozers from the estates while women, protectors of the land in Haudenosaunee culture, locked arms to shield them. “People made a tire fire that gave out huge black smoke, which is an international sign of distress. When I saw it from afar, I knew then my people were calling for help,” Jacobs recalled.

Jacobs consulted with Rick Hill, a Tuscarora historian who helped develop the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Six Nations Polytechnic in Southern Ontario. Hill proposed a spiritual covenant with churches wherein churches would acknowledge the land’s history and give lease payments in compensation for its use. When decommissioned, churches could choose to return the land to the Six Nations. Legally, this proposal was sound since church properties in Canada and Six Nations lands are both tax-exempt.

Jacobs organized the first Spiritual Covenant gathering in 2007 as a Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion, combining elements of Haudenosaunee cultural ceremony and Christian practice into a call for repair. The gatherings gained momentum, drawing international witnesses from groups like the Maori people, but paused when Jacobs moved to Manitoba, where he also extended the invitation to churches. In 2020, land conflicts resumed, culminating in the 1492 Land Back Lane. “It was the same con-

The table at the Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion in June 2025. (Tom Bulay).

flict, same arguments, same police, same tire fire, but with younger generation leaders. What could have happened instead if churches had taken up Rick Hill's invitation in 2007 for the Spiritual Covenant?" Jacobs reflected. Returning to Ontario in 2022, Jacobs now leads truth and reconciliation efforts with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA).

Following Jacobs's sharing in 2023, MCC Ontario supported a revival of the spiritual covenant between churches and Indigenous communities. With Jacobs's leadership, MCC hosted the Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion gathering in 2024 and then expanded it into an ecumenical gathering in 2025. The two events drew hundreds of participants, including unions, institutions and churches from 11 denominations. Adrian proposed token lease payments to Six Nations Polytechnic, a non-partisan school on the Haldimand Tract.

Spiritual, relational and systemic reconciliation: The Strawberry Thanksgiving and Communion holds spiritual significance by weaving together Haudenosaunee and Christian spiritual practices. Strawberries—"heart berries" in Ojibway (another Indigenous language)—are the first fruit celebrated in mid-June. The Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving ceremony honours all aspects of creation, concluding each section stating, "now our minds are one." In the same spirit of unity, communion symbolizes union with Christ. Together, these spiritual practices form a sacred exchange of hearts with the goal of reconciliation.

By directing token land lease funds to Six Nations Polytechnic, a school offering degrees in Indigenous languages such as Mohawk and Cayuga, the covenant supports cultural revitalization, aligning with the vision of the school's president, Rebecca Jamieson, for more young people speaking their nations' languages fluently. This direction of funds from the covenant also addresses the church's historic role in language erasure. Systemically, the initiative reframes land, wealth and responsibility. Churches acknowledge historical harm and act to repair it with resources, not just words. This model can inspire and inform reconciliation work across Canada and beyond, wherever churches seek to walk in solidarity with Indigenous communities and nations pursuing land justice.

Two years into supporting this initiative, we are learning that this journey is Spirit-led—shaped by listening to, learning from and responding to Indigenous leadership. As we embrace the invitation together, that same Spirit transforms hearts, relationships and systems.

Fiona Li and Scott Morton Ninomiya work in the Indigenous Neighbours program in MCC Ontario as engagement associate and program coordinator, respectively.

Learn more

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Ogasawara, Ken. "Spiritual Covenant with Adrian Jacobs." *Undercurrents*. Podcast. Episode 27. Available at https://mcc.org/our-stories/undercurrents-ep-27-spiritual-covenant-adrian-jacobs.

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Six Nations Council. "Six Nations Lands and Resources." Website. Available at https://www.sixnations.ca/LandsResources/.

Six Nations of the Grand River. "Who We Are." Website. Available at https://www.sixnations.ca/who-we-are/.

"By directing token land lease funds to Six Nations Polytechnic, a school offering degrees in Indigenous languages such as Mohawk and Cayuga, the covenant supports cultural revitalization."

Decolonization through rematriation: lessons from Eastern Canada

In workshops with the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery, Sarah Augustine invites participants into a simple breath prayer: "Thank you for this land, our body." Practicing this prayer in Atlantic Canada prompts reflection on how colonial assumptions and practices have shaped our relationship to the land. Decolonizing how we relate to the land is essential to the broader work of decolonizing all our relations.

Takŭmegoochk (Tatamagouche, "the place that lies across another") in Nova Scotia, Canada, represents the intersection of two important waterways, the French River and the Waugh River. The land in this region is sacred to the Mi'kmaq people, a matrilineal nation indigenous to the area. It has long served as a gathering place and burial ground, with artifacts dating back to 200 CE. Today, the Tatamagouche Centre sits at this intersection and is a space to cultivate community.

Founded in 1954 as the Atlantic Christian Training Centre (ACTC) as a ministry of the United Church of Canada, the Tatamagouche Centre has offered educational and engagement opportunities to community members, including peacebuilding workshops, Indigenous food sovereignty events and Peace and Friendship gatherings. For the past 35 years, an important part of the Centre's work has involved promoting healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and settler populations. Part of that journey involves decolonizing the church's relationship to Indigenous communities and to the land on which churches operate.

Decolonizing one's relationship to land requires rethinking how land is perceived, used and stewarded and recognizing how the land cares for its inhabitants. Acknowledging that the land on which the Tatamagouche Centre operates is a sacred site for the Mi'kmaq, the land's original inhabitants, was an important first step in the process of decolonization, but the leaders of the Centre recognize that the process does not end with mere acknowledgement. To truly address past colonial harms, including land dispossession and the commodification of a sacred relationship between land and its inhabitants, these leaders recognize that the movement from acknowledgement to action is fundamental to decolonization.

In 2023, Women of First Light (a group of Clan Mothers and Grandmothers) organized a Seven Generations Gathering at the Tatamagouche Centre, bringing Wabanaki Indigenous people and United Church members together for their first in-person conversation about rematriating the land. This conversation sparked a shift from acknowledgement to action: after years of discussing "land back," or the return of land to its Indigenous caretakers, participants committed to a process of land rematriation. Rematriation, as defined by those present, is "Indigenous women-led work to restore sacred relationships between Indigenous people and their ancestral land, honoring matrilineal societies, and in opposition of patriarchal violence and dynamics" (Tatmagouche Centre website). Returning the land to Women of First Light would mark an important transition regarding the Centre's governance and stewardship of the land on which it operates.

Learn more

Augustine, Sarah. *The Land is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery.* Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2021.

Tatamagouche Centre. "Land Rematriation." Website. Available at https://www.tatacentre.ca/land-rematriation.

Women of First Light webinar about Treaties featuring teachings from Dr. Sherry Pictou and gkisedtanamoogk. "Peace and Friendship Treaties: Treaties 101 and Impact of Treaties on Women, Water and Land." Wapna'kikewi'swaq. Available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPTZ_ogm554.

"Decolonizing one's relationship to land requires rethinking how land is perceived, used and stewarded and recognizing how the land cares for its inhabitants."

The term "land rematriation" intentionally rejects both colonial dispossession of land and the imposition of patriarchal norms on matrilineal societies like the Mi'kmaq. As a first step on a long journey of reconciliation and decolonization, the United Church of Canada, Tatamagouche Centre Board of Directors and Women of First Light signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that formalizes a commitment to a path toward the full rematriation of the land to the stewardship of Indigenous peoples. While this formal agreement signals progress, much work remains as each one considers spiritual, social and legal obligations. Still, there is deep hope and anticipation for what the land's return will mean for members of the communities with rich and sacred histories in this area.

"Land rematriation is Indigenous women-led work to restore sacred relationships between Indigenous people and their ancestral land, honoring matrilineal societies, and in opposition of patriarchal violence and dynamics."

As MCC accompanies the Tatamagouche Centre and Women of First Light on this journey, we see exciting possibilities. This partnership offers a profound opportunity to learn what decolonization requires, not only in relationships but in how we relate to the land that sustains us. Accompanying partners in their work of decolonization invites us to consider how MCC's own practices may reinforce colonial patterns that we may not have recognized. The work of partners, like the Tatamagouche Centre, provides us with an ongoing example of how we can move beyond acknowledgement toward action necessary for decolonization and true reconciliation.

Jonathan Schut is the Atlantic Canada regional representative for MCC Canada. He currently lives in Epekwitk, Mi'kma'ki (Prince Edward Island, Canada).

Africa's colonial heritage: building bridges across artificially created canyons

As a global Anabaptist organization, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is committed to sharing God's love and compassion by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. In our current technological revolution, many tools have become available to help break down human barriers. However, physical, face-to-face connections are irreplaceable when seeking true trauma healing and restorative justice. An encounter organized in Kigali, Rwanda, for MCC partner staff by MCC programs in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean in late February/early March 2024 marked a pivotal moment for MCC. The gathering called MCC to reimagine its identity by addressing colonialism's geographical and linguistic fragmentation of Africa's heritage. Participants in the encounter challenged MCC to move from "talk-shop" to "workshop," embedding decolonization into strategic planning, program design and advocacy and building bridges across artificial canyons created by colonialism.

"Neo-colonialism draws life from the same roots that once nourished historical colonial structures. It manifests subtly—in power dynamics, decision-making spaces and whose voices are heard or validated."

While the Kigali conference was a milestone, it revealed deeper questions about decolonizing MCC's structures and practices. Beyond such gatherings, intentional daily efforts are needed to support and uplift visible minorities within MCC. Too often, their perspectives are questioned or their ideas for advancing the decolonization conversation are delayed, leading to frustration and fatigue. Some colleagues have had to find coping mechanisms to navigate systems that feel unresponsive or difficult to access. This reality calls for translating the spirit of the conference—and others like it—into ongoing reflection hubs where colonial impacts can be named and

Learn more

Barnes, Jonathan and Peter Makari. Eds. *Restoring Dignity, Nourishing Hope: Developing Mutuality in Mission.* Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2016.

lamented while also witnessing visible, system-wide steps beyond rhetoric. Only then can MCC's commitment to decolonization become a lived experience addressing both historic and present-day forms of colonial influences within our shared work.

Conference participants emphasized that acknowledging *neo-colonialism* within MCC's systems is an essential first step. Neo-colonialism draws life from the same roots that once nourished historical colonial structures. It manifests subtly—in power dynamics, decision-making spaces and whose voices are heard or validated. Moving forward, MCC must ask: How do we name these dynamics honestly? How do we share power equitably, especially when visible minority groups seek support or challenge the status quo?

Participants also urged MCC to reflect on power and privilege—not as abstract concepts but lived realities shaping relationships, opportunities and influence. When inequities are identified, what concrete steps follow? Does MCC have mechanisms for genuine accountability and transformation, or do our systems unintentionally preserve the hierarchies we seek to dismantle?

"Decolonization must evolve from conversation to institutional posture—marked by humility, curiosity and courageous self-examination."

For MCC to continue on this path, decolonization must evolve from conversation to institutional posture—marked by humility, curiosity and courageous self-examination. True progress will mean creating conditions where lament and learning coexist with visible change, where reflection is paired with action and where every person—regardless of background—sees themselves fully represented in the mission and life of MCC.

Vurayayi Pugeni and Thelma Sadzamari (area directors for Southern and Central Africa and Nigeria), Kristen and Wawa Chege (area directors for East Africa and Sahel), and César Flores and Lizette Miranda (area directors for Central America and Haiti).

Colonization and decolonization of development work in Haiti

In winter 2024, MCC organized an extraordinary event in Kigali, Rwanda, bringing together Afro-descendants from the Caribbean and Latin America with their African siblings to share perspectives and experiences of colonization. As a faith-based development organization, MCC drew in religious leaders and development professionals from programming it supports, creating space for dialogue, learning and solidarity.

"Colonization has taken many forms and has left deep marks."

Colonization has taken many forms and has left deep marks. Participants in the Kigali encounter not only lamented colonization's enduring harms but also shared strategies they have developed to shake off the yoke of colonialism's living legacies, free themselves and adopt more humane lifestyles as intended by the Creator. The shared reflections inspired a deeper understanding of new forms of colonization and the development of tools for decolonization designed to awaken the consciousness of oppressed peoples and facilitate new social and economic structures. From different cultures and perspectives, we enriched each other's thinking in our fight for a fairer and more humane world.

At the encounter, I shared that my country is undergoing horrific violence that continues to worsen today. My organization, Partnership for Local

PDL trains members of farming cooperatives on both soil conservation techniques and on livestock production, management, and care. In August 2021, Magdala Bien-Aime, a member of one of these cooperatives, demonstrates how to plow a field using oxen. In Haiti, this is usually done by hand, which is a grueling and time-consuming process. Using animals makes the process easier and more efficient. (MCC photo/Annalee Giesbrecht)

Development (*Partenariat pour le Développement Local*, or PDL), works in six of Haiti's districts with marginalized farming families to form community-based organizations that strengthen resilience and improve their standard of living. PDL envisions rural communities organizing to defend their rights and interests and generate well-being by developing sustainable livelihoods. Our programs include awareness raising on colonization and decolonization. Each time a marginalized person overcomes a challenge, they take another step toward freedom. The encounter was invaluable to our organization, bringing together people from different realities and enabling mutual learning.

"PDL envisions rural communities organizing to defend their rights and interests and generate well-being by developing sustainable livelihoods."

Former colonies must combine their strategies to free themselves from all forms of colonization, despite the obstacles. This work requires inclusive and appropriate strategies to fully implement and achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Five years from the 2030 deadline, the Least Developed Countries remain in poverty and none of the SDGs have been fully achieved in these contexts. I urge MCC to continue facilitating partner exchanges to better understand different faces of colonization and decolonization worldwide. Through this, MCC and its partners can better support marginalized people to free themselves from the effects of colonization.

Cantave Jean-Baptiste is founder and executive director of Partnership for Local Development (PDL).

Lessons for decolonizing development in Uganda

In 2024, I had the opportunity to participate in an MCC-organized encounter in Kigali, Rwanda, for partners from Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. This historic event attracted 56 participants from 20 countries to reflect on shared histories and experiences of the destructive impact of colonialism, particularly in separation of peoples and cultural, social, economic, theological and political oppression.

"Even well-intentioned interventions can perpetuate colonial dynamics when local voices are sidelined or Western models are seen as the standard."

Learn more

Chiwanza, Takudzwa Hillary. "How Colonialism Instilled Inferiority Complexes in Africans." *Africa Rebirth.* Website May 22, 2023. Available at https://www.africarebirth.com/how-colonialism-instilled-inferiority-complexes-in-africans/.

Shakib, Mohammed Khosravi. "The Position of Language in Development of Colonization". *Journal of Languages and Culture* 2/7 (July 2011): 117–123.

The encounter deepened my knowledge of colonialism beyond historical definitions of foreign domination, emphasizing that colonization goes beyond territorial control to include:

1. *Identity*: The so-called "white savior complex" portrayed Africans as helpless and inferior, with colonialism presented as a "civilizing mission" that erased our peoples' origins, languages, belief systems, values and cultural practices in favour of foreign ones that present themselves as normative.

2. *Control over knowledge*: Colonial education systems devalued Indigenous forms of knowledge while also failing to provide sustainable livelihoods for many.

3. *Governance*: Our governments continue to perpetuate colonialism's legacy by following political and economic systems left behind by colonial powers.

More intriguing and concerning was the revelation that colonialism never ended but only changed shape. This understanding reframed my view of development work: even well-intentioned interventions can perpetuate colonial dynamics when local voices are sidelined or Western models are seen as the standard.

Another powerful insight was that *decolonization is not a one-time event but an ongoing process* of rebalancing power, reclaiming narratives and redefining relationships. It demands self-critical and intentional institutions that create space for Indigenous and community-led knowledge systems while acknowledging emotional and cultural scars of colonization and promoting collective healing and pride in Indigenous identities.

This MCC-organized encounter has influenced how my organization, RICE West Nile, operates and collaborates with MCC in Uganda. For example, good governance and sustainable cohesion now constitute crosscutting themes that guide my organization's operations and programs. Additionally, we nurture mutual partnerships where all parties have a collective

"In environment and livelihood projects, we encourage local seed preservation, along with use of locally made organic inputs and community-driven innovations."

In this 2021 photo, Augustine Bidali, a refugee from South Sudan now living in the Imvepi settlement area in northwestern Uganda with his three brothers, uses his training in tailoring to support the family. Augustine successfully completed a tailoring course supported by MCC through partner RICE-WN which earned him a startup kit that included a sewing machine. (Photo courtesy of RICE-WN)

voice, including co-creating projects with communities. Furthermore, we build on Indigenous knowledge. For example, in environment and livelihood projects, we encourage local seed preservation, along with use of locally made organic inputs and community-driven innovations. Through these efforts we raise awareness about the devastating impacts of colonization and the role each stakeholder must play in decolonization.

The encounter reinforced that genuine social transformation requires *humility*, *listening* and *solidarity* and that decolonization begins with individual awareness—recognizing privilege, unlearning biases and affirming dignity and agency of those we serve. I am profoundly grateful to MCC for this experience that reframed my perspectives on colonization and decolonization forever!

Yikiru Comfort Mercy is the manager of programs for MCC Uganda partner RICE West Nile.

“Genuine social transformation requires *humility, listening* and *solidarity*.”

Humanitarianism, peacebuilding and decolonial action in Palestine and Israel

What does principled humanitarian action require in the context of Israel’s nearly sixty-year military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip? What long-term visions for just peacebuilding can be nurtured in the face of an entrenched and expanding settler colonial regime involving the systematic dispossession of Palestinians, from the *nakba* (catastrophe) of 1948, which turned two-thirds of the Palestinian population at the time (over 700,000 people) into refugees, up through Israel’s relentless attacks on the Gaza Strip over the past two years, attacks that Palestinian, Israeli and global human rights organizations have identified as a genocide? What might decolonial humanitarian and peacebuilding action look like within this settler colonial context? MCC and its partners in Palestine and Israel have grappled with variations of these questions for decades, intensifying since October 7, 2023.

As a Christian organization committed to Jesus’s path of nonviolence, MCC laments all killing as a violation of God’s image in each person. MCC yearns for the liberation of captives and a just future when all of God’s children are at peace and unafraid under vine and fig tree. In Palestine and Israel, peacebuilding rooted in this scriptural vision requires sober assessment of dominant forms of Zionism as settler colonial ideologies with eliminationist intent and practice. The Zionist ideological frame of an imagined “land without a people for a people without a land” has facilitated uprooting of Palestinians from 1948 to present, with durable peacebuilding thus calling for decolonization (see Wolfe 2006; Amuroso 2019; Salamanca 2012; Seidel and Stagni 2024). [Here settler colonialism refers to colonial domination aimed at replacing an existing Indigenous population with settlers, often becoming genocidal in practice. The State of Israel exemplifies a modern settler-colonial state, alongside the United States, Canada and Australia, among others. Non-eliminationist forms of Zionism, like the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha’am, existed before 1948, including binational visions, and could be revived to nurture decolonial futures.]

Learn more

Amuroso, Francesco, Ilan Pappé, Sophie Richter-Devroe. “Knowledge, Power, and the ‘Settler Colonial Turn’ in Palestine Studies.” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 21/4 (April 2019): 452–463. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369801X.2019.1581642.

Arafeh, Nur and Mandy Turner. “Destruction, Disempowerment, and Dispossession: Disaster Capitalism and the Postwar Plans for Gaza.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. July 24, 2025. Available here: https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/07/destruction-disempowerment-and-dispossession-disaster-capitalism-and-the-postwar-plans-for-gaza?lang=en.

One consistent dimension of MCC's decades-long work in Palestine-Israel has involved amplifying the witness of the Palestinian churches to counter Christian theologies (evangelical, mainline Protestant or Catholic) that have bolstered and justified settler colonial Zionism, with the conceptual erasure of Palestinians by various Christian Zionist theologies providing an ideological justification for their physical erasure from the land. [For a recent argument against the captivity of Western Christian theology to colonial thought, see Raheb 2023.] MCC helped establish Bethlehem Bible College in the 1970s and has partnered with the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center since its inception, while also supporting peacebuilding initiatives led by Palestinian Christians like the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between Peoples.

Postcolonial scholars insist on the agency of colonized peoples. For example, Palestinian American scholar Edward Said stressed the urgency of listening to Palestinian voices against a colonial regime that seeks to deny them "permission to narrate." Through decades of learning tours for Anabaptist leaders to Palestine and Israel and public policy advocacy, MCC has resisted colonial theological frames by calling the global church to listen to and learn from Palestinian churches' theological reflections on their ongoing dispossession.

If colonial systems treat people as objects to control, humanitarian agencies at their best take a decolonial approach by insisting on human dignity. Since October 2023, MCC's humanitarian action in Gaza has meant commitment to mutual partnership with Al-Najd Developmental Foundation and the Catholic parish in Gaza City, emphasizing and valuing Palestinian agency in assessing needs, leveraging community strengths and resources and delivering aid to the most vulnerable with safety and dignity.

In recent years, Israeli authorities have worked to delegitimize and severely constrict the work of UN agencies and INGOs in providing humanitarian assistance, hampering their operations and threatening their registrations, especially in Gaza. Since October 2023, Israeli military authorities have placed tight restrictions on aid entering Gaza. While MCC managed to send 13 trucks of food from Jordan and one container of non-food relief supplies from the U.S. through Jordan during the past two years, Israel implemented a near total blockade in March 2025, leading to starvation conditions in Gaza. Even after the October 2025 ceasefire announcement, Israeli military authorities have continued to impose harsh limits on the delivery of food, medicine, shelter supplies, reconstruction materials and other basic goods into Gaza.

During the past two years, Israel has weaponized humanitarian assistance by blocking it from Gaza and coordinating with the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which violated humanitarian principles of independence and preservation of human dignity. GHF distribution centers became "death traps, characterised by gunfire, overcrowding, stampedes, and chaos, compounding the suffering of a population already burdened by protracted siege and displacement" (Jabali et al. 2025). Rather than allowing aid to flow through UN agencies and other humanitarian actors with established trust among Palestinians in Gaza to distribute aid transparently, based on need and in partnership with local actors, Israel's collaboration with GHF turned humanitarian assistance into a mechanism of surveillance, control and violence, with hundreds of Palestinians killed at GHF sites (Elkahlout 2025; Hamamra and Shehab 2025).

Learn more

Elkahlout, Ghassan. "Aid Denied, Justice Deferred: The Gaza Genocide and the Collapse of Humanitarianism." *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* (September 22, 2025): 1–14.

Hamamra, Bilal and Ekrama Shehab. "Humanitarian Aid in Gaza: From Lifeline to Arena of Violence and Exclusion." *Third World Quarterly* (November 3, 2025). Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2025.2576787.

Hawari, Yara, Sharri Plonski and Elian Weizman. "Settlers and Citizens: A Critical View of Israeli Society." *Settler Colonial Studies* 9/1 (2019): 1–5.

Jabali, Oqab, Saqer Jabali, and Dwight Haase. "Aid as a Weapon: The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation." *The Lancet* 406/10507 (September 26, 2025): 1003–1004. Available at https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01693-9/fulltext.

Kairos Palestine—The Palestinian Christian Initiative. *A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide*. Bethlehem, Kairos Palestine, 2025. Available at https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/Final_Kairos_document_II_English.pdf.

Raheb, Mitri. *Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, the People, the Bible*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2023.

The reduction (albeit not full cessation) of killing in the Gaza Strip brought about by the twenty-point "peace plan" brokered by the U.S. administration in early October 2025 brought some desperately needed respite to Palestinians in Gaza, after mass displacement and the systematic destruction of homes, medical facilities, schools and infrastructure by the Israeli military. Yet, as Harvard political economist Sara Roy observes, this twenty-point plan and other visions from policy think tanks for Gaza's future perpetuate the politics of disempowerment and "de-development" of the Gaza Strip that Israel has pursued since its conquest of Gaza in 1967. These "day after" peace plans for Gaza, Roy explains,

> perpetuate colonial control, imposing forms of governance that exclude Palestinians as political agents, denying decision-making power and ensuring Israel—and by extension the US and EU—retain ultimate power over Palestinian life in Gaza. Some also implicitly maintain Gaza-West Bank political and economic separation, where Israel remains free to subjugate and cantonize Palestinians at will. Far from creating a new future in Gaza, such plans entrap Palestinians in a familiar, exhausting, ruinous loop. (Roy 2025).

Roy draws on the work of Nur Arafeh and Mandy Turner, whose analysis of "day after" plans for Gaza reveal their colonial nature. These plans share common policy elements: "the establishment of a governance structure that denies Palestinians political agency and control over their future; a process of land grabbing, resource extraction, and reconstruction profiteering; and the imposition of security arrangements to enforce the conditions necessary for sustained political and economic control by Israel and its allies." (Arafeh and Turner, 2025).

Decolonial peacebuilding, in contrast, attends to the agency and hopes of peoples uprooted by settler colonialism. MCC's Israeli partner, Zochrot, undertakes this long-term, challenging work by organizing events such as "return visits" to destroyed Palestinian villages inside Israel, both to remember the past and imagine a binational Palestinian-Israeli future based on justice. Just peacebuilding in Canada and the U.S. demands a reckoning with their settler-colonial foundations, including the mass dispossession and genocide of Indigenous nations. Similarly, just peacebuilding in Palestine and Israel today must confront the settler-colonial reality of the Israeli state and its military occupation, responding with creative actions that imagine a decolonial future of justice, freedom and equality for all people in the land. Decolonial humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives operate within the disjunctions and ruptures that break through colonial projects, offering foretastes of reconciled humanity amidst the devastated spaces of colonial conquest.

Alain Epp Weaver directs planning and learning for MCC. He worked with MCC's Palestine and Israel program for 11 years, including two years in the Gaza Strip.

Learn more

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Salamanca, Omar Jabary, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie, and Sobhi Samour. "Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine." *Settler Colonial Studies* 2/1 (2012): 1–8.

Seidel, Timothy and Federica Stagni. "Settler Colonial Violence and Indigenous Struggle: Land, Resistance, and Refusal in Masafer Yatta." In *Resisting Domination in Palestine: Mechanisms and Techniques of Control, Coloniality, and Settler Colonialism*, 161–175. Ed. Alaa Tartir, Timothy Seidel, and Tariq Dana. London: I.B. Tauris, 2024.

Weaver, Alain Epp. *Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Studies*. 8/4 (December 2006): 387–409. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623520601056240.

Zochrot. Organizational website: https://www.zochrot.org/welcome/index/en.

On August 28, 2025, MCC partner Al-Najd Developmental Forum staff* delivered a food package to a Palestinian family displaced from their home. [*Names withheld for security.]

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