

*SARAH AUGUSTINE is the Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center of Yakima and Kittitas Counties, the co-founder of Suriname Indigenous Health Fund, and co-founder of the Anabaptist Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery. She is a Tewa woman living on the homeland of the Yakama Nation in Central Washington.*

**Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker, *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada*, Fernwood, Nova Scotia and Winnipeg, Manitoba, October, 2015. 158 pp. \$18.99. ISBN: 978-1-55266-778-1.**

I live on a berry farm in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. I recall going for a walk around the property a few years ago and standing at one end, looking out over the fields and thinking, “I own this,” and then reflecting on what it must have been like before we moved there. Before we planted strawberries and blueberries. Before the previous owners cleared all the trees and turned it into a gravel pit, extracting hundreds and hundreds of truckloads worth of gravel from the land and then leveling it out again. Before that, when it was forest with a stream flowing through the middle of it, where no stream exists now. And I wondered what it would have been like a hundred or five hundred or a thousand years before.

And then I wondered who had lived or traveled through this area and what would it have been like to be in this place then. And I thought about the Indigenous people who lived and hunted and gathered on the land I now own. And then I reflected on what it means for me today to “own” this land—land that I have helped cultivate and take care of and make “productive.”

This was during the same time that a friend of mine was working for our denomination helping us think about how we might engage in the work of reconciliation with Indigenous neighbors. As he talked about being an Indigenous person, as he tried to help us gain understandings of Indigenous culture and worldview, and as he prepared us for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was coming to Vancouver, I found myself reflecting on “my land,” and I didn’t quite know what to do with that. How did we get here? Who “owned” it before us, or the others before them whose names had been registered in the land title office?

Lowman and Barker’s book has much to say about land, about our relationships to the land, and about folks like me. People whose parents came to Canada to make a new life, who came as refugees and “displaced persons” looking for a new home and some land they could call their own. It also has much to say about how things have gone terribly wrong in Canada and the ways in which we have come to own our land and to settle on it as if it had always been ours.

I’ve appreciated reading this book and being challenged by what the authors have to say about those of us who have settled here. They have helped me unpack the

term “Settler” and to take it on as a descriptor of who I am in Canada and those like me, who have come to this land as Settler Canadians. They use the term Settler not as a pejorative term but rather as a recognition of who we are in this country and our ties with the ongoing colonization project.

Like Indigenous, we are using Settler as an identity that connects a group of people with common practices, a group to which people have affinity and can belong either through individual identification or recognition by the group [in order to] articulate our efforts to understand ourselves as Settler Canadians, as colonizers, and as people with deep moral and ethical responsibilities to change our relationships to the lands that we call home. (13)

The authors’ aim is to get the reader to grapple with the fact that “Indigenous and Settler peoples are not defined by their distances and differences, but rather their relationships to each other and to the land,” and that “these two identities coalesce around an observable, general and crucial difference: relationship to the land” (17, 18).

My parents came to this country to find a home and to live on some land they could call their own. They had been forced out of their former lands during World War II and found a new place they could settle on. It happened to be in the Fraser Valley. My parents loved this land. The Indigenous people who lived on this land before we Settlers came loved this land too. But their relationships were much deeper and much different. Their relationships were place-based. Lowman and Barker explain:

Indigenous identities and histories are shaped by “place-thought,” the inseparable relationship between how Indigenous peoples understand and interact with the world as a living entity, with will and agency of its own, and how the living, intelligent elements of the world shape Indigenous thinking culture and social practice . . . a place-based identity, forged in longstanding and intimate relationships with particular lands and sacred sites that is common to Indigenous peoples across the continent (and the world). (51)

In the six short chapters that comprise *Settler*, one of the key points the authors make is the reality that colonialism is still very much alive in Canada and that Settlers still receive many benefits from it, even if we don’t recognize this to be so. Lowman and Barker address Settler fears and anxieties around acknowledging our participation in this ongoing structure of settler colonialism, including those expressed by people who are actively trying to build a more just and equitable Canadian society (but do not engage their work through a decolonization framework). By the end of the book, Settlers are called not only to acknowledge an identity that we necessarily inhabit (because of our participation in the settler colonial project) but also to embrace it as an identity that we need—something that can speak truth,

nurture deep moral questions, and change our relationships to the lands that we call home.

Of course, Settler identity is not something we do on our own. The work that needs to be done and the change that needs to happen must take place through communal effort. “We cannot change who we are as Settler people alone, so we must work to create a broad base, to build communities—with friends, our families, our colleagues—to undertake these efforts together” (110). And a central part of this communal engagement must be done with Indigenous peoples:

This requires being in relationship—respectfully—with Indigenous people and communities so we know their needs and expectations and are aware of Indigenous relationships to the land without seeking control of them. That is how trust is built. That is how we come to know that we are friends. That is how we achieve true and lasting peace. (119)

Many of the ways that Lowman and Barker point us forward are things we understand as Anabaptists. We know about the importance of relationships, we know about reconciliation, and we know about the power of community. And we also understand that the work of justice takes time. But most Anabaptists do not know much about Settler realities and identity. It’s something we must start grappling with and taking on.

Why say Settler?

We say Settler because it’s a place from which we can determine how we live on these lands. We say Settler to signal that we’re ready to do the work. We say Settler because we believe ethical and exciting decolonial futures are possible. . . . We say Settler because it is who we are. We say Settler because it is not everything we could be. (123)

*HENRY KRAUSE lives in Langley, BC, and attends Langley Mennonite Fellowship. He spends some of his time working with friends in Mennonite Church BC trying to figure out how we Settlers can live well with Indigenous Neighbors. His farm is on the unceded territory of the Kwantlen and Sto:lo First Nations.*

**Joanna Shenk, *The Movement Makes Us Human: An Interview with Dr. Vincent Harding on Mennonites, Vietnam, and MLK*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene, OR, 2018. 109 pp. \$18.00. ISBN: 978-1-5326-3529-8.**

In the 1960s some US Mennonites began to shed their tradition’s historic hesitations about social involvement and joined movements agitating for peace, racial justice, and women’s rights. Their decision shook the church and shaped the direction of mainline Mennonite denominational institutions, churches, and theology for the past fifty years. At the same time, progress toward peace, racial and gender