

Thinking About Home

A guided meditation

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In 1996, Sarah Chandler was invited to present a seminar at Woodbrooke Quaker College on the current situation for First Nations in British Columbia, Canada. The seminar began with the following guided meditation.

The Quaker Aboriginal Affairs Committee feels this meditation can be used to overcome what is called the “bystander effect”, and to help us to relate, at a feeling level, with those who have been, and continue to be, oppressed by the forces of colonization. For group or silent meditation.

Take a minute to think about “home”...

...your living space and the land
around it...

...your family...

...your friends...

...your community...

...your way of life...

Think about everything that is precious
to you, and what makes it that way...





Now...

Think how **you** would feel if...



Suddenly your community was overrun by strangers who:

- don't speak your language.
- don't dress or look like anyone you have ever seen.
- take your food without asking, including killing many animals.
- begin to build buildings and dig holes all around the countryside without your permission.

These people are not your traditional enemies. There has been no declaration of war. These people are heavily armed.

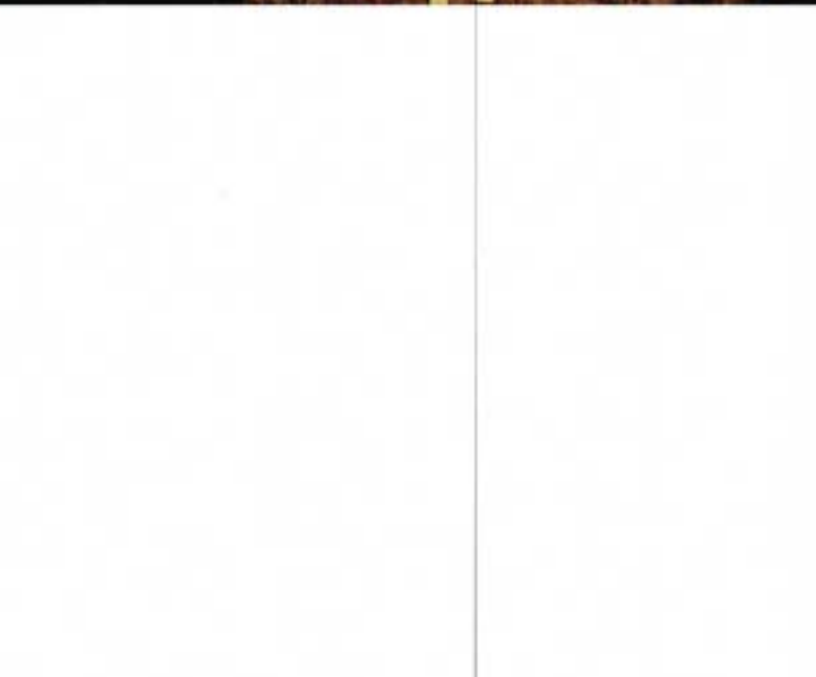
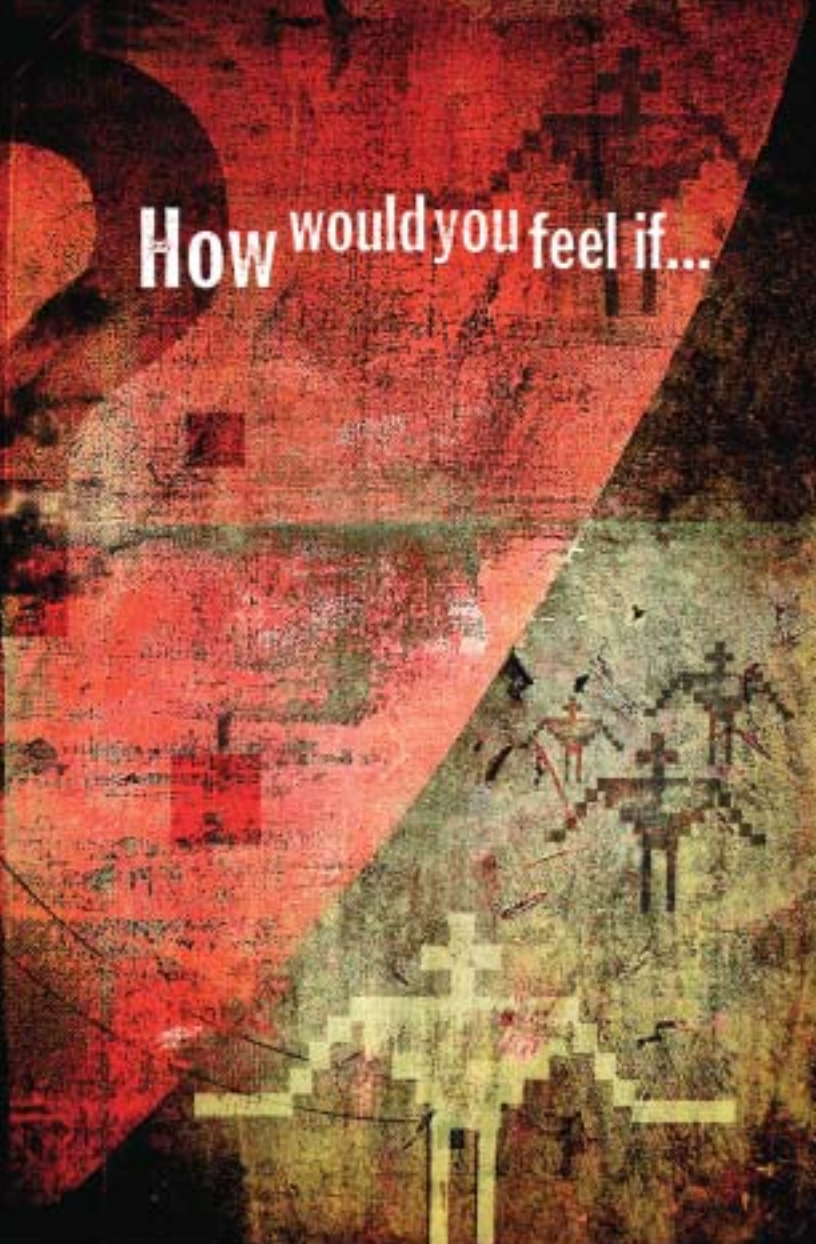
When you do find a way to communicate with these people, they tell you that they have come to use the land, because they can see that you are not using it...

...They tell you that you can still have "what you can use."

Most of the members of your community and many of your family, sicken and die of diseases you have never seen before...



How would you feel if...



as a child, you were taken from your home
by strangers and enrolled in a school
far away...

...you are not allowed to see your family.

...you are forced to change
your appearance.

...you are beaten if you speak
your language.

...you can't return home for some years.

...when you do return – many have died,
perhaps your entire family.

...you can no longer speak to your
grandmother – you don't
know her language.



How would you feel, as a **parent**, if...



...your children are taken from you by force.

...you cannot visit them.

...when you see them again, they are greatly changed.

...perhaps they die at the school to which they have been taken.

...if they return, they no longer speak your language. They do not understand or remember the ways of your family and community.

The strangers increase and increase in number, beginning to limit your activities and access to resources...

...they tell they have come to stay.

...they own the land...not you.

...they are the government...not you.

You have no right or title to anything, except what they choose to give you... to tide you over until you have had time to learn to be like them, at which time, you can be one of them...





Except...

You will not be able to get a
job or buy property, or vote...





Unless...

You renounce all ties with
your family and community
and move away.

Then you can vote.
No promises about getting a
job, or buying property...

...after all, you are still one of
"the others."

How would you feel if, of 400,000 people,
only 25,000 of you remain alive after two generations?

How would you feel if, your community and family
no longer had a language to express the way you see the world?

How would you feel if, you were the only person
left in the world who could speak your
mother tongue...*the only one?*

How would it feel...
would it feel...

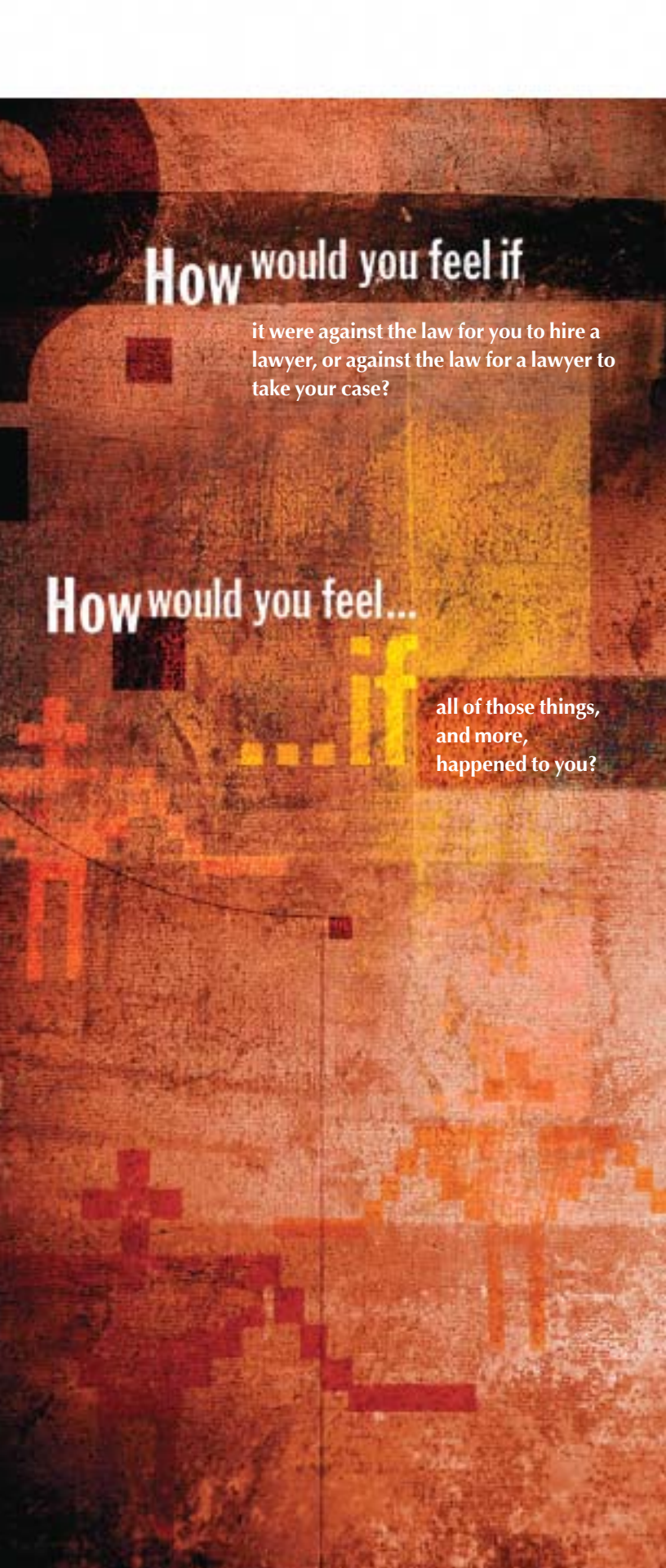
...if

celebrating your traditional holidays would result in a jail sentence of up to two months?

...if

all community gatherings,
for any purpose of gift-giving,
or any other purpose,
were prohibited?



The background is an abstract composition of warm, earthy tones including shades of brown, tan, and ochre. It features various geometric shapes such as squares, rectangles, and lines, some of which are semi-transparent or layered, creating a textured, painterly effect. The overall aesthetic is reminiscent of mid-century modern or abstract expressionist art.

How would you feel if

it were against the law for you to hire a lawyer, or against the law for a lawyer to take your case?

How would you feel...

all of those things, and more, happened to you?

What would you expect if,

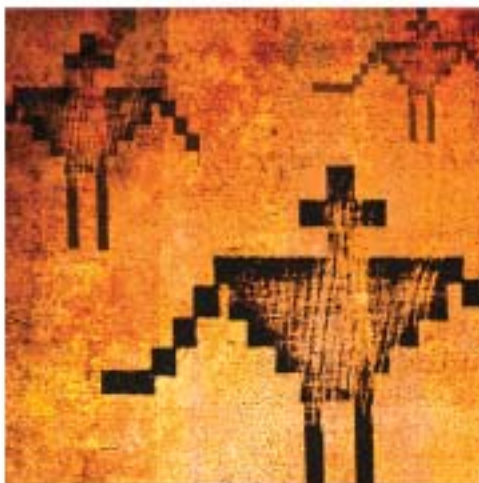
after 150 years, the strangers who invaded your territory and did these things to you wanted to negotiate a treaty?

What compensation would you expect?

Would you trust these people?

Would you respect these people?

What would be your terms of Settlement?



Now, thinking about yourself, where you are today, what can you do toward setting things right between the settler population and the First Nations of Canada?

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