

Friday evening opened with a sobering poem of indigenous lives delivered by Denise Hammond. The room was silent as she spoke about an indigenous woman inviting 'white man' into her home with open arms and being locked in a small bedroom of the house while 'white people' took over her home. A metaphor for the 'taking of indigenous lands'.

The opening speaker was Jesse Wente. Jesse Wente was born in Chicago and graduated from the University of Toronto in cinema studies in 1996. He broadcast for CBC Radio's Metro Morning on films and pop culture for 20 years, and was appointed to the Canada Council for the Arts 2017-2021. In Jesse's opening remarks he shared with us his experience growing up first Nations and effect it had on him his entire life. He spoke of his experience in being discriminated against while being stopped nightly by Police as he walked through Toronto with his wife just because he was native and had long hair.

Saturday morning began with a Smudging Ceremony. Brother Don Wren followed with a presentation on Decolonization 101, followed by discussion. That lead into the next topic which was stories of the Residential School Program.

The room sat quietly while moving and powerful stories were told of children being taken from their parents to live in Residential Schools. One of the survivors, a member of Local 1S in Saskatchewan shared her story. She told her heart wrenching story of being taken as a little girl to the school. Stories of missing her family, of being beaten The school she attended closed its doors in 1996. Following the powerful and emotional stories of the survivors Denise Hammond lead a discussion on legacy and impact of survivors.

After lunch Kelly Bondy gave a presentation followed by a discussion on Water, Rights and Reconciliation. The presentation was very poignant. It demonstrated how privileged 'we are in 'white' society and how we take simple things such as the ability to use tap running water as and when we wish, yet there are indigenous people living today in a community in Manitoba that have to bring in clean water for drinking and washing from the city.

After supper we returned to the hall where we watched a video presentation called "The Front Runners". The video is a short documentary of residential school members that carry the torch from Minnesota to Winnipeg for the Pan Am games in 1967. The members of this running team ran the flame all the way to the stadium in Winnipeg but were not allowed into the stadium to light the fire. After watching the video, we were introduced to three of the members from the running team. Charlie Nelson, Bill Chippeway and Patrick Bruyere. All three men shared their stories of being in a residential school program and the Pan Am games run. Once again we were told stories of the abuse and mistreatment they endured in the schools. Their stories were