

Prayer Meeting in Canada Confronts 245-Year-Old Estrangement

French Christians and French-Canadian Christians met in Quebec City in hopes of healing long-held resentment

Ministry leaders and intercessors from across Canada gathered in Quebec City in July to witness a dramatic, teary reconciliation between French-Canadian Christians and Christians from France after 245 years of estrangement.

Dubbed The Homecoming by its organizers, the reconciliation quickly became a love-in between the two French groups following a visit to France by leader David Demian just one month earlier.

“I had to visit France for other ministry work, but the Lord told me then to invite French church leaders over here for our reconciliation meetings,” said Demian, director of Watchmen for the Nations, a group of 500 Canadian church leaders committed to prayer and reconciliation in Canada and around the globe.

“They readily agreed, having forgotten all about France’s history of abandoning the French-Canadians. The French-Canadian church leaders who were with me thought it was a wonderful idea and agreed to welcome them with open arms,”

Quebec is one of the largest of 10 Canadian provinces and three territories, and French-Canadians make up 22.9 percent of the country’s population. Quebec has held several votes to separate from the rest of Canada and was the site of much

civil unrest and some violence during the 1960s and 1970s.

French-Canadians in Quebec have the lowest church attendance of any group in the country, despite a rich history of Catholicism and a wealth of Christian place names. Although the second ethnic group to populate Canada, following the First Nations people, the French were eventually defeated by the British during the 1700s, and the country became a British colony.

After winning a battle with the French in 1759, the British occupied Quebec City, the capital of the province. The following year, the French sent six frigates filled with soldiers and supplies to bolster the French-Canadians, but the British heard of the plan and blocked their entrance to Quebec City's harbor. The French sunk some of their own boats and returned to France, never to be heard from again.

The reconciliation included a reconstruction of historical events; French church leaders arrived on a ferry boat to symbolically represent a return to Quebec City's harbor, where French-Canadians welcomed them with open arms. After a teary reunion, they traveled to the Plains of Abraham, site of the 1759 French-British battle. There the French repented for abandoning the French-Canadians and made a commitment to stand with the French-Canadian church.

The French-Canadians then expressed their forgiveness toward France. Church leaders from English Canada also committed to stand with France to see the growth of the church in French Canada. Seed was planted in the ground to symbolize healing and growth in relationships, and communion was later held.

The Homecoming was part of an ongoing series of reconciliation gatherings that Watchmen for the Nations has held since 1995. Demian said the goal is to mend Canada's spiritual rifts and regional strife so the nation can reflect the glory of God and help other nations find healing.

"When God called me to this ministry, I believed the reconciliation was to happen first between the white man and the First Nations, but He said no, it was to happen between French and English first," Demian said. "So we started off two years ago at Charlottetown, the birthplace of Canadian confederation, where we read what Canada's first prime minister declared when he wrote that there would be holy matrimony between French and English. Using that as our theme, we moved across the land ... gathering history and praying."

Demian said Watchmen for the Nations also is acting as a spiritual mentor and supporting several other nations that are repenting for former conflicts in hopes of finding spiritual wholeness. Among them are Germany, Switzerland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Denmark.

Josie Newman in Quebec City