

**Right Relations Report to the Executive of Toronto Conference
September 14, 2016**

Annual Consultation on Right Relations Work

On July 6, David Allen and Jody Maltby met with representatives from the LIRR Circle to develop a proposal for an annual Consultation on Right Relations Work in the Conference. After much discussion about the purpose of a consultation and the anticipated outcome, it was agreed that we will not hold a consultation in 2016 but will focus on a consultation in the fall of 2017. By that time, we will know whether our structure is changing from Conferences and presbyteries to a regional model.

The Executive is invited to offer input into planning the consultation, such planning to begin in earnest in February 2017. The purpose of the consultation still needs to be fleshed out but we know that we want to talk about ongoing right relations work within the context of what the structure of the church will look like going forward. What is the right relations work that we want to have continue regardless of whether there is a conference structure or not? We also want to consult with and engage presbyteries through their structure. Engaging with a broader group of people, other than those in the LIRR Circle and the Conference Executive may bring different perspective.

The feeling was that we don't need to talk more about the relationship between LIRR and the Executive at present.

30th Anniversary of the Apology

At its meeting on March 18th, the LIRR Circle expressed support for sending a bus from Toronto Conference to the event in Sudbury to recognize the anniversary of the apology. Jody consulted with representatives from the presbyteries and also sent an invitation to witnesses to express interest in attending the event and travelling by bus. There was insufficient interest to warrant a bus, but about a dozen folks from Toronto Conference did attend the event. We set up a closed Facebook group to facilitate carpooling. Although we did not get a great response, this is a model that is worth trying again.

Community Projects with Georgina Island, Christian Island and Toronto Urban Native Ministries (TUMN)

One of the projects that will be funded by the Right Relations Fund is relationship-building with each of the Indigenous Communities within the Conference. Jody has approached the two congregations on Christian Island and Georgina Island, and the folks at TUMN, to offer funding for a community-controlled project that could focus on healing, reconciliation, education and/or relationship-building. The presbyteries were also included in the conversations.

We have an initial meeting with staff at TUMN on September 20th that will be attended by Jody, Brian McIntosh and Susie Henderson. Jody is meeting with the Christian Island community on September 22nd and will keep Northern Waters informed moving forward. We have not had a response from the community on Georgina Island. Jody will be on the island in October for a youth event and hopes to connect with Betty Lou at that time.

Education Events in Toronto Conference

We had a good event in June at Grace United Church around the topic “What Does Reconciliation Mean to Us?” Unfortunately Georgina Island was not able to host us as planned and this did change the tone of the event somewhat, but it was well attended and there was good conversation.

The following recommendations come from that group to Toronto Conference:

- That Toronto Conference continue the education series for witnesses, including education on how to build relations with First Nations partners;
- Continue the dialogue that Toronto Conference Executive has begun with the All Native Circle Conference around developing relationships and sharing resources;
- Explore the possibility of offering the program “Returning to the Spirit” <http://returningtospirit.org/> in Toronto Conference.

Our next event, **A Conversation with the Moderator on Indigenous Justice and Right Relations**, will be held on October 22 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Conference Office. Jody and Susie are ramping up promotion for this event in September and October. The event is open to witnesses only but people are still able, and encouraged, to sign up as witnesses.

Jody and Susie have reached out to Sara Stratton at the General Council Office about a workshop on Acknowledging the Land for the spring of 2017. Some of the issues to consider will include:

- What to do if the information isn’t clear or there is more than one Nation that has lived on the land.
- What to do if there isn’t a local First Nations Community with whom to develop a relationship.
- What (if any) is the impact for First Nations Communities when a congregation acknowledges the land? What do First Nations Communities actually want us to do?
- Sharing resources for creating acknowledgements.

We are also approaching Victoria Freeman, a professor at York University, about the possibility of a research project that would identify the traditional territories and treaties of each local congregation and also the Indigenous perspective on those treaties.

Both the LIRR and the witnesses have expressed the desire for the educational series to continue. We need to acknowledge that our program is primarily of interest to our Settler Communities. Further consideration needs to be given to the ongoing role of witnesses going forward. How can we encourage them in building relationships in their local communities?

Ontario Based Right Relations Work

At the July 6th meeting with representatives from LIRR, a question was raised about Ontario-based Indigenous work and how best to engage ecumenically at a provincial level. David contacted the Executive Secretaries in the other Ontario Conferences to find out who is their key contact around right relations work. Those folks have been invited to participate in a conference call on September 29 at 10:00 a.m.

Right Relations Blog

The new Conference website will include a number of blogs including one on right relations work. Susie will approach a number of settlers and Indigenous people about contributing to this.

Right Relations Grants

Grants of up to \$1,000 are being made available to communities of faith within Toronto Conference for the work of right relations. The criteria for the use of the funds will be consistent with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and the United Church of Canada's commitments toward right relations. To date, two grants have been given for a total of \$1,080.

Blanket Exercise Grants

Grants of up to \$300 are being made available to planners of Blanket Exercises within Toronto Conference for costs directly related to an event. To date, two grants have been given for a total of \$450.

Next Meeting of the LIRR Circle

The next meeting of the Circle will be on Friday, September 16 at Knox United Church in Sutton.

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