

Living into Right Relations Circle
Tuesday, November 29, 2016

Members of the Toronto Conference Living into Right Relations Circle gathered at Christian Island United Church on Tuesday, November 29, 2016 beginning at approximately 10:30 a.m.

Present: David Allen, Audrey Brown, Debbie Cauch-McIntosh, Delores Charles, Meiske Hockley, Robert Hockley, Lynn Lawrence, Gloria McCavery, Brian McIntosh, Elizabeth McLean, Betty Lou McNabb, James Ravenscroft, Thérèse Samuel

Regrets: Dave Gordon, Jody Maltby, Linda Parsons, Mary Poulin, Bryan Ransom

Gathering

Brian read a poem by Murray Sinclair. The group had a circle check-in. Brian read a prayer from the Standing Rock protest.

Notes

The group AGREED to receive the notes from the previous gathering.

Educational events

Events in 2016: There were a number of well-attended events in 2016 on what reconciliation means, doctrine of discovery, time with the Moderator, and a number of blanket exercises.

In June a reconciliation event was held at St. Michael's College; it was a national event sponsored by the Jesuits with more than 200 people in attendance. They produced a video with statements from some of the panelists. The material is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=jesuit+conference+toronto+june+2016 . The material could be used at an up-coming educational event.

Up-coming events: There will be a workshop in the spring on helping congregations to identify the treaties related to the location of the congregations.

Partera International Peacemakers International has booked Michael Blair and others in April to do a two-day event in Toronto with the title "Colour Coded: Decolonising Hearts, Minds and Spirits".

Increasing awareness: There are a number of churches where there could be more interest. Could we work cooperatively with the Islands around Aboriginal Day? Can we let people know about particular events? The *Step-by-Step* newsletter needs to be more widely advertised. We can encourage people to attend events that are happening already, and can include highlights of what people are doing in congregations, e.g. bulletin boards. Could clusters of congregations share up-coming events? **David** will speak to Susie Henderson about increasing communication.

Potential ideas: Do we need more blanket exercise facilitators? Shannon Neufeldt of KAIROS coordinates the training.

Canada 150: How do you celebrate 150 in the context of reconciliation?

BMO is offering \$150 to young people in 2017. Could we encourage young people to take their BMO \$150 and use it for subversive purposes? We could come up with a list of places where they could donate/use their money.

Planning team: The educational events planning team will consist of Jody Maltby, Brian McIntosh, James Ravenscroft, Thérèse Samuel (in discernment) and Betty Lou McNabb (as events may relate to Georgina Island).

Co-convenor:

Brian gave some of the history of the co-convenor positions. He explained the hope that there would be Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-convenors. There have been a limited number of Indigenous people as part of the Circle, so the available pool is small. The group brainstormed some ideas:

- Could Christian Island and Georgina Island take turns naming a co-convenor?
- Could there be three co-convenors? **Brian** will check with each community/congregation about naming a co-convenor and backups.
- The role is not to do the administrative work, but it's to make sure the protocols are being followed in an appropriate way.

James spoke about how the work was done in Alberta & Northwest Conference. They too had discussions about how to ensure that there is a greater Indigenous presence in the Circle. James will provide the mandate from ANW. How might our mandate be changed by looking at the mandates of the other Conferences? We could ask how they got to the place that they are currently.

Brian and David will look at possible revised position description for the co-convenors.

Right Relations Working Group

Brian reported that the Right Relations Working Group meets at Council Fire in Toronto. It has had as many as 35 people present, usually with good Indigenous representation, and sometimes there are fewer people in attendance. The group has done a number of things, e.g. working with educators and lawyers, arts groups, and TRC support and follow-up, etc.

David encouraged the group to think about making connections in other parts of the Conference, not just Toronto. Are there Friendships Centres or other Indigenous organizations that would be open to some kind of partnership?

Right Relations Fund

David outlined the uses of the fund. Toronto Urban Native Ministry may submit an application for an elders' circle. Christian Island may develop an expanded Ojibway/English hymnal.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Group

No one in the group had current information on what is happening about the church's response to the UN Declaration. **David** will see what's happening.

Lunch

Audrey offered grace. The group broke for a delicious lunch catered by Robert at approximately 12:30 p.m. and resumed at approximately 1:30 p.m. The group expressed much appreciation for the meal and the hosting.

Inter-Conference Ontario Right Relations Network

Brian, David and Jody Maltby had been part of a conference call with representatives of all the Ontario United Church Conferences. This conference call offered an opportunity to think about how to relate to the government of Ontario and the Ontario chiefs. A follow-up call will take place in January, and at that time it may become more clear whether the group wishes to become a more formal body. If anyone wants to be part of the inter-Conference conference call, let Brian or David know.

Relationship with Toronto Urban Native Ministry (TUNM)

TUNM is a ministry of the All Native Circle Conference; it receives some funding from Toronto Conference. How can the relationship be developed? Evan Smith is the United Church minister; a new Anglican priest began his ministry there in September. If there is a structural change there will be quite a bit up in the air. Betty Lou talked about Aboriginal ministry which is transcending current structures.

Toronto United Church Council (TUCC) Indigenous work

Jody and Brian attended a meeting of the TUCC Board of Directors at their invitation to talk about right relations work. TUCC had honoured Roberta Jamieson and Marie Wilson at their Heart and Vision event in May, but they didn't want the award to be tokenism. The conversation was about how their work can be affected by right relations. Brian said that there may be a stronger relationship of mutual support between TUCC and LIRR. **David** will ensure that the hand-out from the meeting will be shared with LIRR members.

Emmanuel College

Emmanuel College is offering a course on “Engaging Aboriginal Theologies”. Brian had contacted Emmanuel to indicate willingness to talk about how to support this kind of work. No response has been received to date.

Criteria for right relations fund over \$500

The group had planned to discuss criteria for grants over \$500, but no work has been done, or has been needed, to date. This topic will come back at a later time if necessary.

Arts and Reconciliation Festival

The Restorative Relations Working Group is working on a four directions festival. Brian described where the event will be held and the plans that have come together to date. Conference will be providing a grant of \$7,500. More information will be distributed as it becomes available.

Other items

A policy briefing paper from KAIROS is downloadable showing why it’s important for the government to move forward with the UNDRIP commitments. Canada seems to be backing away from some of its commitments.

Isadore Day of the Ontario chiefs spoke at Church of the Redeemer as part of treaty week. He is a very good speaker.

Educational events (cont’d)

Canada 150: The group AGREED that it would be good to plan an event prior to July 1.

Partera: Would like Jody to be involved. It would be helpful if there can be an Indigenous person to be involved.

Closing

The group offered thanks for the day. Betty Lou offered a closing prayer.

Next meeting

The group will meet sometime in March on a Tuesday or early April hopefully at Georgina, but Knox, Sutton as a backup.