

Living Into Right Relations Circle
Tuesday, April 4, 2017
At Knox United Church, Sutton

The Living Into Right Relations Circle gathered at Knox United Church, Sutton on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. About 15 people were present.

Present: Acting Co-Convenor Brian McIntosh, Co-Convenor Linda Parsons, Joan Chaboyer, Lynn Lawrence, Anja Oja, Dave Gordon, Thérèse Samuel, Bryan Ransom, Debbie Cauch-McIntosh, David Allen (note-taker until lunch), Betty Lou McNabb, Sara Stratton (General Council), Robert Hockley, Meiske Hockley, Elizabeth McLean (note-taker following lunch), Angus MacLennan (chair of Living Waters Presbytery and member of Knox, Sutton), Gloria McCavery, Aiden Allen, Ron Ewart and Jim Patterson (TUCC, afternoon)

Gathering and check-in: Acting Co-Convenor Brian McIntosh called the gathering together at approximately 10:30 a.m., led by an opening prayer, acknowledged some who were not present, and made a special welcome back to Co-Convenor Linda Parsons. The group had a check-in.

Notes from previous gathering: The group reviewed the notes from the November 29, 2016 meeting at Christian Island. Questions were asked about a number of items:

1. Treaty workshop: The treaty workshop will now take place in the fall of 2017 with help from Sara Stratton from the General Council office.
2. BMO funds: Nothing further has been done about encouraging young people to participate in the Bank of Montreal's Canada 150 program.
3. Mandate from Alberta & Northwest Conference: James Ravenscroft had provided the mandate as requested.
4. United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): This topic is on today's agenda.

The group AGREED to receive the notes as circulated.

Conference Fund: David Allen provided an outline of how the \$50,000 from the Conference Fund is being spent on right relations work. To date approximately \$10,000 has been committed in 2017.

Toronto Urban Native Ministry (TUNM): Brian spoke about a proposal from TUNM to develop an Elders' Council. This body would be a resource for providing indigenous leadership at events involving the settler community. This has become an increasingly high demand as more events are happening, and there is a danger that Indigenous leaders could become burned out responding to requests. Funding for this initiative will come in part from the Conference Fund. A new Anglican priest, Chris Harper, has been appointed to serve at TUMN.

Inter-Conference conversation: Brian has chaired two conference calls involving representatives from other Conferences within Ontario. He said that there has been a positive response; people are interested in hearing what is happening, but they are less keen on developing a new network, feeling

that local involvement is a higher priority at the moment. David has been part of the calls; he expressed a pleasant surprise that so much is happening in each of the Conferences, and he recognized the general feeling on the calls that they want to do things locally.

Emmanuel College: Brian and David had met with Professor Tom Reynolds from Emmanuel College to wonder how the theological school and the Circle might partner on some right relations work. Brian circulated a document provided by Tom showing the kind of right relations work that is being done by all the theological schools connected with the Toronto School of Theology. The number of things being done at Emmanuel College is impressive. Emmanuel College is open to further conversation with the Circle.

Sara Stratton talked about what the General Council is doing. The office has written to the theological schools to find out how they intend to do follow-up from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action. There has been a variety of responses.

The group noted that Georgian College started an Aboriginal studies program in 1992. There was further discussion about how local schools could be encouraged to talk about Aboriginal issues. The Toronto District School Board has recently developed a practice of acknowledging the territory on which schools are located. This happens every day in some cases. They are also doing blanket exercises every week.

Shannon Neufeldt at KAIROS is the main contact for blanket exercises.

UNDRIP: Sara provided information on United Church efforts to help implement UNDRIP within the church. She noted the following:

- You can draw a very clear line from UNDRIP to the TRC calls to action which flow directly from UNDRIP.
- The United Church issued a statement on UNDRIP in March, 2016, and has made a commitment to review all of our structures and policies in light of UNDRIP.
- General Council wants to engage Conferences and other regional structures; time has been requested and granted to have time on annual meeting agendas.
- A six-minute video has been shot and is being edited and will be on YouTube in a couple of weeks.
- General Council is advocating for Canada to respond to UNDRIP in meaningful ways.
- A Caretakers Circle has been established to work on UNDRIP issues from an Aboriginal perspective.

The group AGREED that it will appeal to all presbyteries to use the new video on their agendas in the fall.

Sara distributed a KAIROS document “Let Justice Roll: implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”. It is available online at www.kairoscanada.org/UNDRIP.

Comments by Sen. Lynn Beyak: Sen. Lynn Beyak has recently made statements indicating support for the positive aspects of the residential schools. Her comments have drawn much criticism. The United Church Moderator Jordan Cantwell issued a statement March 10 taking issue with Beyak's comments.

Lunch

The group enjoyed a lunch provided by the United Church Women (UCW) of Knox United Church.

Toronto United Church Council (TUCC): Brian welcomed Ron Ewart and Jim Patterson and invited them to talk about the right relations work that TUCC is doing. Ron thanked Brian and Jody Maltby for attending a Board of Directors meeting in October where they talked about right relations work.

They talked about the TUCC Heart and Vision Awards. The recipients in 2016 were Roberta Jamieson and Dr. Marie Wilson; in 2017 Cindy Blackstock and The Very Rev. Stan McKay will be honoured.

When Jody and Brian met with TUCC, the group talked about partnering on educational events, one of which will take place on May 14 just before the Heart and Vision Award ceremony. This event at Jubilee United Church will be a two-hour seminar to broaden understanding of the past and the nature of the United Church's commitment to reconciliation going forward. Ron and Jim acknowledged that this is long-term work which can take many forms, e.g. project funding, camps, and work with youth.

Jim said that he has made contact with a number of people , e.g. John Bird, Jody, as well as First Nations leaders Grafton Anton, and Andrea Chrisjohn at Council Fire. TUCC has received excellent feedback on how its programs could be involved in community needs.

The group engaged in a wide-ranging conversation with Ron and Jim:

- noted large growing numbers of Indigenous children
- spoke about the pressing need for outreach and healing of deep intergenerational trauma
- the 60s's Scoop should be discussed
- partnership between TUCC and LIRR beyond workshops
- resources are available so other good educational events can be sponsored
- General Council's right relations fund is over-applied for and all funds used every year
- how to create that critical mass that needs more than dollars; there needs to be trust
- Church sponsored camps must change how to include teachings about spirituality/nature from an indigenous point of view
- What are strategies to decolonize camps?
- Where are the indigenous voices at TUCC?
- In the past LIRR meetings did not continue or do decision making unless strong Indigenous voices were present; this topic will be included on next meeting's agenda...
- Much discussion ensued on how to encourage more Indigenous Members???
- Need to be mindful of travel challenges to have Indigenous voices present, perhaps billeting overnight with other members
- "nothing about us without us" is an important Indigenous phrase
- a settler responsibility ..."Do what you can ... how you can ... with your own community"

Brian thanked Ron and Jim for being present and invited them to participate in future gatherings and events.

Education events: The group reviewed the up-coming educational events that are being planned on April 20-21 (Colour Coded), May 14 (with TUCC), June 10 (Canada 150) and the fall (territorial acknowledgments).

Council Fire: Brian spoke about a number of activities taking place at Council Fire in Toronto through the ecumenical group responding to the TRC calls to action. Information will be shared about up-coming events.

Other activities: The group heard about a number of other activities that are underway.

- Metropolitan United Church is creating a Medicine Garden/Heart Garden and are looking to create a memorial
- General Council office published liturgical resources for the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, which had been worked on by a Toronto Conference based group pulled together by Won Hur, including Linda P., Brian, Evan Smith, Diane Meredith
- Debbie gave a KAIROS blanket exercise report
- Brian has written the Bible Study on reconciliation for the May Mandate magazine
- Thérèse spoke about a May 10 blanket exercise at the high school in Meaford for teachers and students, sponsored by Safe Schools Committee

Communication strategy: Susie Henderson and Jody had developed a draft communication strategy for discussion. The plan includes:

- 1) make an e-list
- 2) create a google group to share information ...for questions and event information ...members to talk to each other
- 3) members and BRIAN no longer have to go through Linda Gray
- 4) create a Witness Quarterly Newsletter and resource list
- 5) need an active presence on TRC Toronto Facebook page; need a moderator for the page
- 6) Twitter feed - create, maintain, filter

NEXT MEETING ...

The Circle will gather again on **Tuesday May 30th** at either Christian Island or Georgina Island. Topics will include:

- the importance of having Indigenous voices represented at the LIRR Circle meetings
- more detailed discussion to hear about the group's history