

**Living Into Right Relations Circle**  
**Tuesday May 30, 2017**  
**At Christian Island United Church**

Present: Acting Co-Convenor Brian McIntosh, Debbie Cauch-McIntosh, Dave Gordon, Joan Chaboyer, Anna Bassila, Lynn Lawrence, Elizabeth McLean, Gloria McCavery, Robert Hockley, Meiske Hockley, James Ravenscroft, Kathleen Monague & Kendal Ann, one month old!

Gathering, Opening and Check-In: Brian led the group in an opening, with a reading and the lighting of a candle, and the group spent some time going around the Circle sharing.

Notes of April 4, 2017: It was AGREED that the Notes of April 4<sup>th</sup> were accurate as circulated.

Issues/Items Arising from Notes:

1) Educational Events: Two for our Circle and witnesses have taken place so far –

*Colour Coded*, about de-colonization, was at Cummer Ave. United Church April 21-22, and 28 attended. This was led by Lee McKenna of Partera Peacebuilders International, and guest presenters included Michael Blair of the General Council office, and Renee Thomas Hill of Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation;

*An Invitation to Listen: the Earth and Her Children*, about our relationship to the land and the 60's Scoop, took place May 14<sup>th</sup>, Mother's Day, in the afternoon, and about 70 attended. This was in partnership with Toronto United Church Council (TUCC), and included leadership from former United Church Moderator Stan MacKay, and 60's Scoop survivor and now Beaverhouse First Nation Chief Marcia Brown Martel.

Both these events are funded by the Right Relations Fund of Toronto Conference.

In conjunction with the second event above, TUCC held their annual Heart & Vision Awards Ceremony at Daniel's Spectrum on Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup> and honoured Dr. Cindy Blackstock, relentless in her passion for her people, particularly the children who were taken from their homes through the child welfare system, and Stan McKay. This was a Concert also, which speeches and song intertwined, and was a very successful evening.

We sadly had to report that the planned June educational event, focusing on the true history of the land beyond Canada 150 and scheduled for Georgina Island, had to be canceled. James and Jody had worked with others, including Betty Lou, to plan the program, but with Betty Lou's husband very ill with cancer, it was decided to cancel.

The last educational event of 2017 will be in October and will focus on helping congregations formulate an Acknowledgement of the land and original Indigenous inhabitants. News about this should follow by the early fall, from a planning team of at least Jody, James and Susie Henderson.

Other educational events include:

a) Springwater Pow wow: June 10-11, with Grand Entry at 12 noon. Dave Gordon will send Brian the info, and he'll pass it on to be sent out. An entire Pow wow schedule should also be available, and will hopefully be circulated.

- b) Joan noted that Trudeau is speaking to the Pope to urge an Apology
- c) Thérèse is hoping we'll consider an educational event about racialized peoples, and is planning an event for June 17 at the Black History Museum in Thornbury.

2) Restoring Relations Working Group (RRWG) at Council Fire: This inter-church and widely representative group meets with inner-city Indigenous peoples, including survivors, at Council Fire on a monthly basis. Brian reported on two things in particular:

- a) Council Fire has responded to the TRC Call to Action about there being a monument in the capital city of each province/ territory by undertaking the IRSS Legacy project, with a plan for installation and unveiling of a symbolic statue at Toronto City Hall, Nathan Philips Square, of a turtle, with 13 back tiles for the 13 new moons, and 28 base tiles for the number of days between new moons. It is hoped for a November, 2018 unveiling.
- b) The Four Directions Festival is coming up fast! See the circulated flyer about events in four parts of Toronto between June 16<sup>th</sup> opening and National Aboriginal Day June 21<sup>st</sup> closing. Financial support for artists taking part would still be appreciated, and Brian is a signing officer for the bank account. There will be ceremony and teachings at each event.

In addition, the RRWG supports survivor Michael Cheena's efforts to follow-up on the relevant TRC Call to Action to lobby for a change to the Oath of Allegiance for new Canadians to include an honouring of the treaties. This change is being studied so that proper wording can be suggested, and it is hoped that a recommendation will be made soon.

3) Toronto Conference Right Relations Fund: \$50,000 available for supporting various things, including Christian, Georgina and RRWG, as well as Kairos Blanket Exercises, local church projects, etc.

Brian gave an update on the Harmony Collaboration Project, about a seven part artistic work to be created collaboratively by a professional composer and writer, in conjunction with Carolyn King of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, about the MNCFN history as depicted in their wall mural in the school. The Right Relations Fund supported this project last year.

4) Toronto Urban Native Ministry: Brian shared some news about TUNM (see brochure):

It's funded through the All Native Circle Conference (ANCC), and is primarily a service agency for inner-city Indigenous people. One United Church minister, Evan Smith, and one Anglican minister are the staff.

Conference Right Relations Fund supported TUNM to create an Elders Circle to be able to respond to requests for settler events and teaching. Andrew Wesley, Grafton Antone, other known elders may be taking part. More info. on this project, and on the availability of elders, should come later.

5) UC Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): The UC just came out with a good seven-minute video about UNDRIP, as part of a workshop outline for congregations and small groups. This video was used at the Conference Annual General Meeting the previous weekend, and it is hoped that many will show this video and use the workshop resource.

6) KAIROS Update: The Gitchi (really big) Blanket Exercise on Parliament Hill in Ottawa takes

place June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Also the document *Let Justice Roll*, intended to help people meet with their MP to follow up on UNDRIP's implementation, is also available. Indigenous federal Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, has said a few contradictory things about implementing UNDRIP within Canada, so this situation needs monitoring.

Dave reported that a new worship-friendly and shorter version of the Blanket Exercise is available to download from KAIROS' website, for a small fee. He used it at worship services at Holy Trinity, & at Westminster in Orangeville, and it was well received. A new version for children at summer camps is also available.

Debbie reported doing a few Blanket exercises, and has one upcoming with Lansing United Church, where Past Conference President Bryan Ransom serves.

7) There's nothing new to report about the Co-Convenor of the Circle question, or about the Communications Strategy implementation.

#### New Items/Issues

Robert Hockley reported on his attempt to respond to the TRC Call to Action about restoring heritage by working on creating a new Ojibway - English hymn book for the fall of this year.

James reported on the creation of a LIRR Circle in his church, Richmond Hill United Church, with education being the biggest piece.

As a prelude to the afternoon discussion, Brian reported that it should be known by the end of June about the Remits process in the United Church. We may end up being in more than one Regional body, which would replace Conferences, of which there are currently seven in Ontario, and Presbyteries, of which there are four currently in Toronto Conference. Our Conference Circle has related to the two non-ANCC Indigenous congregations in its midst, namely Christian Island & Georgina Island, as well as Council Fire. The ANCC funds TUNM, and does have a relationship with other congregations within southern Ontario.

Lunch Break was enjoyed by all, with thanks to Robert and Meiske for their hospitality.

#### New Items/Issues (continued)

Consideration of our History and Mandate, and Inclusion of Indigenous Voices and Leadership:

Where do we go from here?

Brian opened up a general discussion, having handed out a very brief summary of our history as well as the Mandate of the Circle, most recently revised in 2014.

- What to hold on to / what to let go?
- Face to Face relationship building, but we need Indigenous people
- how to get Indigenous people to LIRR Circle?

It was noted that the potential change in structure will be a good time to consider our own mandate and structure.

Many commented on how eager we are to learn from, and work alongside, Indigenous people.

James spoke of his Alberta experience, in which there was one Indigenous, one non-Indigenous convenor for their Circle, but also an attempt to maintain a balance in the membership of the Circle as well, and representation from each Treaty area. He also

acknowledged that the Indigenous history, as well as the history of the church's relationship to Indigenous peoples, and even the sorting out of Treaties, is a more complex one here in Ontario.

A few acknowledged that we non-Indigenous people need to act when we know what to do, and continue to educate people regarding the settlers' role in the history of this land. It was also agreed that it's important to simply show up when invitations to opportunities for cultural exchange, via Pow wows, workshops, etc., are already known.

Kathleen Monague had joined the group toward the end, and noted that her Dad had shared leadership regarding the Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings at the Pinewa gathering in Manitoba when the LIRR circle network in the UC was first started about 10-12 years ago.

Elizabeth suggested that a Teaching Circle for Settler people, run by Elders, would be a good idea.

#### Courtesies, Closing Prayer, Departure

Brian drew the discussion to a close, as departure for the ferry had to take place, noting that the last discussion will be very important to continue once the results of the Remits are known. We joined in a Circle Prayer time to close, and departed for the ferry at about 2:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Elizabeth McLean, edited by Brian McIntosh