

Toronto Conference Living Into Right Relations Circle  
Tuesday, October 3, 2017  
At Midhurst United Church  
Gathering Notes

Present: Linda Parsons (co-convener), Debbie Cauch-McIntosh, Delores Charles, Jeffrey Dale, Dave Gordon, Robert Hockley, Ren Ito, Lenore King, Pam King, Lynn Lawrence, Jody Maltby, Gloria McCavery, Brian McIntosh, Elizabeth McLean, Betty Lou McNabb, Wayne Monague, James Ravenscroft

Regrets: Meiske Hockley, Thérèse Samuel and Sara Stratton

Gathering, Opening and Check-in

Linda welcomed everyone to the circle at 10:30 a.m. Delores offered a smudging ceremony. Folks around the circle introduced themselves and checked-in.

We broke for lunch at 12:15 p.m. after which discussion continued.

Jody reviewed the Conference process for nominations.

Jody explained that the Conference Executive approves appointments to Conference standing committees, task groups or consultations based on recommendations from its Nominations Committee. Before making a recommendation to the Executive, the Nominations Committee will review the mandate of the group and the skills needed. Specifically, with respect to LIRR, the Circle is to make recommendations to the Nominations Committee for co-convenors. It is important to consult with the Aboriginal communities we are in relationship with, as to who should be named as the Aboriginal co-convenor.

The question was raised whether we can have shared Indigenous leadership? Although the mandate says one Aboriginal co-convener, the Indigenous communities should be able to define their role in this circle and in particular how their leadership will happen.

There was discussion about the importance of ceremony in the circle, and that some people in Indigenous communities don't want Indigenous spirituality and ceremony in churches. Some thoughts included:

- As a circle, we need to respect that it is for the Indigenous communities themselves to have that conversation, although we want to be supportive.
- It is important to share the struggle and name the struggle; to share truth and responsibility to raise consciousness and awareness in non-Indigenous congregations
- Advocacy, conversation and education need to be inter-generational so that we don't keep repeating patterns.
- Among non-Indigenous peoples there are different experiences of colonization and this could add a lot of value to the conversation – alienation of traditional cultures with incoming western culture and Christian tradition is a common theme with other conversation partners
- Intercultural vision of The United Church of Canada is another way into the conversation

- We are overcome by fear, on both sides, of saying or doing the wrong thing, we need to overcome the fear and talk to each other, find out who we are.

Wayne Monague shared about a workshop on the Seven Teachings which is led by Jim Dumont. This could be a good educational opportunity to explore.

Brian reported on the Ontario Conferences call with respect to right relations that happened on September 26. Right relations work has been named as a priority by several Conferences including Toronto. The question is what we want right relations work to look like in the new structure and how will it be resourced? The group will gather again in the spring when we know what the regions will be.

Jody reported that the educational event in Orillia on October 14 will feature Mark Douglas from the Chippewas of Rama First Nation who will share some history of the area with a particular focus on the fish weirs. This is intended to be the first of a series of events that will occur over the next year as we learn about the history of some of the areas in the Conference. We have already had some conversation with Andrew Big Canoe and Delores Charles about an event on Georgina Island and we would like to hold one on Christian Island as well and then possibly explore an opportunity with the community of Wauksausing. We hope that our acknowledgement of the land will be deepened if we understand the history of the area and build on our relationships with First Nations communities in our geographic region.

Linda shared a small booklet containing the TRC calls to action. Jody has some available at the Conference office and more can be ordered if needed.

The next gathering of the circle will be on Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at Midhurst United Church. We will gather at 10:00 a.m. for coffee and start by 10:30 a.m.

Betty Lou closed us in prayer and we departed at 2:30 p.m.

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