

Toronto Conference of The United Church of Canada
Living Into Right Relations Circle
Notes from Nov 21, 2017

Present: Linda Parsons (co-convenor), Delores Charles, Jeffrey Dale, Edna Caldwell, Gloria McCavery, James Ravenscroft, Bonnie Collacutt, Dave Collacutt, Betty Lou McNabb, Bea Arnill, John McLean, Elizabeth McLean, Wendy Brown, Jody Maltby (staff)

The group gathered for coffee and muffins at 10:00 a.m. Linda called the circle together at 10:15 a.m. Delores offered a smudge, after which those gathered shared.

Co-convenors and Mandate

Linda reported that we are still having conversation about the Mandate and the role of co-convenor. It is important to have the First Nations voice in the circle and in leadership in the circle. Delores is willing to act with Linda until someone else might be willing, knowing that the structure will change as of December 2018 and this work will pass into the new region. Linda will have a conversation with Wayne about the workshop on the Seven Teachings and whether he might be interested in giving leadership in the circle.

We normally don't meet over the winter so the next meeting will be in the spring.

2018 Events

We would like to have an event in the spring and make it a major event for the Conference. Wayne had suggested a workshop with Jim Dumont on the Seven Teachings. Delores and Betty Lou mentioned that hearing the Creation Story is another possible event. Shelley Charles, a member of the community on Georgina Island who might make contact with Jim. Betty Lou will get in touch with Shelley Charles.

Over the winter Jody hopes to arrange another workshop on Cultural Awareness and one on White Privilege which will be important primarily for the Settler communities.

Over the summer and fall we hope to offer the events in the communities of Georgina Island, Christian Island and Wauksausing, similar to the one we held in Orillia last fall.

Treaty 9 Spraying

Ren Ito is looking into this issue and will report more in the future.

Blanket Exercise

Betty Lou asked whether the Circle might take leadership in encouraging the church to make the Blanket Exercise mandatory for all staff across the country, particularly ministry personnel who acknowledge the land in worship.

Jody will explore the options for this in conversation with the Conference Personnel Ministers and whether it would need to be a proposal to the General Council.

Lake Simcoe Watershed Petition

Delores reported that there was a meeting on Friday in the community of Georgina Island led by Kerry Anne Charles. There are over 30,000 signatures on the petition so far.

Anishnawbe Health Centre

Jody shared the background information on the new Anishnawbe Health Centre that is planned in Toronto. This is a project of Anishnawbe Health Toronto, an Aboriginal-led health facility offering traditional healing services for First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. Toronto Conference has been invited to provide funding for the project. Jody has been in touch with Evan Smith to see if this is project is one that TUNM, as our community partner, would like us to support. We also invite the wisdom of the communities we are in relationship with.

Delores reflected that it sounds like a good plan as it is geared toward healing and is in Toronto which was important Indigenous land. She noted that the government should pay for what is needed. This is important and necessary work for Indigenous communities.

Youth Event

Jeffrey, James and Ren met with Betty Lou, Delores and Jake and they are planning an event to focus on teaching for youth. The plan is to take a group of youth to the Island in the spring and camp and participate in a learning event. Jeffrey also felt that it is really important to arrange an inter-generational event as well which may be at the same time or another time.

Jeffrey will also be making contact with Deanna Big Canoe whose daughters would like to talk about relationship and this may lead to another connection.

The long term goal is to experience a deep lasting relationship.

Great appreciation was expressed for Jake's work as an Anishinary and his leadership in relationship and reconciliation work.

Harmony Project

Jody provided background information on the project. The Harmony Collaboration is an incorporated Not For Profit Charitable organization with the goal of connecting people to Indigenous culture and heritage through the shared experience of the performing arts. Since early 2014, Harmony has been building a deep-rooted and respectful collaborative relationship with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, located near the Six Nations of the Grand River in Haldimand and Brant Counties.

Following a series of discussions, Harmony and the New Credit Cultural Committee identified New Credit's *Kiinwi Dbaadjmowin ("Our Story")* Mural as creative inspiration for this collaboration, receiving the New Credit Chief and Band Council's permission and endorsement in 2015.

Harmony is creating a new multimedia music theatre performance incorporating visual and performing arts, expressing the wisdom contained in the mural content. The performance is based on the theme of a quest for the recovery of harmony in the world. The wisdom contained in the mural's content will be expressed through poetry, music and dance, and will include the Anishnaabemowin language.

\$1,000 will be provided by the Conference Fund.

Traditional Territory Workshops

The first workshop was held on October 14 in Orillia with Mark Douglas from the Chippewas of Rama First Nation. It was a powerful conversation and was well attended, including a number of people who have not previously been to our events.

Betty Lou will make contact with Andy Big Canoe on Georgina Island about holding an event next spring/summer. Jody, James and Bryan met with Andy, Delores and Betty Lou last spring about a possible event that had to be cancelled last summer. We would like to revisit the possibility of the event, if Andy is still willing/interested in sharing stories about the history of the area.

James will make contact with Robert Hockley, minister on Christian Island to see if we might be invited to talk with members of the community who might be willing to share stories of the history of the community.

Jody will make contact with Lorna Pawis of Wauksausking with the same request.

Sisters in Spirit Fund

Linda reported that the Aboriginal Ministries Council and Circle has come together to support the families and survivors who will be providing their testimony at Community Hearings across the country. The support being offered is ensuring that families will receive emotional and spiritual support through safe spaces, healing ceremonies, talking circles and counseling. The Council has reached out to local communities to offer this support and they are working with the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre in Saskatoon, SK to implement an aftercare program. Much of this support is through generous donations such as the Sisters in Spirit Fund which is now called Violence Against Indigenous Women, which currently amounts to \$42,840.00.

\$21,686.00 of the funds came from the Sisters in Spirit Fundraising. Linda will explore whether it might be available to local communities for events. Linda will also follow up to learn more about the change in the name of the fund.

Gratitude

Linda asked if Toronto Conference could send a note of thanks to Midhurst United Church for the use of their space which is so well situated for folks coming from Georgina Island and Christian Island. Jody will take care of that.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will likely be in the spring at the call of the co-convenors, possibly at Midhurst United.

Closing

Linda closed the gathering with prayer at 2:10 p.m.