

First Nations Sunday June 19th, 2016

Relationships with First Nations

All this is from God who reconciled himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself... and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Some thoughts and memories from Peggy Jensen. These are random thoughts for the talk.

Prayer: Creator God, you show your love and care for each one of us in surprising ways. Life is full of opportunities and blessings. When we take time to respond to the opportunities we are richly blessed. Thank-you for showing me the way. I have had some incredible experiences along my life journey and met some gentle gracious people. May the thoughts and words that I offer today help others to remember their blessings. In Christ's name, I serve you. Amen.

God entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. I want to share with you some of the blessings and opportunities I have had with First Nations folk.

Early 1960's our CGIT group from Brechin went to **Alert Bay**, met with girl's from church

I met **Jessie Oliver** through Moorecroft Camp and other church events. She had been a house-mother in the Alberni residential school and Arthur Plint was a staff member. She tells the story of meeting a Government Supervisor in Nanaimo and trying to tell him that something was seriously wrong at the Alberni Residential School. He would not listen to a "woman". Some good things happened but the damage done to a number of others students – Church must take responsibility. *" when in February 1997, I first heard about the abuse at the Alberni Residential school I spent a night of shame, agony and tears."*

1986 31st General Council Bob Smith made an apology to First Nations.

Healing Fund was established to raise one million dollars, an effort to put Money where our mouth was.

1988 General Council in Victoria --- **Sacred Fire** ceremony with Alf Dumont and Bob Smith.

Penticton band invitation for Summer Solstice. Chief Stewart Philip and Jeanette Armstrong of the En'nowkin Centre.

1991 final year VST field education was to engage in First Nations reconciliation work through the **BC Conference Task Force on Residential Schools.**

- Court cases made lunches at St. Andrews UC.
- March of 2000 Planned **Worker's Wonderings** a 3 day event for Residential School Workers. 34 former workers from 17 different Residential Schools across the country....
- The teachers and school worker's shared their stories, their pain and received some reassurance that some worthwhile education happened. Also the realization of the damage has affected generations. Most had no idea at the time.

Smither's United Church 2000-2003

- Louis DeJong was a pilot who took children from remote villages to proper schools.
- UCW group met with a group of women in Kispiox at the Pierce Memorial United Church Marion Best was there. Snowberries and other traditional food.
- Highway of tears great concern for missing women.

“Walking with Our Sister’s”

- Last year saw display in Ko'mox Band Hall. **“Walking with our Sister’s”** Commemorative art installation of 1,763 pairs of unfinished moccasin vamps (top only) . Each pair represented one missing or murdered indigenous woman. Children's vamps are dedicated to children who never returned from Residential school.
- Receive cedar Blessing from Elder women she sensed a strong spirit around me

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Observed a day of listening in Campbell River. Bags to collect tears. Madame Justice Dr. Marie Wilson ----- such sincere listening.

Sacred Journey with the Bishop an opportunity to connect with our local first nations neighbours. Who is our neighbour?

The work of reconciliation is ours. Each one of us has an opportunity and, in the name of Christian love, a responsibility to do our part to be informed and present whenever we can.

The Bishop Logan, the UCC and other churches, has encouraged everyone to read the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.** Especially call to action #48 . Copies are available at the church.

MJ Paterson has compiled other references and resources. If you feel there is more we can and should do please speak to Peggy or MJ Paterson .

Here are the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation

Report: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2091412-trc-calls-to-action.html>

Calls 48, and 58 to 61 specifically address the churches.

With the March 31 statement, the United Church of Canada has answered Call to Action # 48. I left a few copies in the lounge. Here it is:

<http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/undrip-united-church-statement.pdf>

We have been joined by the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and Salvation Army in this. Commissioner Marie Wilson's statement on receipt of the joint document can be read here <http://www.united-church.ca/news/release-ecumenical-statement-un-declaration>.

The next steps were annotated from the Kairos document, *Strength for Climbing – Steps on the Journey of Reconciliation*, which listed many great steps.

1. Read the TRC Calls to Action, especially # 58-61 for the churches.

2. Look at the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf) and read the March 31, 2016 United Church of Canada statement (see link above)

3. Be present! Learn. Read. Read some of the wonderful, heartfelt, sometimes agonizing and sometimes very funny literature by Indigenous writers in Canada (Richard Van Camp, Joseph Boyden, Jeanette Armstrong. Listen to great music by Tribe Called Red, Buffy Saint-Marie, Tanya Tagaq, Kashtin, Susan Aglukark, Theo Fleury and many, many other great musicians. Read history (Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian* is both funny and challenging). Watch APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network), especially the excellent news reports. Enjoy art by Roy Henry Vickers, Susan Point, Annie Pootoogook, Alex Janvier, hundreds of others.

4. To be very practical, donate to a special fund being developed for Aboriginal education, the Alvin Dixon Memorial Bursary. Alvin Dixon was from Bella Bella. He attended the Alberni Residential Indian School, went to UBC, took teachers' training, fished in the summers. Alvin Dixon was an activist in many areas of Aboriginal life in BC, and with the United Church. (1937-2014)

On June 24, enjoy watching the Indspire awards on Global and APTN https://indspire.ca/news_postings/2016-indspire-awards-gala-broadcast/.