

BEING GOOD RELATIONS NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

Following the dissolution of Alberta and Northwest Conference, and the Living into Right Relations Standing Committee, most of the members of the Standing Committee continued to function as the Being Good Relations Circle (BGRC) to serve both Northern Spirit and Chinook Winds Regional Councils. The BGRC presented a **proposal to both Regional Council** spring 2019 gatherings. The BGRC sought some recognition by the Council requesting some support staff time and funding to nurture the Being Good Relations Network of witnesses and those interested in moving forward with our initial mandate to bring colonizers and Indigenous people together in a more harmonious and mutual relationship. The proposal was referred to the Regional Council Executives.

From a strong base at Hillhurst and McDougall United Churches in Calgary, and with Chinook Winds funding and support (Chris Mah Poy), **Tony Snow**, a student at Sandy Saulteaux Centre, has offered excellent learning opportunities to co-create a way forward. Northern Spirit has employed **Julie Graham** 1/3 time as Justice and Communications Coordinator. Julie has assisted in hosting 3 Zoom 'cluster' gatherings of Network members in Northern Spirit June 9, 11, and 15, 2020 to check-in, share new resources, and plan for honoring the significant dates of June 21, September 30. (<https://www.orangeshirtday.org/>) and October 4 (MMIWG Vigil). Participation in anti-racism rallies and concerns about Bill 1 criminalizing protest that takes place on or targets what the Alberta government deems "essential infrastructure" were also discussed.

On June 11, 2020, Remember the Children Day was proclaimed in Red Deer and a gathering was held at the City Cemetery memorial to honor 4 teenagers who died during the Spanish flu epidemic at the Red Deer Industrial School. Thanks to Sunnybrook UC and the Remembering the Children Society for organizing it. The latter is seeking United Church board representation from each Region as a new phase of engagement is anticipated to designate the School cemetery as a Provincial Historic Resource.

From May 31 to June 14, 2019, Dr. Patricia Makokis from Saddle Lake Cree Nation was one of the leaders of a **Walk for Common Ground** from Edmonton to Calgary. Several United Church members were among the walkers for various legs of the journey. Some United Church congregations enroute also hosted the walkers for evening showings and discussions of the film "**Treaty Talk: Sharing the River of Life.**" A film "Treaty Walk" has since been made. Both can be seen at <https://www.treatytalk.com/>



The BGRC worked to hold a “**Moving Forward in Truth and Reconciliation**” event October 25-26, 2019 that was attended by 47-90 people in the Network. It was hosted by St Albert United Church, near Edmonton. Tony Snow from Stoney Nakoda Nation (Morley) offered smudging and some history of the Indigenous church in Alberta. His brother, John Snow had just returned from the UC National Indigenous Gathering and provided a report. On Friday, we held a “World Café” where we went from table to table to discuss issues surrounding the reconciliation process and being a network.

On Saturday morning, we listened to presentations by Dr. Pat Makokis, who talked about her work in reconciliation from an Indigenous point of view as a mother, grandmother, a professor, Treaty member and a woman. Dr. Davina Roussel gave a well-researched talk on being a Settler Ally and what we can do as colonizers to forward the response to the Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 5 years ago. Both women work at the University of Alberta. Dr. Sara Stratton spoke to us from her position as General Council Reconciliation and Indigenous Animator. All speakers were well received and there was a deep feeling of respect for all the work being done in these many spaces.

We know that many wonderful activities and learning events have happened throughout the Regions. Sharing more of your stories on the BGR Facebook page encourages us all. Thanks to Tilly Meyer and Cecile Fausak, we continue to have **public and private Facebook pages**. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Being-Good-Relations-Circle-Chinook-Winds-and-Northern-Spirit-Regions-159503007982883/> There you will find many links to relevant resources and stories and links re current issues concerning Indigenous peoples and reconciliation actions. The BGR Network also has a presence on the NS Regional website.

Thanks to Mary Shearer and Shelley Sabo, the BGR Network conveners met via Zoom on November 21, 2019 and May 21, 2020. We sent emails to the 90 witnesses throughout the two Regions, and to the Regional Executives summarizing the work done and conclusions reached at the October 2019 gathering. Attempts were made to contact all those who had said they were interested in volunteering in strengthening the network, yet none were willing to take any leadership. We are also in the process of transferring the email list to Mailchimp. Our group feels that one of the important functions of our network is to identify and support communities of faith and witnesses interested in the truth and reconciliation process. It remains a **challenge in developing a healthy network** to recruit and mentor new conveners and keep people connected.

The **Living into Right Relations Trust Fund** continues to be available to facilitate activities or gatherings that develop and enhance responses to the Calls to Action issued by the TRC, the Calls to the Church by the Indigenous Ministries, and upholding the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The BGR conveners are drafting a process for accessing these funds to take to the Regional Council Executives.

In June 2018, some members of our network attended a training workshop to become **KAIROS Blanket Exercise facilitators** for Northern Alberta. The training event was organized by Keepers of the Athabasca, who have done a series of workshops, “Flowing into Right Relationships”, with 5 Native Friendship Centres in Athabasca, Edson, Slave Lake, High Prairie, Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray. In September 2019, a similar training workshop was held in Canmore in Southern Alberta with much success. Requests for Blanket Exercises may be made to Ian Hopfe, Alberta North BE Coordinator ihopfe@kairoscanada.org and Cherie Ratte, Alberta South BE Coordinator. cratte@kairoscanada.org. There is work being done on the possibility of conducting ‘virtual’ Blanket Exercises.

We believe a Being Good Relations Network is vital to the future of the church and the country. We are passionate about offering support to the many United communities of faith in both Regions willing to do the hard but oh so important work of reconciliation throughout the Treaty lands of 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 and Metis homelands. Please be in touch if you have ideas for us or want to help convene gatherings, especially in the Northern Spirit Region.

Respectfully submitted by the continuing conveners for the Being Good Relations Network:

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