

Being Good Relations Network/Circle

The Being Good Relations Network and Circle across Northern Spirit (NS) and Chinook Winds (CW) Regions continues to evolve. About 100 people have been appointed as congregational witnesses or have attended past events on moving forward on the journey of reconciliation. A Network Circle of Leadership of about 15 people continues to meet to build relationships and discern the next steps.

Membership in the Network is open to anyone interested in learning, sharing experiences, advocating, or posting information related to Indigenous news or events, becoming an anti-racist church, our shared history, and building better relations in these two regions. We hope to publish an e-newsletter soon. If anyone in NS Region wishes to join this Network and receive the e-newsletter or needs more information, contact Julie Graham JGraham@united-church.ca. You can visit our **public** (<https://www.facebook.com/Being-Good-Relations-Circle-Chinook-Winds-and-Northern-Spirit-Regions-159503007982883/>) and join our **private Facebook pages**. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/165687250695166>).

During 2020, COVID-19 interrupted plans for any in-person gatherings but through Zoom, work continued. The Circle met via Zoom several times in the past year, most recently on February 4 and April 20, 2021. There have been many pertinent webinars and learning sessions, including ones related to Bill C-15 and UNDRIP, as well as the Indigenous History Month, Advent, and Lenten series that Tony Snow (supported by CW) has so generously offered. Many books have also been read. Camrose United Church had a great Right Relations Book Club (and also viewed documentaries).

The Remembering the Children Society hosted a February webinar, “Perspective on K-12 Education for Reconciliation”. They have been very concerned since October 2020 that the province is not living up to its commitment with other educational partners to respond to the TRC Call to Action #62. With the March publication of the K-6 draft curriculum, that concern rose to even greater heights. A template letter to the Education Minister was developed as an example to accompany a proposal for a letter-writing campaign with communities of faith in both Regions.

The Remembering the Children Society (with 3 United Church members on the Board) has also been moving ahead with consultation engagement regarding the future of the Red Deer Indian Industrial School cemetery site as a designated provincial historic resource. This involves 8 First Nations and the Metis Nation of Alberta and the province, resulting in a meeting with Culture Minister Aheer on April 19.

During the February 4, 2021, meeting, the Circle met Cherie Ratte, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE) coordinator for Alberta, based in Calgary. The KBE has gone virtual. The priority has been to deliver to educational, social, government, and health care institutions. It has been difficult to prepare enough facilitators to meet the demand. The KAIROS Prairies North Regional chapter is being revitalized, and anyone interested in working on ecumenical Indigenous, ecological, or migrant justice issues can contact Shannon Neufeldt sneufeldt@kairoscanada.org.

Northern Spirit members of the Network formed three clusters in their Region, each with a different facilitator: Edmonton - Shelley Sabo; NE - Cecile Fausak; and NW - Grace Hussey. Each cluster meets via Zoom as it wishes to share ideas and concerns. During December a team of volunteers from 8 faith communities in the Bow Valley and Calgary teamed up with Gloria Snow, Trudy Wesley, Glenda Crawler and Tony Snow to raise \$10,000 dollars. The money was used for food and small gifts for children. Gift certificates and prayer shawls were distributed to reserves and urban Indigenous across CW region before Christmas.

Rebuilding the McDougall Memorial United Church after a fire continues. An article in the January 2021 issue of *Broadview* about this project was challenged as needing deeper research.

The Circle and Northern Spirit members appreciate support from Julie Graham, Justice and Communications Lead for Northern Spirit, Living Skies and Prairie to Pine Regions. The Circle and Chinook Winds members are grateful for the administrative support from Chris Mah Poy. Members of Chinook Winds are fortunate to enjoy Indigenous leadership from Tony Snow, a Candidate for Ministry. Some of the work Tony has done in 2020 has been shared by many in Canada.

Chinook Winds region celebrated the ordination of Rev. John Snow Jr. from the Stoney Nakoda Nation. He is now the Indigenous Ministerial Lead for Pacific Mountain Region. There are other Indigenous students in CW region who are studying for ministry.

As of July 1, 2021, Rev. Murray Pruden (originally from Smoky Lake, and a member of Saddle Lake-Goodfish Lake Nations) became the General Council Executive Minister for Indigenous Ministries and Justice. We look forward to his leadership amongst us.

Respectfully Submitted by Mary Shearer (CW) and Cecile Fausak (NS), Convenors,
Being Good Relations Network Circle of Leadership