

A Truth and Reconciliation Cluster

Let me introduce you to a cluster of Winnipeg and area people who are committed to working on Truth and Reconciliation issues. Five or so years ago an ad hoc group of Winnipeg Presbytery arose in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Calls to Action*. It was a gathering of people from a variety of churches in the city who wanted to find ways together to live out the *Calls to Action* and to encourage the rest of the church to engage with the work of reconciliation. Some individual churches were already very active but missing was a common voice from the United Church of Canada. The group decided that it was important to offer educational opportunities to help UCC members learn and understand the history of colonization in Canada and its ongoing reality and impact today. To that end, it planned a number of educational events open to all, including a visit to the former residential school in Portage La Prairie, a Blanket Exercise at a Presbytery meeting, an invitation to Native Studies professor, Niigaan Sinclair, to speak at Presbytery, and as well as creation of a web page listing events and resources. The group also worked ecumenically on public educational events and invited the Presbytery to sign on to Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord, a living document to guide our shared commitment to the Journey of Reconciliation in Winnipeg. Members of the group also had an opportunity to meet with members from ANCC congregations in Keewatin Presbytery. The group recognizes that the **Indigenous Caretakers Calls to the Church**, as unanimously accepted at GC 43, (https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/06_caretakers_of_our_indigenous_circle_report_-_revised.pdf) is an important document that, if taken to heart, it will change us.

The cluster is following several issues identified by Indigenous groups. We invite you to circulate and sign the petition found elsewhere in this newsletter, calling on the Manitoba government to establish a health care facility in the Island Lake region. We stand in solidarity with organizers of Camp Morningstar who are protesting a silica sand mine proposed for their land in Hollow Water First Nation. We invite you to learn about the Wet'suwet'en struggle to protect their territory in BC. See links to resources below.

This T&R Cluster is currently working out how the re-structuring in the church impacts its work, where its accountability lies, and who else needs to be invited to be part of the work. It has claimed the title "cluster" in order to have an identity within the new regional structure. We hope to hear from other groups doing similar work in this region and welcome you at our meetings.

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Wet'suwet'un Resources

The struggle of the Wets'uwet'en land defenders over jurisdiction of their homelands raises important and complex issues of Indigenous land rights, governance, right to say "no", rule of law, nation to nation relations. Some are calling it a turning point for this country. It is time for Canadians to learn about indigenous governance structures, to understand the impact the Indian Act has had on Indigenous peoples across this land, to listen to Indigenous peoples speak about their laws, their ceremonies, their rootedness in the land and their commitment to peaceful co-existence in this country.

We recommend these articles and resources:

["A short introduction to the Two Row Wampum"](#) by Tom Keefer

[Letter from the United Church Elders' Council and Moderator](#)

[The Wet'suwet'un, Aboriginal Title and the Rule of Law: An Explainer](#). By First People's Law

["True test of reconciliation: respect the Indigenous right to say NO"](#). Pam Palmater

[Wet'suwet'en and Crown Conflict: Resources for Understanding](#)

[Wet'suwet'en Supporter Toolkit 2020](#)

["Wilson-Raybould offers four proposals to help resolve the Wet'suwet'en blockades"](#)