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rupert'slandnews

CONNECTING CHURCH & COMMUNITY

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RLN welcomes story ideas, news items and other input. If you want to be involved in this media ministry, please be in touch with the editor.

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Cover: Elder and priest Barbara Shoomski lights the four sacred medicines for the smudge at Faith Horizons.

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HOSTING RECONCILIATION *Allison Chubb*



This month's edition of Rupert's Land News has a particular focus on Indigenous ministry, which feels timely coming on the heels of Faith Horizons a couple of weeks ago and the Bishop's Dinner with Murray Sinclair on October 22. With the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ottawa during the late spring of this year, Anglicans across the country are charged with the question,

"What next?" What does it mean to begin living into the process of reconciliation together, as Indigenous and settler Anglicans? Tanis Kolisnyk, in her Master's thesis on Indigenous self-determination, demonstrates that if we are serious about reconciliation, our worshipping communities will begin to take on a new shape. It is an exciting time to be Church.

Throughout the magazine, you will find brief responses from a cross-section of Rupert's Landers — old and young, Indigenous and settler, rich and poor — answering the question, "What does reconciliation mean to you?" This is because, while

reconciliation at a community level is indeed important, Jesus demonstrated for us that it is also deeply personal, beginning with you and with me. Perhaps if there is a Christian practice that forms the foundation of reconciliation, it is hospitality. Those who attended this year's National Sacred Circle speak of the joy of experiencing welcome in an increasing variety of ways, and how a spirit of hospitality has enabled those once considered so different to grow together as brothers and sisters. May you, too, experience the warmth of hospitality given and received this November. rln

THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS *Geoff Davies*

Dear Editor,

It has been said, "If you are to grow in Christian living, you need companions who are firmly rooted and themselves pilgrims." The Society of St. Francis is a worldwide religious order within the Anglican Communion. It is composed of the brothers and sisters of the First Order, who live in community; the enclosed sisters of the Second Order, the Community of St. Clare; and the brothers and sisters of the Third Order, a group of lay people. There are also the Associates, who support the brothers and sisters by

prayer and alms giving, and who live by a simple Franciscan rule of life.

St. Francis himself formed the Third Order for men and women who felt called to serve God under a life vow, but who were unable to relinquish their duties in the world to go and live in community. Today, there are many men and women who are aware that God is calling them to a deeper commitment to Christ within the circumstances of their ordinary lives. They find in St. Francis a pattern of Christian living at a simple, but profound,

level and see his example as pointing them to Christ. They strive to express this by a life of sacrament, prayer, and simplicity. They are supported in their aim by meeting together, as far as possible, for mutual prayer and study, and by a personal rule of life designed to fit the situation of each member, within a framework common to all. rln

For more information about the Society of St. Francis, please contact me at (204) 745-6727 or digeoffdavies@mymts.net.

ALL OUR RELATIVES: A THEOLOGY OF EMBRACE *Donald Phillips*

Those of us who are parents or grandparents know the sometimes painful adjustment that happens when the next baby sister or brother comes home from the hospital and joins the family. Suddenly, the older child is no longer the only child, the one around whom life revolves.

In adulthood, all of us in partnered relationships know the ongoing learning and transformation that takes place as we gradually come to terms with the fact that not all families look at life through the same lens that we do. (I still remember, after mentally planning out all of the activities that would be part of our Saturday wedding day, Nancy announced that we should get married on Friday evening!)

Social scientists use terms like “self-differentiation” and “de-centering” to describe the maturing that happens when we acknowledge and make room for the other. And while there is often fear, anxiety, and doubt associated with the kind of yielding that takes place to give “the other” space to be in our world, we inevitably discover that we do not become less as a result. Instead, we become richer as we explore and experience this life as another experiences and values it.

Jesus, the one whose

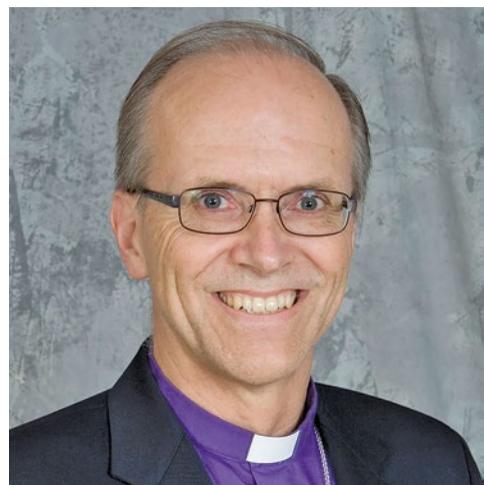
disciples we are, constantly challenged his followers to make room for the other: whether it was women, children, Samaritans, or non-Jewish centurions (soldiers). The Holy Spirit continued this work of Christ in the first century Church. By far, the most challenging thing that the first century (Jewish) Christian community had to learn was that the Gentiles, whom they abhorred, could be Jesus’ disciples too — and their brothers and sisters in God’s family.

But this learning was not just about being inclusive for the sake of being nice or even being just. Having to make room for (and not just a grudging acceptance, but a warm embracing of) those who are different from us, brings us closer to God; it re-makes us more deeply into the image of Christ. It is spiritual work, and that work needs to be done as much for our own sake as anyone else’s.

In Canada today, God is calling the settler society (and especially the disciples of Jesus) to make room for, and to embrace, Indigenous peoples as brothers and sisters or, as expressed in Indigenous culture — as relatives. And, of course, that same Creator is calling Indigenous peoples

(and especially the disciples of Jesus) to continue to welcome and embrace settler peoples as brothers and sisters also. Do not think for a moment that what has to be learned will be easier for one group than the other. Both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples will have to yield and make room for the other in their lives and communities. And it will be difficult; some might even suggest that, in light of recent history, it is impossible. But we follow the one who said that, “with God, all things are possible.”

The learning of healing and reconciliation awaits us. The path feels risky, but the rewards will be abundant! 



*Δ Donald Phillips,
Bishop of Rupert's Land*

"I don't know what reconciliation is.
I have never heard of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission"
- young Sauleaux mother whose own mother attended a residential school

INDIGENOUS ANGLICANS IN CANADA: THE PATH TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Tanis Kolisnyk

The journey toward self-determination for Indigenous Anglicans in Canada has not been without struggles. We have spent decades working toward new goals for healing and reconciliation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans. As part of my theological studies at the University of Winnipeg, I found an Anglican document written in 2001 called, "A New Agape," with its first goal as self-determination. I began asking the question, "What are the barriers that are impeding self-determination of Indigenous Anglicans in Canada?"

In general terms, self-determination can be defined as being able to determine one's own fate or course of action without compulsion. In the Anglican context, it means determining one's own fate without compulsion,

but also within the ecclesial community. The oral responses of members of the Anglican Council of Indigenous People (ACIP) were essential to my research because of their first-hand accounts of their successes and struggles.

Early in the research, I found that one cannot address injustice within the Church without addressing injustice within wider Canadian society. Many Indigenous Anglicans continue to be in crisis. Basic needs such as inadequate housing, lack of running or adequate drinking water, basic social services, access to health-care, suicide prevention, education gaps, sustainable employment, and the lack of resource development in Indigenous communities are all pressing issues that impede the building of self-determining communities. If non-Indigenous Anglicans

have the mindset that issues affecting Indigenous people took place in history and are to be addressed at a distance, this becomes a barrier to self-determination. The stories shared by Indigenous Anglicans in our parishes confirm that the ramifications of a harsh history are still lived out every day.

The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) and the 2014 United Nations report by James Anaya give a good framework to discover common struggles of Indigenous people across Canada. Both reports confirm a pattern of neglecting long-standing injustices in Canada, in both rural and urban settings. They make reference to broken promises, apathy, and indifference in tackling Indigenous concerns that continue to impact, not only individuals, but whole communities. Attempts



△ *Mark MacDonald, our National Indigenous Bishop, teaches Centre for Christian Studies students in a traditional circle style at Thunderbird House.*



Indigenous leaders believe that the decisions made about self-determination today will affect the lives of seven generations.

Photo: Art Babych

toward partnership after patterns of domination, and mutual respect after attempted assimilation, require us to walk a complicated path to new relationship building.

Is there hope? Yes, but there is hard work ahead. The Anglican Church of Canada has the opportunity to advocate for change. Today, Indigenous people are insisting on a different future and have voiced their frustration with the slow progress towards justice, healing, and the right to take control of their own futures. Continued diligence to battle the sin of racism and attitudes of ethnic superiority in our Canadian society must be reflected by the Church in word and deed. It is in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courage to reconcile that progress to self-determination is taking place. Attitudes still need to be challenged as together we keep Jesus at the centre of our efforts.

Fear of change is a barrier to self-determination.

As we know, there is risk in moving away from what makes the majority comfortable and secure. Growth, change, and embracing diversity need further exploration. Efforts to be an inclusive church include renewed efforts to reach out to the young, the marginalized, and those who disconnected themselves through generations of non-participation. Are there new ways being developed to connect to community? Are Indigenous governance structures, policies, and attitudes being considered as Indigenous Anglicans continue to grow in leadership and autonomy?

God continues to prepare Anglican Indigenous people for even greater things. Indigenous ministry means working in the community, outside the church building. Financial pressures continue to force the Church to rethink how to be missional. Indigenous people need to be represented in all levels of leadership, with

new strategies for vocational exploration. Increased numbers of Indigenous clergy and leaders will better reflect a self-determining Indigenous Anglican Church. There is a challenge for those who are in charge of theological education and development, with care to factor in cultural identity, leaving room to embrace new ways of interpreting and valuing Indigenous knowledge. This is an exciting but challenging time!

Glimmers of hope continue on the path to self-determination for Indigenous Anglicans as together the Church hears the call to justice and hearts are motivated to kindness, overcoming internal and external barriers. The journey to self-determination remains incomplete. It is being achieved in part with more yet to come. New developments continue with strong leadership, structural changes, and a new chapter of hope, as we work together towards this goal. [tin](#)



△ *Tanis Kolisnyk is the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the University of Winnipeg and an Anglican deacon.*

PARISH NEWS

ROUND UP

▷ St. Peter's, Winnipeg

A conference on Physician-Assisted Dying will be held at St. Peter's on February 26-27 with keynote speaker Eric Beresford, the Chairperson for the Primate's Theological Commission on Physician-Assisted Death. [Find the full details here.](#)

▷ St. Andrew's, Winnipeg

There will be a Christmas bazaar on November 7 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. with crafts, a bake sale, and prizes. [Click here for details.](#)

▷ Truth and Reconciliation Education

St. John's College is partnering with St. Paul's, Fort Garry, to host a Kairos workshop promoting the TRC's recommendation #62, that the history of residential schools be taught in all Canadian classrooms. Together, they will look at their role in educating others and pressuring the government to put recommendation #62 to work. The interactive workshop is at 2:00 p.m., November 8, at St. John's College. [Click here for details.](#)

▷ The Red Tape Challenge

St. John's College is taking on the "Red Tape Challenge." Read the incredible story of one small Anglican Church which is raising thousands of dollars for refugee sponsorship while also calling on the national government to change their stance toward accepting Syrian refugees. [Click here to read more.](#)

▷ St. Margaret's, Winnipeg

Tony Harwood-Jones, a long-time priest in the Diocese, will be performing a recital of 20th-century music with his daughter, Ariel, a professional soprano, on November 6 at 7:30 p.m. The repertoire will be works by Poulenc, Cooke, Strauss, and Heard.

▷ Grace-St. John's, Carman

The Anglican Lutheran Church in Carman celebrates their 50th anniversary on November 1. Congratulations, Grace-St. John's, on 50 years of worship and service!

▷ St. Benedict's Retreat and Conference Centre

There will be a Christmas craft sale from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on December 5. [View details, or book a table.](#)

▷ Faith Horizons

Representatives from parishes across the Diocese gathered in Winnipeg on October 16-17 for Faith Horizons, held biannually between diocesan synods. This year's speaker was Kevin Lamoureux, Professor of Education at the University of Winnipeg. Kevin, who is half Ukrainian and half Ojibwe, was raised for much of his life in a French-Metis family and knows first hand the challenges of intersecting Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures with faith. He spoke to the crowd on Friday evening and Saturday about deconstructing "otherness", whereby we learn to humanize those we categorize as "other" through the building of mutual respect and relationship. "Nothing we do in our faith communities is neutral," he told those in attendance. "Everything we do is bound up in a perspective."



WHAT A LITTLE BOY AND AN OLD WOMAN TAUGHT ME ABOUT GRACE *Nancy Phillips*

I've been thinking lately about second half of life issues. Being situated as I am between welcoming grandchildren and the increasing need to care for parents with declining health provides an interesting perspective. My introspection has been aided by a recent visit to my parents, both of whom experience dementia.

My father has become dependent upon his wife for so many daily activities. Sue always seems to find bright spots in what must be a daily struggle to manage. My mom lives alone in a senior's apartment and the daily routines at the residence provide a structure that helps her to cope. But, increasingly, she is becoming more agitated and anxious, believing people are stealing from her. The reality is that she is suffering many losses, not of things, but of her memory and her ability to engage in activities

she used to enjoy.

In contrast, my mother-in-law has a memory that's clear and sharp, yet her physical body is declining to the point where she is confined to a wheelchair. She can no longer feed herself or move around. Just sitting in her wheelchair seems, some days, to be an effort.

For those of us who watch the decline of others, these scenarios are a reminder of what may lay ahead for ourselves. My two brothers no longer visit my father, finding the visits too uncomfortable. And, indeed, they may wonder why they should engage in regular contact, since he no longer recognizes them as family.

Facing our parents' decline is a daunting task. Each time a name disappears from my memory or an item is mislaid, I begin to wonder, "Is this the beginning? Will it happen for me

as well?"

But perhaps these are the wrong questions. These dark moments in the progression of life may be times when we should be looking for evidence of a grace-filled and loving God. Rather than cursing the darkness, we can turn toward the grace of a loving and caring Creator.

I recently accompanied my mom to church. She is no longer able to read a prayer book or sing hymns, but she longs for opportunities to be present in her church. It brings her joy to hear the music, keep abreast of parish news, and feel part of her community. It must be frustrating for the people who reach out to her from church to engage with someone so forgetful. And yet, they are faithfully present. These are moments of grace for her.

I think about Sue's constant care for my dad: the indignity of managing his incontinence, the worry about his wandering, the daily round of dressing, and cooking, and feeding. In my recent visit, dad's quick smile and attempts to join the conversation, albeit with nonsensical words, reminded me that he is still the same person; still worthy of our love.

Recently, I took our grandson to the personal care home to visit his great gran. Two-year-old Caleb

▽ *Caleb chats with great-grandma.*



is a "regular" at the care home, enjoying every visit with G.G. Joan, lavishing her with hugs and kisses. During a lull in conversation, he likes to head down the hall and poke his head into various rooms. He talks to the residents with his limited vocabulary and gesture, approaching every person with an innocent, loving acceptance, no matter how gnarled or uncommunicative they appear to be.

Where we might see a depressing vision of loss and

decline, I believe Caleb sees through the physical exterior to the soul of the person, the part of us which remains constant and thrives on love. His simple gestures remind me of the importance of the gathered Christian community, where we experience God's grace through the caring of those God places around us. Caleb inspires me to search for those moments of grace. May you too be granted the vision to recognize God's grace in the dark places of your life. 



△ Nancy Phillips is a spiritual director and an occupational health nurse.

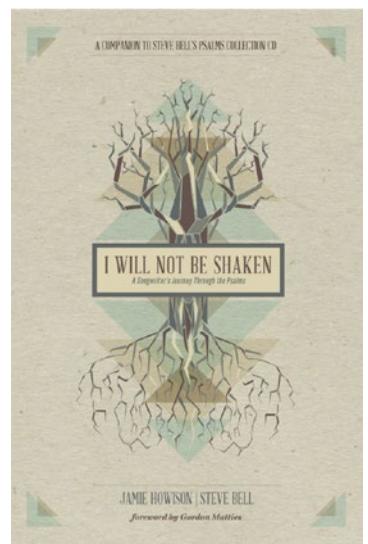
"There can be no reconciliation without recompense. The Greek term which lies behind our word for reconciliation means, simply, "to change". In Paul's writings, it is always God who is reconciling the world to God's self, and through that action we are made active in the process of reconciliation. We as non-Indigenous settlers on lands that are not our own are then called upon to change our relationship with the original peoples of this land. We must repent, recognize the damage we have done, and be prepared to compensate Indigenous peoples for the theft of land, children, and livelihoods." -- Chris Trott, Warden, St. John's College

BOOK REVIEW *Lissa Wray Beal*

I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN: LECTIO DIVINA IN SONG AND WORD

Throughout the centuries, the Psalter has engaged God's people in praise, prayer, and instruction. Steve Bell's new CD, *I Will Not Be Shaken*, invites one into the Psalter's profound imagery, dark questioning, and abandoned praise. Its 17 psalm-settings appear in the chronological order of their release over 25 years, taking the audience on a musical, biographical, and theological journey. A companion reader, *I Will Not Be Shaken: A Songwriter's Journey through the*

Psalms, provides further reflection on each psalm by Jamie Howison, and a short biographical note by Bell narrates each composition's life-setting. The joint project richly engages the Psalter. As always, Bell's work speaks honestly and to the heart; the written reflections thoughtfully invite one into deeper reflection on each psalm. This welcome project is a contemporary form of lectio divina, prayerfully reading scripture and life and drawing one into the old-but-ever-contemporary Psalter.



JOURNEY AROUND THE SACRED CIRCLE

Barbara Shoomski, Murray Still, Sylvia James, Tanis Kolisnyk, and Vincent Solomon

Sacred Circles are national gatherings of Indigenous Anglicans for prayer, worship, discernment, and decision-making. Hundreds of participants gather for these meetings every two to three years. This year's August Circle was held in Port Elgin, Ontario. All three Indigenous groups — First Nations, Metis, and Inuit — were present at the weeklong event, in addition to bishops from across the country. There were six Rupert's Landers who attended: Barbara Shoomski, Donald Phillips, Murray Still, Sylvia James, Tanis Kolisnyk, and Vincent Solomon.



Photos: Anglican Video

For the veteran members of the Sacred Circle, the event represented the culmination of the vision of the Elders some 25 years ago. In the years since the National Native Covenant, the national Church has adopted Canon 22, which incorporates the office of a National Indigenous Bishop, the Sacred Circle, and the Anglican Council of Indigenous People (ACIP). We saw Canon 22 in action at the Sacred Circle, as Bishop

Mark MacDonald acted for the first time as president of the gathering. Sacred Circle members elected new ACIP representatives, realizing the Canon will need revision to allow for greater representation from the largest province, the Province of Rupert's Land.

Another significant development at this Sacred Circle was the discussion around the formation of a fifth province for the Anglican Church of Canada, which will be non-geographical and include Indigenous Anglicans across the nation. The vision of the Elders was of a self-determination which includes Indigenous governance and greater incorporation of Indigenous culture and spirituality within the Church.

The Circle itself was an amazing time of prayer, discernment and fellowship. We were uplifted by hearing stories of answered prayer and the overcoming of the many walls that Indigenous Anglicans face within the Church. We have certainly come a long way, but the road to self-determination is still marred by obstacles that seek to keep our voice silent and our sacred ceremonies outside.

Barbara Shoomski, the only Rupert's Lander to all eight of the National Circles, led the pastoral care team this year and considers



herself privileged to be part of such a network of friends and colleagues from across the country. Tanis Kolisnyk, on the other hand, attended the National Circle for the first this year, and was able to make connections with other Metis clergy from across the country. Tanis, who recently completed her Master's thesis on Indigenous self-determination, attended with an excitement to learn from those who have gone ahead of her on the complex path of striving to honour both our Indigenous ways of knowing God and our Christian values and beliefs.

We cried together as we heard stories of struggle, and we reviewed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings, trying to prioritize the 94 Calls to Action. We affirmed each other, celebrated Indigenous identity around the Sacred Fire, and listened to the teachings offered by the Elders. We laughed a lot too, and enjoyed the company of our youth delegates.

Sylvia James, who has served on the Anglican

Council of Indigenous People for nine years, has stepped aside to make room for new leadership this year. She leaves the Council with mixed feelings, proud of the accomplishments she has

witnessed at the national level. She continues to sit on the Rupert's Land Indigenous Circle.

Participants left the gathering with a profound sense of God's presence and

guidance and of inclusion on this path to wholeness and reconciliation. We continue on this journey together, one in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God! 

Reconciliation is remaining in relationship and hearing one another's stories. Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians share common stories, but the stories are not well understood. When Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples come together to hear one another, there is education, and the education leads to the mending of relationships, or reconciliation. -- Murray Still, priest

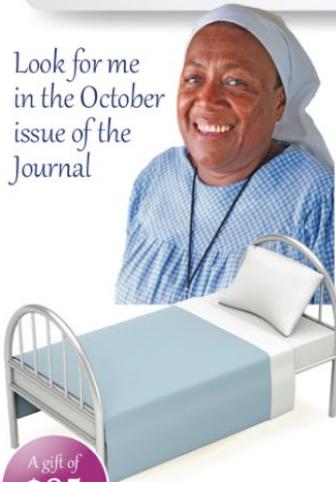


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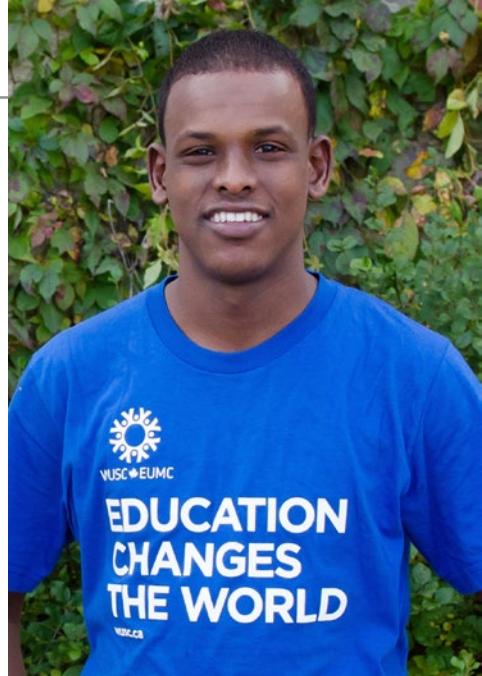
Hussein Sheikh doesn't look like the refugees you might expect to see in the news. Wearing a bright blue shirt with the words, "Education changes the world" splashed across the front, his grin is as contagious as his excitement for refugee sponsorship. In excellent English, he tells the story of how his life was changed four years ago when he was chosen by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC)'s Student Refugee Program to come study at the University of Manitoba.

Hussein explains that for his entire 24 years of life, he has been "a citizen of nowhere," born when his parents were on the run from Somalia to Kenya and spending 18 years in a refugee camp. "They call it an open prison," he says. With no birth certificate and no citizenship, he could neither travel freely in Kenya nor return to Somalia. There were no opportunities for employment, and his growing family has relied on the United Nations and other NGO supports for over two decades.

As a young child, Hus-

sein learned that education was his only chance to leave the camp and start a new life for himself and his family. In the camp of 400,000 people, there were only three high schools, operated by an NGO called Windle Trust. Only the primary school students with the highest grades were granted entrance. With the help of a solar lamp donated by Windle Trust, he studied late into the night, determined to be one of the lucky few given entry into one of the high schools.

His efforts paid off, and Hussein graduated at the top of his class, not only from primary school but from high school as well. He scored high marks on the national Kenyan exam, a standardized test given to refugee students as well as Kenyans. "It was the Swahili that really got me", Hussein laughs, looking back. He's referring to the requirement that students demonstrate a high proficiency in the Kenyan national language, even though they will never be allowed to become Kenyan citizens. But the young man was determined. "I knew that



if I didn't get into the WUSC program, my life is limited to the camp."

Hussein's high marks caused him to become one of a few students selected by Windle Trust to be referred to WUSC for their Student Refugee Program. He then underwent English proficiency and academic testing and an interview process before being placed on a final list to be sponsored by a Canadian university. Finally, when he was 21, Hussein was sponsored by the WUSC local committee at the University of Manitoba and began his degree in the frigid January of 2013.

When asked how it feels to be a permanent resident of Canada and no longer a refugee, Hussein is hesitant. "It feels good but my family is still refugees," he responds quietly. Hussein is

Reconciliation can happen when two parties are willing to accept and embrace the other without trying to change them, while at the same time being willing to address, confess, and forgive past wrongs. The power to reconcile is God-given and is always available to those who want it. -- Don Phillips, Bishop



△ *There are 19 Syrian refugee students currently in camps waiting to be sponsored by Canadian universities through WUSC. Photo: Yann Renoult.*

now the Coordinator of the Student Refugee Program at the U of M, working to bring more student refugees to campus. The group has even begun an endowment fund to ensure that students will be sponsored every year for long into the future.

For his part, Hussein has dreams of a Master's degree in public health because "in the camps, people die from preventable diseases." Having been on the receiving end of many NGOs and UN agencies over the years, his hope is to one day work for the UN himself, giving back to those who would benefit most from his education. In the meantime, he's focusing on finishing his degree in Environmental Science and paying back his student loan, because the University only covered his first year of tuition. After that, he will focus on saving enough money to sponsor his family to come to Canada as well.

In light of the dramatic increase in refugees worldwide due to the Syrian crisis,

the U of M WUSC committee is hoping to double its sponsorship for 2016, to four students each year instead of just two. St. John's College, at the U of M, is raising money to cover two years of room and board for two Syrian students coming through the program. "When I see people fundraising, I

really feel hope," Hussein explains, "It makes me feel like people care."

St. John's has a target goal of \$48,000. To make a donation and be part of changing a Syrian student's life, call their development office at 204-474-9350 or email jackie.markstrom@umanitoba.ca. 

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A Great Manitoban and an Even Greater Friend: **KERR TWADDLE, 1932-2015**

Remembered by Tony Harwood-Jones, a priest and friend of Kerr

I first met Kerr when he and his wife were looking for a church near their home and chose St. Chad's, of which, at the time, I was Rector. I had no idea that he was one of the most respected legal minds in Canada, and Kerr liked it that way, for he and Susan wanted to be "at home" in their church family, not on display.

Kerr did not immediately rush into parish leadership. He and Sue attended worship and made friends. But slowly, I would find Kerr helping something happen that he believed in: for example, a food bank. The parish began collecting for Winnipeg Harvest, and Kerr promoted a "product of the week" system where everyone was encouraged to bring one thing: peanut butter one week, macaroni the next, tinned tuna the next, and so forth; items chosen on the advice of the food bank.

Kerr was a remarkable judge... but for me, he was just a good friend.

Another Kerr initiative was the "Two-Bird Dinner." These events did not necessarily have birds on the menu; rather, they "killed two birds with one stone," promoting parish fellowship and

raising funds for mission and service. Someone would prepare a feast and create in their home the atmosphere of a good restaurant. Guests — fellow parishioners — would then contribute an amount equivalent to what they would have spent had they gone to an actual eatery. The dinners and their two "birds" (fellowship and funds) became a mainstay of parish life for several years.

Such was Kerr's creativity.

Meanwhile, he and Sue evolved, over time, from being my parishioners to being our dear friends. After I become Rector of another parish, we stayed in touch, enjoying the occasional social evening, and, in these latter years, many a Sunday brunch after our respective church services. Because my wife, Heather, is a lawyer, I learned through her of Kerr's accomplishments and legal decisions, but these were never the focus of our friendship. We would talk about music (Kerr was founder of the Manitoba Opera Association), about our respective families, and about our various adventures. Sometimes Kerr and I would "do lunch," when he would ask penetrating questions about theology, or seek my opinion about some ethical controver-



sy convulsing the Canadian Church.

Kerr was a great lawyer, a remarkable judge, a patron of the arts, and a penetrating intellect; but for me, he was just a good friend, a devoted husband and father, and a shorter-than-average guy with a wicked sense of humour and a unique, shuffling way of walking that allowed me to recognize him from afar.

Kerr died on March 30, 2015, after a few years of declining ability. For the funeral, his church family — St. Chad's — partnered with Broadway First Baptist (his daughter Kathy's church), thinking that they might need a big church and a big reception. Sure enough, the place was packed, both with members of St. Chad's and an enormous number of lawyers, judges, musicians... and friends, like Heather and me.

He is missed. 

THE GOSPEL FOR TURTLE ISLAND

Mark MacDonald

Central to the proposal to develop a truly indigenous American Christianity – the Gospel of and for Turtle Island – is the re-conception of the communion of God and humanity as essentially a communion between God and Creation. This communion is conceived as a dynamic ecological relationship between all that is and the Creator. Humanity plays an important but entirely dependent role – dependent upon the integrity of the web of life itself, with Spirit at the center. It is critical to note that this point of view contradicts many of the central premises of the missionary efforts of the Western churches, especially among the Indigenous peoples of North America and around the world.

The West's view of creation was and is shaped by materialistic scientism and economically conceived individualism. These forces eclipsed the West's own

Biblical and theological roots long ago. The cosmology of the West, still prevalent in many contemporary "mission" efforts, was an unchallenged partner of the colonizing churches. It is significant that after 500 years of systematic proselytism, the rejection of this aspect of the West is one of the defining characteristics of Indigenous spiritual identity and renewal. This is true even among Aboriginal Christians.

The communal articulation of faith by Indigenous peoples is an inspiration and challenge, especially for communities of faith and spirituality that are concerned about the environment. We are witnessing the emergence of a spiritual community that conceives of itself theologically and ecologically. This points to a communal spiritual consciousness different from the churches that operate in a Western cultural framework.

We may look for a spirituality inspired, not only by the past and its traditions, but also by the future, a hope-filled imagining of what a renewed family of Creation might be.

The living relationship between humanity and Creation is a defining element of Aboriginal identity and the source of its on-going conflict with the West. The Gwich'in, for example, have had a hard time making the larger society, even environmentalists, understand their living relationship to the ecological community they live in. They are saying, quite clearly, that they do not exist in any meaningful way apart from the ecological community that gave their nation its birth and sustains it to this day.

As seen in this example, Western development can often pose human rights issues for the Aboriginal nations. Development can involve the destruction of an ecological community, not just a restructuring of economic resources. To Aboriginal communities, God or Spirit created this ecological community as an irreducible moral absolute for humanity. Without this community, we don't exist in any way that can be construed as human. Oxygen may be processed in our lungs, blood may be pumped in our hearts, but we will be something quite a

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Communication is an ongoing process. For people living in a world where they are not so connected, attending a round dance or something like that might be helpful. Reconciliation between treaty peoples is a serious matter; studying and asking questions to the people who were in residential school has helped me.
 - Nora Fraser, West Broadway Community Ministry volunteer



Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, surrounded by elders and others, at the 2015 Sacred Circle

bit less than human.

Over time, it has become clear that many people in the West cannot understand the living relationship that is involved in the ecological community of life. In Aboriginal societies, this relationship is often spoken of in family terms, underlining its importance and intimacy. In contrast, though the environment may have a high value to the West, it appears that humanity can exist apart from it or that science can create a substitute for it. The destruction of the environment, however tragic, is not the end of human life, in this view. The relationship between humanity and eco-system is a mechanical or chemical exchange, and not a reciprocal one.

There is also a sharp difference between Western notions of ownership, now impacting every area of life around the globe, and those of Indigenous value systems.

For the West, everything can be bought and sold – everything. In traditional Indigenous thought, such conceptions are often treated as blasphemous, absurd, and destructive. That which is possessed by the individual is held in trust for the larger community of life. If all share, there will be enough for all and more; if we hoard, there will never be enough for anyone. There are things that it is simply not conceivable to buy or sell: land, water, air, and life itself.

In the Western cultural framework, the consequences of environmental demise have been measured in human-centered terms, mostly economic. This is a sharp contrast to the theological, moral, and eschatological terms that are the basis of Aboriginal cosmology. This disagreement grows in significance as the environmental crisis reaches greater levels of danger and urgency.

Aboriginal Christians have discovered an unexpected pre-Western artery of Theo-ecological understanding in the primal elements of Christian faith. The developments in the Anglican Church of Canada are part of a larger pattern that can be seen in Indigenous groups

around the world. We are witnessing an unprecedented cultural renewal and renaissance despite, or perhaps, speaking in a prophetic mode, because of its context in a threatened universal ecology. This pattern has both moral and ecological significance to all, but especially to people of faith. Aboriginal peoples provide a unique and essential prophetic challenge in our world today. Attention to their situation and struggle, at all levels, should be one of our highest priorities. 

A longer version of this article originally appeared in the September 2007 newsletter for the Forum on Religion and Ecology. It is reprinted with permission.



△ Mark MacDonald is the National Indigenous Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada.