

EXTRACTS FROM ON-LINE NEWS LETTER

March 2022

COMMUNITY LIFE



*Our Journey of Healing and
Reconciliation ...*

Learning, Listening and Actioning

Welcome to the new Truth and Reconciliation page of the OPC Newsletter. Further to my last communique, this page replaces the T&R Bulletin. We want to use this section of the newsletter to share information, updates and to feature Truth & Reconciliation activities throughout our province.

We will still be relying on the members to send in their T&R events with photos, if possible, recommendations of favourite books and ideas for future articles. Most of all, we want to continue to keep those pathways for listening and learning open. Understanding our past, together we can do better in future.

Mary Capobianco, Truth and Reconciliation Working Group Chair

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was recently asked for information about land acknowledgements. The questions mainly pertained to the why and how. Therefore, I thought it might be helpful if I shared some of these questions with you in case other councils have similar concerns.

What is land acknowledgement?

Land acknowledgements are an honest and historically accurate way to recognize the traditional First Nations, **Métis**, and Inuit territories of a place. All land acknowledgements have one goal and that is to recognize and respect the Indigenous Peoples as the original custodians of the land and territory and to commemorate their kinship to the land.

Why are land acknowledgements necessary?

Firstly, it might be helpful to recognize that land acknowledgements are not new and have been used at CWL meetings, conventions, and gatherings for the past several years. They were inspired by the *94 Calls-to-Action* published in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report in 2015. They are a necessary first step toward honoring the original occupants of a place.

What is the League's position on land acknowledgements?

Another question that has often been asked, what is National's policy on this matter. In the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, Page 81 Meetings General, it states the following:

Councils at all levels should acknowledge territory before all meetings, conventions, and gatherings. i.e., "We acknowledge that we are on treaty (#) territory and the traditional homeland of the (insert 22 first nation) and the Métis nation, where applicable".

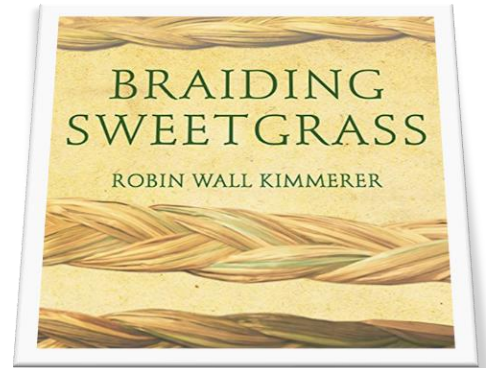
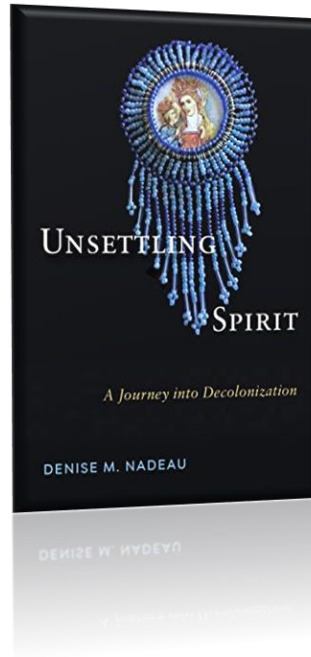
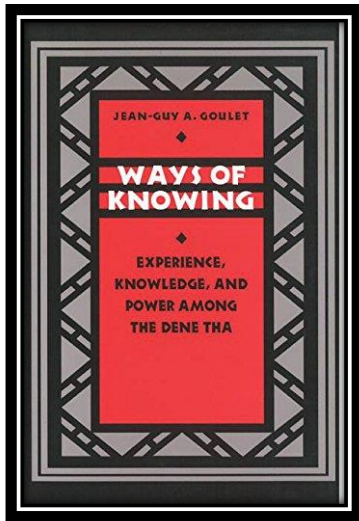
Therefore, this is a practice that should be followed at the start of all meetings.

What version of land acknowledgement should we use?

Over the past few years, I have seen several versions of the land acknowledgement. Some are very specific to their territory and some more general depending on the attendees, especially now that we are hosting more far-reaching audiences via ZOOM etc. There are many examples available online. Certainly, if one example speaks to you more than another, then feel free to adapt it for your group. Bottom-line, land acknowledgements are a starting place for change in how the land is seen and talked about.

And finally, we should all keep in mind that the ancestral traditional lands of the Indigenous Peoples' is a common home to everyone by virtue of the gracious gift of God Our Creator.

Book Recommendations



Please let us know if you have any book recommendations you would like to share.

Prayer for Tolerance, Forgiveness, Reconciliation

O God, Creator and Father of all,
with humility we your children acknowledge the relationship of all living things.
For this we thank you, we praise you and we worship you.

We call on you, Great Mystery, the Word made Flesh
– our teacher, prophet, and brother –
to open our hearts to all our brothers and sisters,
and with them to grow in the wisdom, honesty, courage and
respectfulness shown in The Sacred Teachings.

Give us the vision and honesty to recognize
that we are all brothers and sisters of one human family,
created and sustained by the One Creator.
As we deal with many challenges, may we never give way to fear and anger,
which can be the source of division and threat amongst peoples.

We look to how God always gives to us,
as a remedy for sins of prejudice and intolerance.
We see in God the Creator of all things,
One who always provides and is generous
– even given the abuses we have heaped on one another and on the earth.

We see in the Son, Jesus Christ
- the innocent Victim who pours His life blood out from the Cross for all peoples.

We see how the Holy Spirit is God's gift,
alive in our world
– inspiring vision and hope that we can have
the same mind and heart of God!

May Your Spirit bless the souls
who died at the Kamloops residential school
and all souls who died at residential schools.

May this same Spirit also bring blessing and healing
to all families and communities affected in any way by the schools.

O Creator, show us the way to healing,
forgiveness and reconciliation

.....Submitted by Mary Capobianco, OPC Community Life Chairperson



April 2022

COMMUNITY LIFE



*Our Journey of Healing and
Reconciliation ...*

Learning, Listening and Actioning

Welcome back to the Truth and Reconciliation corner of the OPC Newsletter. We received a lot of positive feedback from last month's submission on Land Acknowledgements. Several councils said that they are now including land acknowledgements as part of their meetings. A couple of suggestions were made stressing the importance of creating your own land acknowledgement. Doing your own research to gain a better understanding of the basic elements can be a very helpful exercise. In this way, the words are more meaningful and may have more impact. It was even suggested that this work could be done by a sub-committee. This would certainly help people to learn more and embrace the ideals of Truth and Reconciliation.

Recently, Diversity Thunder Bay hosted a virtual presentation by Jody Wilson-Raybould. Ms. Wilson-Raybould **is** a former MP, BC provincial Crown prosecutor, and regional chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations. In her presentation she shared her views on Indigenous rights and reconciliation and covered many aspects including the question we all struggle with – "What should I be doing to advance reconciliation?". You can view her presentation here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Idev7T8EQbM&t=1s>.

The OPC is blessed to have a section dedicated to Truth & Reconciliation resources on its website, LINKS, SPIRITUAL RESOURCES and UPCOMING EVENTS. I hope you will take some time to browse through the many sites listed. Videos, prayer services, learning guides and more. Learn about the work that other dioceses and provinces have been doing on Truth and Reconciliation. These sites are especially helpful if you are looking for ideas and inspiration for one of your council meetings or just looking to further your own personal growth.

INDIGENOUS WATER PROTECTORS: IN TRIBUTE TO WORLD WATER DAY

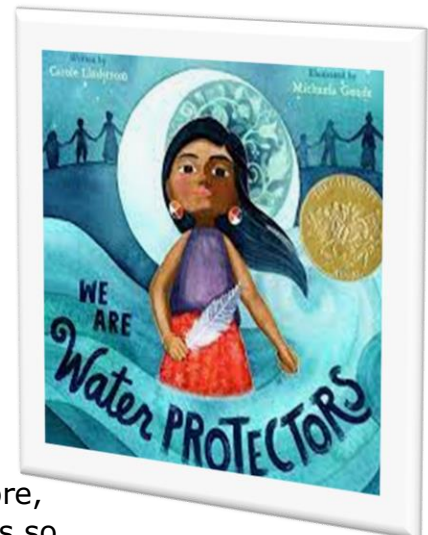
Written by Colleen Martin



World Water Day has been held every year since 1993 on March 22nd. World Water Day celebrates the importance of accessible fresh water and brings awareness to the 2 billion people living on this planet without access to safe water.

This year's event provided an opportunity to hear from three Indigenous Water Protectors Grandmother Mona Polacca (Hopi/Havasupai/Tewa) Chair of the International Council of the 13 Indigenous Grandmothers; Sharon Day (Ojibwe) artist, playwright, water walker and activist; and Elder Kathy Sanchez, Wan Povi (Po-Who-Geh-Owingeh), Tewa Women United call to action to end violence against women and girls and our Earth Mother.

It was interesting to listen to the descriptions of water from these very wise women. All emphasized that we all come from water. When we are born, water usually comes forth first and then our earthly vessel. This fact led to a discussion of the cycle of water which is necessary for all living things to survive. The flow of water starts from the highest of mountain peaks and flows down to the rivers and streams which flow into lakes and ultimately into the ocean. Evaporation raises the water to the air once again until it falls in the form of rain or other precipitation. Therefore, understanding watersheds and the protection of waterways is so important.



In addition to being sustenance, water is known to make us clean. Spiritual water cleans our soul and makes our way clear again. As we believe, God is in all of creation including water. These women talked about the importance of honouring Creator through the honouring of water. It is our fingertips, our fingerprints that hold our life experience, our personal experience and that when we see water, we should go to it and dip our

fingers into it, put some on our face, hug ourselves, thank God for bringing us water and through water life. Water is a blessing.

Finally, if you want to collect water to drink, for nourishment, from running water, always place the mouth of the vessel downstream to capture the flow of the water, the energy of

the water. If one places the vessel upstream, as you dip, it will be fighting the flow of the water and the energy it contains

Bessing for the water – Starhawk

Praise and gratitude to the sacred waters of the world, to the oceans, the mother of life, the womb of the plant life that freshens our air with oxygen, the brew that is

stirred by sunlight and the moon's gravity into the great currents and tides that move across the earth, circulating the means of life, bringing warmth to the frozen Arctic and cool, fresh winds to the tropics. We give thanks for the blessed clouds and the rain that brings the gift of life to the land, that eases the thirst of roots, that grows the trees and sustains life even in the dry desert. We give thanks for the springs that bring life-giving water up from the ground, for the small streams and creeks, for the mighty rivers. We praise the beauty of water, the sparkle of the sunlight on a blue lake, the shimmer of moonlight on the ocean's waves, the white

spray of the waterfall. We take delight in the sweet singing of dancing stream and the roar of the river in the flood.

We ask help to know within ourselves all the powers of water: wear down and to build up, to ebb and to flow, to nurture and destroy, to merge and to separate. We know that water has great powers of healing and cleansing, and we also know that water is vulnerable to contamination and pollution. We ask for in our work as healers, in our efforts to ensure that the waters the world run clean and run free, that all the earth's children have the water they need to sustain abundance of life. Blessed be water



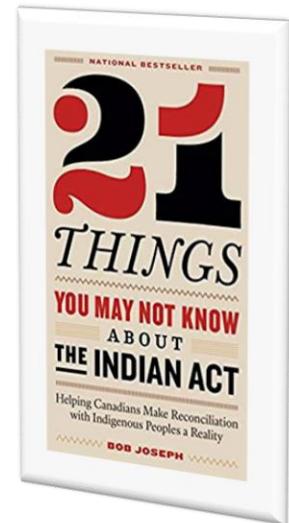
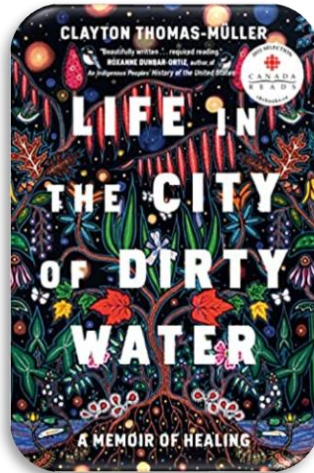
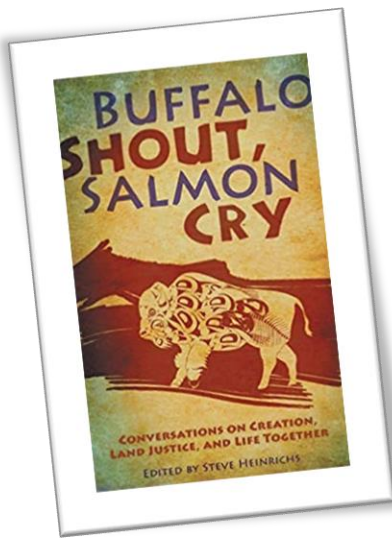
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Book Recommendations



Please let us know if you have any book recommendations you would like to share.

Great Spirit Prayer

Oh, Great Spirit,

Whose voice I hear in the winds
and whose breath gives life to all the world.
Hear me! I need your strength and wisdom.
Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes
ever hold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.
Make me wise so that I may understand
the things you have taught my people.
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden
in every leaf and rock.

Help me remain calm and strong in the
face of all that comes towards me.
Help me find compassion without
empathy overwhelming me.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,
but to fight my greatest enemy: myself.
Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes.
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit may come to you without shame.

- *Translated by Lakota Sioux Chief Yellow Lark in 1887
from Jesuitresource.org.*

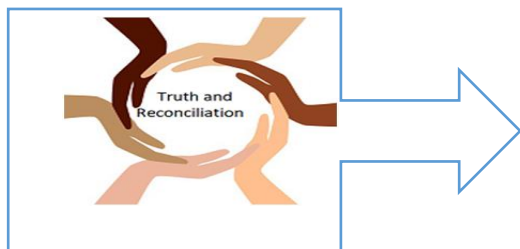
Please feel free to share any other sites, prayers, or upcoming events
with us so that we can all continue our journey together.

.....Mary Capobianco, Truth, and Reconciliation Working Group



May 2022

COMMUNITY LIFE



*Our Journey of Healing and
Reconciliation ...*

Learning, Listening and Actioning

Welcome to the Truth and Reconciliation corner of the OPC Newsletter.
Much has happened since our last newsletter.

Most newsworthy, Pope Francis received three Indigenous delegations from Inuit, First Nations and Métis Canadians in Rome March 28th to April 1st. During that week, Pope Francis held private meetings with the Indigenous leaders and survivors from each group. The groups asked for a papal apology as well as an invitation urging Pope Francis to travel to their country.

As you're aware, last year, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops apologized for its role in the residential school system and expressed "profound remorse" but the Indigenous leaders have long asked for an apology from the Pope.

On April 1st, Pope Francis issued a historic apology to the Canadian Indigenous leaders for the Catholic Church's role in residential schools. This apology was seen as a steppingstone in the journey to Reconciliation and Healing.

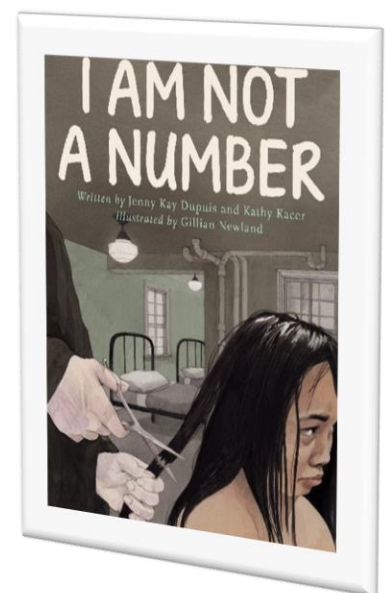
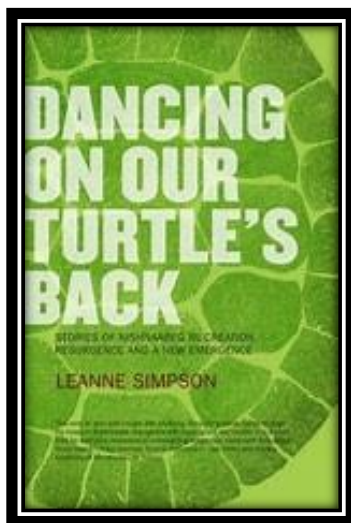
On April 21st, members of the Manitoba Métis Federation also met with Pope Francis. After the meeting, the Red River Métis delegation spoke about "the importance of hope and revitalization". It was also reported that Pope Francis gave rosaries to everyone, as well as a physical olive branch to the delegation as a whole.

Later in April, it was also announced that Pope Francis plans on visiting Canada in the summer month of July marking the feast of St. Anne. Although no official itinerary has been put forward, it's been reported that some details of the papal pilgrimage have started taking shape. Neil MacCarthy, CCCB Communications lead told *The Catholic Register*, "Given the Holy Father's advanced age (85) and desire for simple, modest visits, we can expect the Canadian visit to reflect this reality in both the length of the pilgrimage as well as the geography of such a visit, given the size of Canada."

Over the past month, it's also been very encouraging to hear about some of the ways that members are working through their own journeys. For example, some members have formed a book club that meets virtually once a week. They are currently working through the book, *The Inconvenient Indian*. Other members are signing up for courses, attending presentations, workshops, and days of reflection. All taking one important step in the journey towards reconciliation and healing.

A member of the Ontario Provincial Council recently attended **APEX Speaker Series: Reconciliation – Symbolic Gesture or Systemic Change?** hosted by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. The guest speaker was Bob Watt, Nuclear Waste Management Organization. Bob Watts is a much sought-after expert in Indigenous policy, negotiations, training, and conflict resolution. He is the former Interim Executive Director of the Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined and made recommendations regarding the Indian Residential School era and its legacy. Bob led the process, supported by an excellent team and many organizations from across Canada and internationally, to create the policies and processes in order to firmly establish the Commission. With permission, we are sharing Bob's PowerPoint presentation which has an excellent summary of Indigenous history in Canada. Please be sure to check out the presentation which is posted on our website at www.cwl.on.ca. The link can be found both in the NEWS section as well as Truth and Reconciliation section under the LINKS tab.

Book Recommendations



Please let us know if you have any book recommendations you would like to share.

PRAYERS FOR HEALING

Prayer for Families

O Great Creator, we give praise and thanks to you
for our lives and for our families.
Your gift to us of human community is one of your greatest blessings.
We thank you for our Elders – our grandfathers and grandmothers –
whose patience and wisdom guide our lives.

We thank you for our fathers and mothers,
who by giving their love to each other,
bring us into the world, nurturing and leading us.
We thank you for our brothers and sisters,
with whom we come to know what sharing and caring really means.

We thank you for young people,
whose hope for a better world, energizes and inspires us.
We thank you for the little ones – the children –
whose innocence and promise bring gladness and joy.

O Creator may our families always be that blessed
and first community that we honour and cherish.

As you continue to make all things new,
may we hear your invitation – in all creation –
to receive and share all that is good and true with each other.

O God, we also face many challenges and crises in our lives and world.
May our families continue to be the first and constant community
that shows us how to live intimately and respectfully
with all people and all creation.

May all Glory, Praise, Honour and Thanksgiving be shown to you,
Father of all mercies and compassion,
Jesus Saviour and Guardian of our souls,
and Spirit of peace and communion.

Amen.

*2016 National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples,
Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council and Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*

Please feel free to share any other sites, prayers, or upcoming events with
us so that we can all continue our journey together.

.....Mary Capobianco, Truth, and Reconciliation Working Group



June 2022

COMMUNITY LIFE



*Our Journey of Healing and
Reconciliation ...*

Learning, Listening and Actioning

Welcome back to the Truth and Reconciliation corner of the OPC Newsletter.

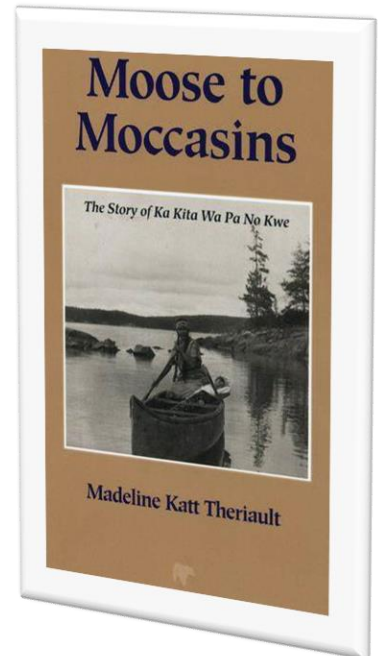
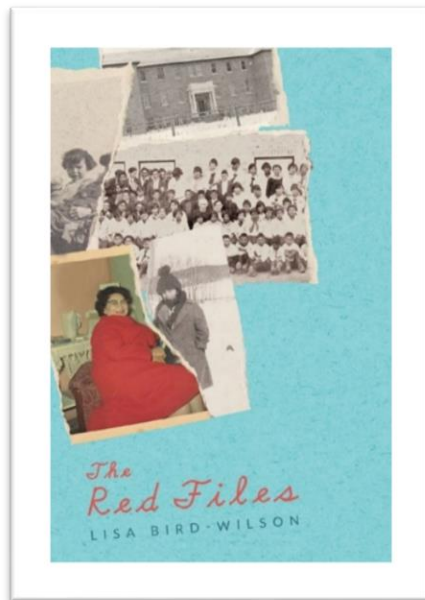
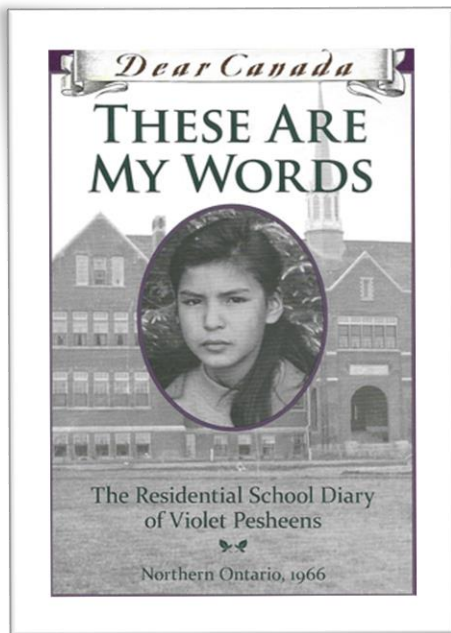
June 1st, 2022 is the start of National Indigenous History Month. This is the time to honour the history, heritage and diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada and recognize the strength and resilience of these communities. It is a time of sharing and celebration for Indigenous peoples and the month culminates with National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21st, which was created in 1996. This day was selected in conjunction with Indigenous communities and takes place around the summer solstice, which is the longest day of the year. The day itself is usually celebrated with **musical and dance performances, firework- displays, free concerts, and parades**. You can find out more about June 21st National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada at <https://rcaanc-cimnac.gc.ca>.



The Vatican confirmed that Pope Francis will make a pastoral visit to Quebec City, Iqaluit, and Edmonton between July 24th and 29th. During this trip, Pope Francis is expected to personally apologize for the Catholic Church's role in running residential schools where many indigenous children were abused. Specific programming and events will be confirmed approximately six weeks prior to the Holy Father's arrival.

You can visit www.papalvisit.ca or www.visitepapale.ca for more information and to stay updated on the latest developments. Please continue to pray for the health of Pope Francis and for all those engaged in the ongoing healing and reconciliation journey.

Book Recommendations



Please let us know if you have any book recommendations
you would like to share.



PRAYERS FOR HEALING

Prayer for Truth and Reconciliation

O God,
Great Spirit and Creator,
We praise you for your gifts that surround us –
For the gift of the land that gives us food, shelter and water;
For the gift of the sun that gives warmth and light to all that grows;
For the gifts of the moon and stars which you have arranged for your
glory;
For the gifts of language and culture, through which your peoples praise
you,
and share the most deeply held values you have engraved on their
hearts.

Come upon us, O Divine Healer and open our eyes –
To the injustices brought against our Indigenous Peoples, their language
and culture
in Canada's Indian Residential Schools.
Give us repentant hearts –
That ache with sorrow for their violence against First Nations families and
their children.
Give us determined hearts –
That refuse to stand by when the dignity of our Indigenous brothers and
sisters is trampled. Give us healing hearts –
That beat with the drum of Jesus' Gospel, to defend and honour our
Indigenous neighbour, their language and way of life.
Give us flaming hearts –
That burn with love for you, who come to us
... in every human face
... in every language and culture
... in every gift of creation.

Make us stewards –
Of one another's dignity,
Of one another's safety,
Of one another's lands,
Of one another's right to a cultural identity:
... as unique peoples,
... as gifts to the human family,
... as your beloved children.

Prayer for Truth and Reconciliation

Pour out your healing love on all who suffered in Canada's Indian Residential Schools;

- on bodies, minds and spirits wounded through abuse,
- on hearts wounded through separation and disdain,
- on families wounded through trauma and anguish

that still torment over the course of generations.

Jesus – gentle Saviour, forgiving and humble of heart,

Good Shepherd, Divine Healer,

Great Lover of all peoples:

We offer you our sorrow

For the wrongs committed

Against our First Nations' children in Canada's Indian Residential Schools.

We offer you our desire

To walk with our First Nations brothers and sisters;

To journey with them

On the path of truth, healing and reconciliation,

As we share this earthly pilgrimage to our heavenly homeland,

Where every tear will be wiped away

And every sorrow will be turned to joy.

Give us one heart and one mind

To walk forward together along this path

In the love and strength of your Spirit,

In truth, reconciliation, and peace.

We make this prayer

In the power of your Most Holy Name.

Amen

*(Prayer of repentance and solidarity with Indigenous Peoples following
Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission)*

Please feel free to share any other sites, prayers, or upcoming events with us so that we can all continue our journey together.

.....Mary Capobianco, Truth, and Reconciliation Working Group



Retreat with Indigenous Elders

Submitted by Lynn Lavictoire, Ottawa Diocesan Past President

In late April-early May I was invited to participate in an Indigenous Retreat with Elders. This invitation was part of an ongoing partnership with Saint Paul University in Ottawa and the Kateri Native Ministry of Ottawa. The retreat was held in person at the Galilee Centre in Arnprior, Ontario. I was joined by 30 other students studying in the field of theology.

The retreat began with dinner, a Land Acknowledgment, a blessing, and a teaching by Elder Tom Dearhouse. He explained that their teachings are repetitious so there was no need to write notes. Although there was a slight moment of panic in me, I respected their oral traditions. Tom was right – listening is key to learning.

We sat in a circle that first night and the teaching began with Tom explaining the Sacred Fire and how it would be kept alive and watched over throughout our retreat. I asked him how the fire could be kept alive while we were inside. Tom answered, "I have my ways, and you'll see".

The Sacred Fire

Each morning began with a Sunrise Ceremony at the Sacred Fire. We sat in a circle and Chief John Rice led us in teaching. We were also in the presence of the Executive Director Donna Naughton. After breakfast, our days began with the Traditional Opening by Feather Carriers John Rice and Erin Dixon. John led us in the Feather Carrier Teaching and an Elder's teaching. The days ended with reflection.



John led us in sharing circles and discussed topics of their traditions, culture, ceremonies, food, language and much more. He held open sharing discussion. A space was created for us to get to know one another which contributed to healing and reconciliation. John also had a good sense of humour.

I would like to share a few things I experienced that have touched me deeply in this retreat where the Elders wisdom and spirituality stirred an awakening of longing.

Remember the Sacred Fire? It was brought in the retreat house by lighting a candle with the Sacred Fire which was placed on the floor of the meeting room among items that were brought in reminding us of what is part of Indigenous culture and traditions. Each one of us was asked to spend an hour throughout the night with the Sacred Fire. Yes, I spent an hour in reflection and prayer.



The Seven Stages of Life

One of the teachings that caught the attention of the students was the Seven Stages of Life:

1. The Good Life begins at birth where one is guided by their parents and learn through observation.
2. The Fast Life prepares one for vision quest and learning about each person's roles and responsibilities.
3. Wandering/Wondering Life is a period of questioning, challenges, and decisions.
4. The Stages of Truth guides one to their true gifts, strengths, and value system.
5. Planting/Planning is a time to decide what to do with the knowledge gained and how to accomplish one's goals.
6. Doing is practicing and implementing what one has learned and following the creator's plan.
7. An Elder teaches and passes on knowledge so that the spiritual side grows stronger.

Also notice that on the attached picture the edges don't meet. Those who go off the edge is because they never made it. Life took them down that path and there is no way back. The square at the top is the spiritual life.

One of the ceremonies we did included rocks. Each person would take a rock from a pile of rocks, hold it close to their chest, walk around the circle, and remember someone whose life was cut short, by suicide, or had been forgotten, not remembered, etc. On the floor were several layers of different coloured fabric where the rock was then placed. When I took my rock, I remembered my older brother, Paul, who never had a chance to live. My mother miscarried at six months. Now that my parents are gone, I'm not convinced anyone remembers Paul. I carried with me and prayed for all lives lost due to miscarriages.



These rocks were collected, and John led us in the ceremony of wrapping the rocks with the different coloured fabrics. Each colour was representative of a person's time in life. I was with the grandmothers' group and tied up the rocks with the fabric. Once all had a chance to participate, John tied up the rocks with two sticks. We then passed the bundle of rocks to each other forming a "moving" line all the way down to the river where our bundle of prayers was offered

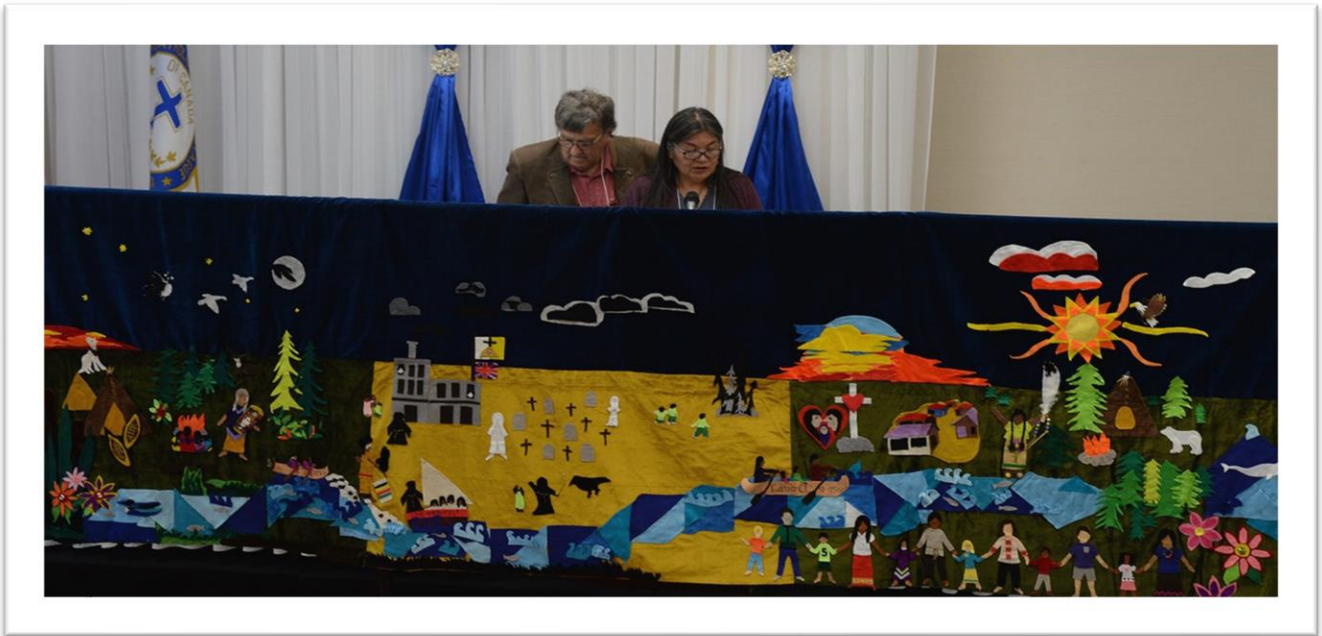
and placed in the water.

Overall, the retreat was an opportunity to **Listen and Learn** and journey with Indigenous Elders who were willing to teach us what they've lost and are trying to reclaim. There is also the wisdom of the oral traditions, the deep spirituality and strong connection with nature and the land. This experience has led me to believe that there is room for all of us to live united in this country and to bring about healing and reconciliation for a better vision of Canada.



Elder John Rice

THE RECONCILIATION TAPESTRY



On Saturday, April 23rd, 2022, at the Sault Ste. Marie Annual Diocesan Convention in North Bay, Ontario, Jackie Hookimaw-Witt and Norbert Witt were invited to share their presentation on the Reconciliation Tapestry to 115 delegates.

Jackie and Norbert are educators of the indigenous story, who are also Catholic, and have created a beautiful tapestry together with children from Attawapiskat with the hope of cultivating healing and dialogue between cultures. Jackie Hookimaw Witt, PhD, is from Attawapiskat, Ontario and is an educator, photographer, human rights activist, and chef-de-cuisine. Norbert Witt, PhD, is from Bavaria Germany and is a graphic artist, educator, and a retired university professor.



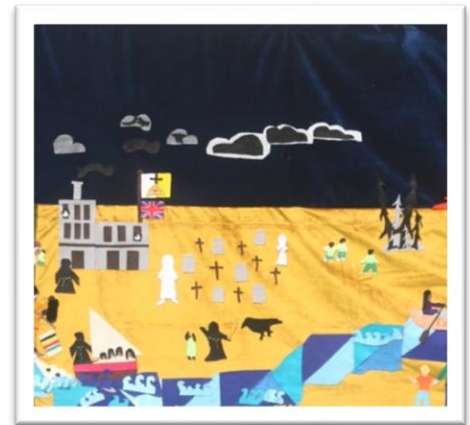
The tapestry was also developed as a teaching tool for younger children, dealing with the trauma of residential school, with the children being active in putting the story together, gluing felt figures and images they cut out on the textile banner.

The tapestry depicts three time periods: Before Contact, Stolen Children and A New Beginning.

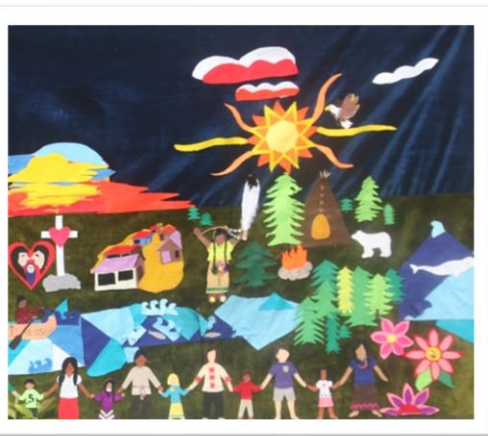


Before Contact: This part of the tapestry shows how, in the Cree sense, the world was order. People lived in harmony with creation, knowing that they were only one part of nature, not her rulers. Like in every human community, people loved their children, and they treated their environment in a way that the land can still provide for future.

Dark Times for the Mushkegowuk, where children were separated from their parents and people, and were brought to a Residential School by a Hudson's Bay Company ship. They were not allowed to speak their own language anymore, brothers and sisters were separated, and parents could not visit their children.



Stolen Children: The dark sky shows that night has fallen. This represents the



A New Beginning: The third part of the tapestry represents present and future, the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation is understood as an initiative by the victims, sharing their sorrows with those who oppressed them in the hope of starting a conversation, promoting compassion and understanding. The people are still *holding on* to the Cross and the Love it teaches, but they have not lost their spiritual traditions, and the symbols used (e.g. feather and drum) are similarly teaching the Love of God. The goal is living together and respecting each other. And that means that we (still outsiders) understand the people's traditional spirituality

as something that does not oppose our worldview or religion but is rather just a different expression of the same values we uphold.

Jackie and Norbert will continue to bring their presentation to CWL councils throughout the diocese of Sault Ste. Marie and invite dialogue to foster understanding and reconciliation with whomever they encounter.

.....Submitted by Lisa Henry, President, Sault Ste. Marie Diocesan Council

Photo Credit: Rob Ouellette – Sault Ste. Marie Diocesan Convention Photographer

