

A Time for Hope

Worship Resources on the
TRC Calls to Action
and

The
United Nations
Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples



The Presbyterian
Church in Canada



Appreciation

This resource had many contributors whose work and words shine a light on pathways to reconciliation.

The following people generously shared reflections and prayers for this resource:

Laura Alary	Vivian Ketchum	Linda Patton-Cowie
Stephen Allen	Hans Kouwenberg	David Phillips
Yvonne Bearbull	Binesikwe (Thunderbird	Keith Randall
Jacques Dalton	Woman) Cathy Lindsay	Lori Ransom
Stewart Folster	Katharine Masterton	Ian Ross-McDonald
Whitney Hanna	Margaret Mullin	Kenneth Stright

Editor: Anne Saunders

Design: Tim Faller Design Inc.

© The Presbyterian Church in Canada, May 2016
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7

Permission is granted for congregations and individuals to photocopy material in this resource for educational purposes. They are asked to credit the source. All rights reserved.

"Sunday School Version of Shannen and the Attawapiskat School" is copyrighted by its author Laura Alary.

Healing and Reconciliation Sunday is May 22, 2016

National Aboriginal Day Sunday is June 19, 2016



Contents



Information for Worship Leaders	4
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action	
Worship Service	6
Sermon	8
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and Prayers	10
The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	
Worship Service	17
Sermon and Introduction to the UN Declaration	21
Stories about Indigenous People and the UN Declaration	23
Children's Stories	
Shannen and the Attawapiskat School	32
Sunday School Version of Shannen and the Attawapiskat School	35
Two Hockey Players	38
About the Contributors	40



Information for Worship Leaders

The Healing and Reconciliation program was established by General Assembly in 2006. The program had several foci including working with Presbyterians to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Since then, over 150 Presbyterians have received training as local leaders. \$258,786 in seed grants have supported 69 initiatives across Canada. Presbyterians were at every National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The TRC issued 94 Calls to Action that provide concrete suggestions for churches, governments and Canadians to continue the journey to reconciliation. Call to Action 48 states that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a framework for reconciliation. The UN Declaration does not create new rights but lifts up the rights of Indigenous peoples so that all people have the benefit of this knowledge.

In worship we glorify God who has given us the ministry of reconciliation. This resource assists worship leaders to lift up in prayer the people who are living with the legacy of residential schools and those living out the spirit of the Declaration.

There are two orders of service. The first can be used for Healing and Reconciliation Sunday (May 22, 2016). The second can be used for Aboriginal Day Sunday (June 19, 2016). Each service contains more material than will fit into an hour-long service. Worship leaders may select different parts or use the whole service, according to the needs of the congregation. The service for Aboriginal Day Sunday has two children's stories that can be used separately or together. The children's stories may also be helpful for Sunday school teachers. Both services can be used at any time of year.

The sermon section of the TRC Calls to Action service consists of reading Calls to Action and responsive prayers. Worship leaders can read one, two or several of the Calls and prayers. You do not need to use them all. Each Call and prayer can be used individually in bulletin inserts, prayer groups, newsletters or as minutes for mission.

The sermon section of the UN Declaration service consists of short stories about Indigenous people who are living out the spirit of the UN Declaration. Select one, two or several stories to share. The stories are written by Presbyterians. Most prayers in this service are written by Indigenous people who are members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.



Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

Worship
Service

Worship leaders can download an accompanying slide presentation noted by [SLIDE #] in the text from presbyterian.ca/healing. All photos in the presentation are copyrighted to The Presbyterian Church in Canada or The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives. They may be used for educational purposes. The service may also be used without the accompanying slides.

Call to worship

L: We gather because we are God's people.

P: Day by day, Sunday by Sunday, we praise the Living God.

L: We are a community in Christ Jesus. In praise, in prayer, in teaching and fellowship, we are sustained by our Lord.

P: Let us worship God.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of all peoples, in all times and places;
 Your creation sings your praise.
 Your son teaches us the ways of love, justice and peace.
 Your Spirit emboldens our hearts and hands to build the world
 according to your will.
 We confess our brokenness:
 We do not hear the cries of those who are suffering because it is
 inconvenient and costly to respond.
 We do not acknowledge truths that make us uncomfortable.
 We reject and belittle those who are different than we are.
 We are blind to the ways we benefit today from a legacy of hurt
 against Indigenous people.
 Too often we love imperfectly, speak harshly, and judge quickly.

A moment of silence

Reconciling God,
 We are called to gentleness, to compassion and to radical acceptance of difference.
 In Christ Jesus, we are learning to walk in new ways with new companions.
 We are learning to surrender the need to justify, to explain and to fix.
 We are learning to listen: when creation groans, we groan as well.
 When your people speak out against injustice, we honour their courage
 and stand with them.
 Spirit of God, create in us feeling hearts, clear eyes, and open minds.

Assurance of Forgiveness

In Christ we are forgiven and reconciled to God.

Introduction of Healing and Reconciliation Sunday Theme

On June 2, 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued 94 Calls to Action. The Calls are to governments, churches and all Canadians to re-set the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. 42 Calls to Action are titled “Legacy.” They deal with the impacts of residential schools. 52 Calls to Action are titled “Reconciliation.” They provide foundation stones for building a new, just relationship. In worship, we honour God’s call to seek, to encounter, and to know God. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation. We pray that God opens our hearts to the calls for reconciliation.

Hymn 98 By the Babylonian rivers

Prayer for Illumination

As your Word is read, O Lord, by your Spirit, open our hearts to hear your message in new ways.

Scripture Readings

Psalms 133

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (Primary text)

Matthew 18:15-22

Sermon

We are broken people living in broken relationships. Sin alienates us from each other, and separates us from God. But the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ is that in him, our woundedness may be healed. Our sins are forgiven. We are called to build the world as God would have it be. In Jesus Christ, the barriers of separation come down. Just as Christ reconciles us to God, let us work for reconciliation with our sisters and brothers.

The Residential Schools System existed for 130 years. The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran 11 schools. After 1925 the church ran two schools: Cecilia Jeffrey in Kenora, Ontario [SLIDE 1] and Birtle in Western Manitoba [SLIDE 2]. In the 1990s survivors began talking about their experiences at residential schools. This took courage and strength [SLIDE 3].

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded six years of work in 2015. [SLIDE 4] The Commission gathered 7,000 statements and heard from anyone who wished to speak about how they were affected by residential schools. Statements were gathered from former students, and members of their families, and communities. Statements were also gathered from former teachers, health care workers, church members, and school staff. These stories are part of the public record and cannot be silenced, ignored or denied. Many survivors have not shared their stories. 4,000 students died at school.

[SLIDE 5] As survivors tell their stories and more people hear them the weight of this history is carried on more shoulders. On May 31, 2015, 10,000 people walked through the streets of Gatineau into Ottawa by the Parliament buildings and on to the Human Rights Monument. This was a public declaration that reconciliation matters to Canadians. [SLIDE 6] Presbyterians from across Canada were part of this public witness. Today, we read aloud the Calls to Action which tell us in concrete ways how we can live out the ministry of reconciliation.

Calls to Action and Prayers

Worship leaders are encouraged to select one, two or several Calls to Action and accompanying prayers starting on page 10. After the Calls have been read, the worship leader may conclude with these words:

Holy Spirit, enliven us to continue on the journey of reconciliation. Amen.

Optional Closing Paragraph

Worship leaders select one or two of these signs of hope, or share a good news story of your own.

- On May 31, 2015, more than 20 Presbyterians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, young and old, walked for reconciliation in Ottawa. They witnessed the presentation of the Calls to Action and returned to their home communities to talk about reconciliation.
- Mary Jesse and Douglas Stewart from First Church in Regina work with members of the United Church and Indigenous organizations advocating for the preservation of the cemetery at the Regina Indian Industrial School, a Presbyterian-run school which operated from 1891 to 1910.
- Mark Tremblay is the minister at Knox Church in Calgary. He worked with people of other faiths to organize a workshop with Indigenous elder Doreen Spence to learn about the importance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Andrew Johnston is the minister at St. Andrew's Church in Kingston, Ontario. He worked with the Katarokwi Indigenous Grandmothers' Council to host a community feast. 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbors broke bread together.

Worship leaders may use these words to conclude this section of the service.

Across Canada, Presbyterians respond to the call for reconciliation. This is the healing and reconciliation ministry of our church. This is our story. With Jesus, the great Reconciler, we are walking toward right relationships in Canada.

Hymn 199 If I have been the source of pain

Offering

Generous God, we thank you for your abundant gifts. Bless these offerings to build up your people and for your work in the world.

Hymn 736 For the healing of the nations

Commissioning and Benediction

Empower us by your Spirit
to love fiercely,
to give and receive forgiveness fully,
to pray daily,
to serve cheerfully,
to live simply,
and to leave everything else to God. Amen.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and Prayers

Worship leaders may use one, two or several of these selected Calls to Action and prayers in worship, bible study or as a minute for mission. Invite different readers to participate in the service, including young people. These selected Calls to Action have been shortened and summarized to facilitate reading in worship services.

Call 4

We call upon the federal government to enact Aboriginal child-welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases and affirms the right of First Nations governments to establish their own child welfare agencies. Child welfare agencies and courts should take into account the legacy of residential schools in their decisions, and offer culturally appropriate environments for children in agency care.

Prayer

God, you love your children and gave your only son to overcome the alienation of sin and brokenness. You know the agony of separation between parent and child. Indigenous children in the care of child welfare agencies are separated from their family. We pray for the wisdom that will see parents and children together in strong healthy families.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 8

We call upon the federal government to eliminate the funding discrepancy between children being educated on reserves in schools paid for by the federal government and children in provincially run schools.

Prayer

God of wisdom, you have given us minds to know you; we receive all knowledge and understanding from you. Your son was found as a boy sitting among the leaders listening, learning, and asking questions. We pray that all your people will be treated equally and fairly, so that they have the same access to education.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 14

We call upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that outlines the value of Indigenous languages in Canadian society and revitalizes Aboriginal languages and culture.

Prayer

God of diversity, in tongues of fire you blessed your disciples with the gift of different languages, that all people may know you, and speak to you in words of praise. Teach us to love diversity as you do. Stoke fires that rekindle Indigenous languages.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 18

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to acknowledge that the current state of Aboriginal health is a direct result of Canadian government policies including residential schools.

Prayer

Healing God, when Jesus touched a dead man, he came alive. When Jesus spoke to a lame man, he walked. He blessed a woman whose sick child was healed. The wounds of racism scar our communities. We pray for policies that close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and reduce the disproportionate levels of illness amongst Indigenous people.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 27

We call upon the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal – Crown relations.

Prayer

God of justice, shine a light on Indigenous legal traditions and the treaties. We pray for law makers, law enforcers, lawyers and arbiters. Remind us that treaties are sacred agreements for sharing resources and living together on the land you created.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 38

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in custody over the next decade.

Prayer

God of freedom, your son is visited whenever we are with those who are in prison. Open our eyes to injustice. Open our hearts to be compassionate with those who feel hopeless. Strengthen us to work for justice and reconciliation. Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 41

We call upon the federal government to investigate the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls.

Prayer

God of love and care, you know what it is to lose a child to violence and murder. We pray for missing women; for violated women; for abused women; and for murdered women, whose families need the truth. Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 48

We call upon churches and other faith and interfaith social justice groups to formally adopt and comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.

Prayer

Creator God, the kingdom Jesus preached about challenged the political, economic and social values of the dominant culture. Give us ears to hear our brothers and sisters. Give us eyes to see you in our neighbors. Give us strength to work together to realize the world you would have us build here and now. Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 59

We call upon churches to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization and in residential schools, and why apologies are necessary.

Prayer

God of reason and understanding, we love to talk about theology, but sometimes our talk leads to actions of violence, not love. Sometimes our practices divide rather than reconcile. Lead us to face the truth of the past and to work for peace in the future. Remind us that confession from the heart leads to healing of the heart; that words of truth build trust. Stir us to respond to your longing for a new creation to heal and restore the circle of your people.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 60

We call upon church leaders, in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors and theology schools to develop and teach curriculum for students, clergy, and those who work in Aboriginal communities on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right. It should include the history and legacy of residential schools, the roles of the churches in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.

Prayer

God, source of light and wisdom, soften our hearts and lower our defenses. Give us a retentive and honest memory, a willingness to learn about difficult and new things, and an ability to discern your voice calling us to follow you.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 61

We call upon church parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with Survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to Aboriginal people for projects that will further community-controlled healing and reconciliation, culture and language revitalization, education and leadership development.

Prayer

Almighty God, we ascribe to you power and might, but we like to take power in our own hands. You govern with justice and mercy; but too often we control and limit, believing we are being faithful to you. Sharpen our vision so we may catch a glimpse of you in the places we prefer to ignore or forget and when you are fully among the people we are tempted to dismiss.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 71

We call upon all chief coroners and provincial statistical agencies that have not provided their records to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these records available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

Prayer

God of Peace, we pray for the families and communities whose children went to residential school and never came home. We give thanks for the work of historians, archivists, and community groups that are seeking to have residential schools cemeteries maintained and to identify the children who are buried there. Bring peace to families whose children never came home.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 83

We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to reconciliation.

Prayer

Creative God, we give thanks for the creative expression of Indigenous artists, musicians, writers, poets, dancers, film makers, story tellers. We give thanks for artists who are recapturing lost traditions and passing on artistic and creative knowledge and inspiration to a new generation.

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.

Call 93

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal people of Canada, including the Calls to Action, information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.

Prayer

Compassionate God, hear the words of denial, doubt and defense in our hearts, words like:

Why do we keep talking about this?

I don't think this has anything to do with me.

I was not part of this history.

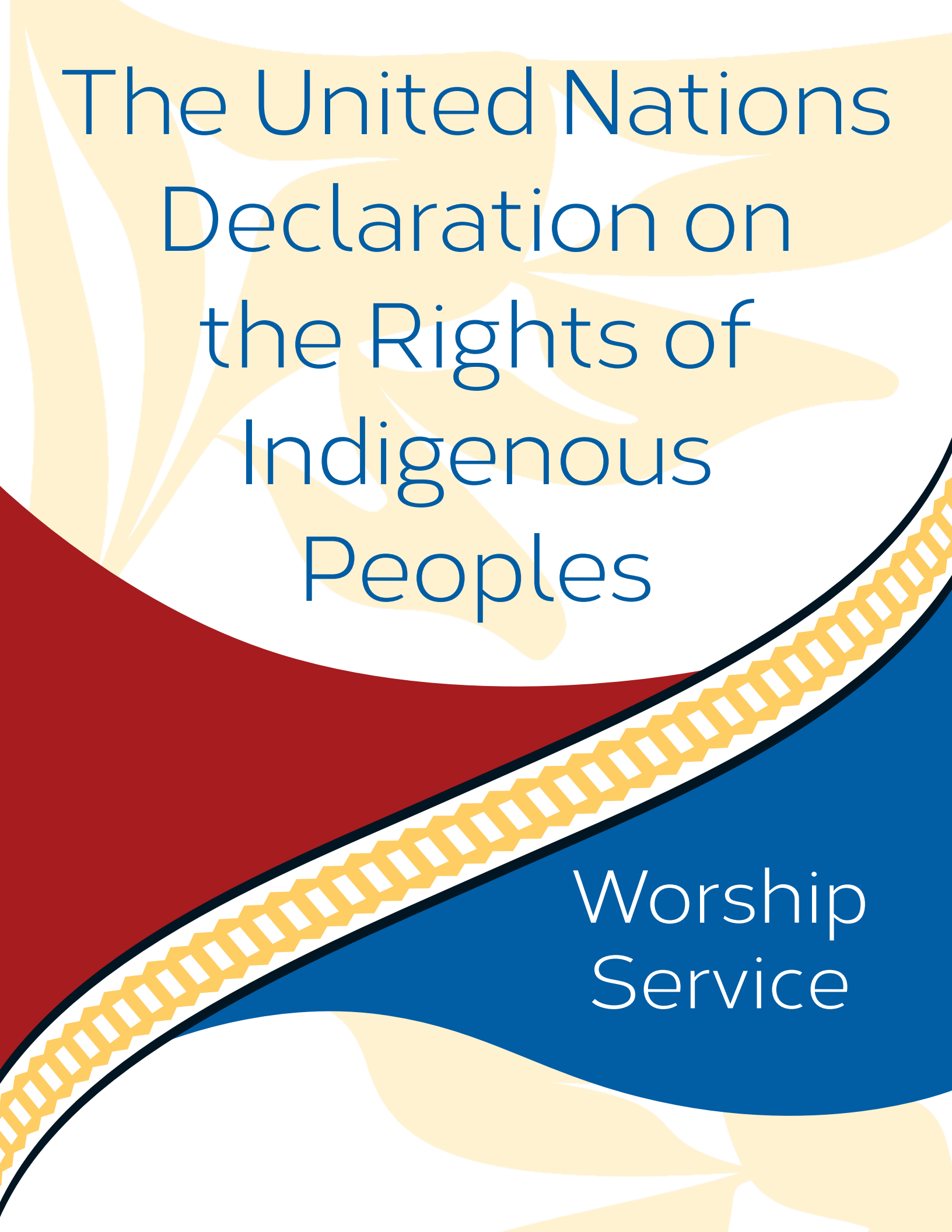
This is overwhelming.

What can we do now?

Healing God, your children are hurting. Hear the cries of all people who carry heavy burdens.

Moment of Silence

Let us work for reconciliation. Amen.



The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Worship
Service

Note to Worship leaders: Most prayers in this service are written by Indigenous members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Living Faith

Sections 8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.4.3, 8.4.6, 10.1

Hymn Suggestions

301 Many and great, O God, are your works
447 O Great Spirit
480 In Christ there is no east or west
540 One bread, one body
709 What does the Lord require of you
730 O for a world where everyone
736 For the healing of the nations
759 In loving partnership

Call to Worship

L: Let all who take refuge in the Lord rejoice;

P: Let them ever sing for joy.

L: God's protection is over them so that those who love God's name
may exult in the Lord.

P: Let us worship God.

Prayer of Adoration

L: Jesus called us to be open to the gifts of change that surround us.

P: Great Spirit, we can feel and see the change as the seasons bring their
warmth and acceptance.

L: Lord, help us to be respectful of the spirituality of our Aboriginal brothers
and sisters.

P: Great Spirit, help us to walk together with all your children, to recognize
your gifts of creation, and to learn the lessons that creation has for us.

L: Lord, help us to be more like you; and to remember your son in everything that
we say and do. God, you have sent the Holy Spirit so all humans can call out,
"We are children of The Promise."

P: The promise from you is for abundant life, peaceful living, and being together
in a good and compassionate way. God has freed us all so that we might enjoy
life, and live together with all nations in peace. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, you have heard the persistent sound of Indigenous people crying.
You are angered by the injustice done to them every day!
If our hands are stained with injustice, God, forgive us, save us, rescue us!
Encourage Indigenous people. Encourage our church.
Help us find new ways to walk together, in peace, as your children. Amen.

Declaration of Pardon

The promise of God through Jesus Christ is this: we are forgiven.
We praise the God of Compassion. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open our ears, unveil our eyes and soften our hearts, by the power of your
illuminating Spirit, to hear with fresh awareness the message of God's Holy Word.

Scripture Readings

1 Kings 21:1-10
Psalm 5:1-8
Galatians 3:23-29 (primary scripture)
Luke 7:36-50

Sermon

See *Sermon* on page 21 and *Stories* on page 23

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

We praise you Creator God. All blessings come from you. Our hearts and our lives
overflow with your love. We offer back a portion of our blessings so that the light
of your Word shines brightly. Help us to use these gifts to feed your people, to bring
healing and comfort to those who are hurt, to bring nourishment to those who
hunger, to bring guidance and wisdom to those who are lost. May these gifts bless
others as we have been blessed.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Prayer of Thanksgiving is written by Binesikwe (Thunderbird Woman) Cathy Lindsay, an Indigenous elder in Kenora, Ontario. She supports the work of the Kenora Fellowship Centre, one of the Native Ministries supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Ojibway words are translated throughout the prayer. The eagle feather is sacred to many Indigenous peoples. When held by a speaker, it is a symbol of strength and courage. The eagle flies overhead and can see what troubles people and the land. Worship leaders may explain the symbol to congregants before the prayer.

Boozhoo Chi'Manidoo. As I hold my eagle feather in hand, I humbly ask with all my heart and spirit that you hear our prayers.

We give thanks for Mother Earth and all her children, otherwise known as "Turtle Island," that was gifted to all First Nation peoples who were also given the honoured duties to be her caretakers, protectors and defenders for all of life that we hold sacred.

Chi'miigwetch for all waters that surround our Mother Earth and that flow in all her lakes, rivers and streams; and for waters that cleanse us in mind, body and spirit. Chi'miigwetch for the air we breathe, for fire that warms our hearts, and for the ground we walk upon. May we walk gently upon our Mother Earth with respect.

On behalf of Anishinnabek, our Treaty #3 territories (lands in Northwestern Ontario and Eastern Manitoba), across our native lands, and worldwide, let all people hear the words of the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous law, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. We lift up prayers in great hope that our Anishinaabe peoples may meet on common ground with all churches, faiths, traditions, languages and cultures.

Creator, we ask for healing for all who suffer emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually – including all ages from birth to our elders. Remove all sickness, abuse, addictions, and all other forces that take from us and leave us weak, homeless, suicidal, missing, and grieving. Lift up all who feel forsaken, freed from burdens in full measure by Chi'Manidoo, who loves us all.

The **eagle feather** means the speaker is not afraid. It gives strength to talk about difficult things. The eagle flies overhead and can see the problems of the land or sickness.

Boozhoo Chi'Manidoo

is Ojibway, meaning 'Welcome Great Spirit'. An invitation into prayer.

Chi'miigwetch is Ojibway meaning, thank you for listening, also implying that a conversation may end but that dialogue is ongoing.

Anishinnabek is the Ojibway term for all First Nations people.

Chi'Manidoo is Ojibway for Great Spirit, who loves us all.

Open our minds, hearts and spirits to one another in faith, hope and trust that we may learn from each other, encourage each other and empower each other to build together a healthier and stronger relationship with one another. Let us come together, work together, and pray together. Let us be united. May we continue to serve all who are in need and who call for help. Creator, continue to protect and defend us, to bless us and to grant us peace in mind, body and spirit.

We are grateful for all that you, our Creator, give us and for all that we hold dear, dear and sacred unto us. Creator, we thank you for the greatest gift of all, for love. Amen.

Benediction

Go out, bringing into the world the love and justice of our Lord. May you always walk upon the Creator's road. And may the Creator always bless your footsteps until we meet again. Amen.

Sermon and Introduction to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Today I'd like us to think about Galatians 3:23-29 (*optional: read aloud the passage again*). Let's think about it in terms of what it does or doesn't mean; and what it did and didn't do. It doesn't mean we can forget the law.

It doesn't mean that there aren't things we can and should learn from the law. It doesn't mean that there are no differences between Jews and Gentiles. Galatians 3 didn't mean slavery would end. Nor that women would achieve gender equality.

However, Galatians 3 does mean that Paul saw Christ as the great equalizer, that Paul believed that racial and cultural attitudes of superiority had no basis, that societal and class structures creating a dominant class were wrong, and that misogyny and gender-based prejudice are incompatible with the values Jesus taught.

We can think about National Aboriginal Day in this way. It doesn't mean that Canada has stopped struggling with the legacy from residential schools. It doesn't mean that Canadian laws and attitudes are free of the prejudicial influences of colonialism. It doesn't mean we have forgotten the 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls with families who seek and deserve answers.

But the great promise in Galatians 3 is that in Christ we are *all* beloved of God. Every person reflects the divine image. God knows each of us by name. In Jesus, every person's joys and sorrows, gifts and challenges are God's own. In the Spirit, every person can know God, and share God's loving Spirit.

Likewise, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples doesn't mean that all human rights are not important.

But it does mean that the rights of Indigenous peoples are affirmed; that Indigenous peoples' rights are important to the wellbeing and dignity of all people.

Today we've also heard the story known as Naboth's Vineyard. Ahab and Jezebel were powerful people. They were not content with what they already had and sought to dispose Naboth of his ancestral land, his traditional land. They made Naboth what they considered to be a reasonable offer. When Naboth declined, they killed him and took the land. This story reminds us of the challenges in human relationships. We see abuse of power, corruption and disregard for human life.

Hearing this story on Aboriginal Day Sunday reminds us that too often treaties and other agreements between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people have not been honoured, and that non-Indigenous people have taken the land. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the land rights of Indigenous peoples. It affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to be involved in decisions about their lands and resources. The message of Naboth's vineyard is that the actions of Ahab and Jezebel are evidence of broken relationships, and a distortion of the kinds of righteous relationships God calls us to – with God and with each other in Jesus Christ.

In the 1970s Indigenous peoples from around the world went to the United Nations to talk about discrimination, abuse, and how attitudes of cultural superiority of non-Indigenous peoples had impacted their lives, culture and spirituality. These messages were consistent with Galatians 3 teaching that difference should not be a barrier to justice and right-relationships.

It took twenty years for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to be drafted, and then ratified by the United Nations. It is thanks to the courage and persistence of Indigenous sisters and brothers that all people have a Declaration that reminds us in specific and concrete ways that God's love is for all people and that in Jesus, differences between groups of people are not to be used as weapons or walls. The Declaration provides us with a framework for reconciliation in Canada.

There are people – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – who are living out the spirit of the Declaration. Like Paul said in his letter to the Galatians, the people in the stories you will hear affirm that all people are beloved children of God. Now let us hear some of these stories and the parts of the Declaration that they live out.

Worship leaders: Select one, two or several vignettes to read. Each vignette is written by a Presbyterian, or an Indigenous person who works in partnership with Presbyterians toward reconciliation. Each vignette is a story about one or two Indigenous people whose life and works reflect the principles of the Declaration. Use the following to close your sermon.

Today we have heard God's Word about how God wants us to live together, about how God calls us to live in righteous relationships with each other. Today we have also heard some articles from the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Today we have heard about Indigenous people who are making a difference in communities across Canada. As you celebrate this day, reflect on the messages in these stories. Ask yourself how you will join with people who are different from you to become one in Christ Jesus. How will you remove barriers to justice? How will you form right relationships? We are all called. Let us now respond.

Stories about Indigenous Peoples and the Declaration

1. This story relates to these articles in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 7.1 *Indigenous individuals have the right to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.*

Article 22.2 *States shall take measures...to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.*

The story comes from Vivian Ketchum, member of Place of Hope church in Winnipeg. Vivian is an Anishinnabe woman of Wauzhushk Onigum, a First Nation community outside Kenora, in northern Ontario. Vivian writes:

The bottom of my winter coat has drops of candle wax on it. It's the coat I've worn to vigils for murdered or missing Indigenous women and girls, where I've stood beside other women, holding candles, in a circle to remember a sister – an Indigenous person who was denied the right to safety, protection, and perhaps to life.

I'm considered a social activist for what I do. I participate in marches and protests that highlight a social cause, usually a denial of a human right in my community. I'm not alone; there are other Indigenous women leaders who are my mentors; women whom I admire, whose names are never in the media.

One of them is Elder Nancy Morrison. A childhood friend of my mother, Nancy is in her eighties and still a strong activist in Kenora. I often see her participating in a march, leading the way with her walker. I admire her for her courage and wisdom. Her wisdom isn't found in a text book; it's lived knowledge.

Another woman I admire is Sheilia Redsky from Shoal Lake. Last year in Winnipeg, I walked along side Shelia and over 200 other women. We were voicing our concern about the denial of the right to clean water. Shoal Lake has been without safe drinking water for over 18 years. Sheilia and the other Shoal Lake women walked carrying water jugs, along with their signs and banners.

I walk beside these women in solidarity and support. I am one of many people insisting that our communities be made safe, that our women and children be protected and that all Indigenous people have the right to life.

2. This story relates to these articles in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 8.1 *Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.*

Article 15.2 *States shall take effective measures, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.*

The story comes from Hans Kouwenberg, a retired Presbyterian minister and a former member of the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee. He chaired a community group that worked with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at its National Event in Vancouver. Hans writes:

I want to tell you about two British Columbians, Chief Dr. Bobby Joseph and his daughter, Karen. Bobby is a survivor of the Indian Residential School system. He has risen above the abuse he suffered to become an advocate for healing and reconciliation. He often says: “Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future and the well-being of our children rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

Together with Karen, Bobby founded Reconciliation Canada. It seeks to bridge the relationship between First Nations people and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Its motto is “Namwayayut” – “we are all one.”

I got to know Bobby Joseph after I became the moderator of our national church in 2007. In 2008, along with other leaders from the Anglican, Catholic, and United churches, I travelled across Canada to alert Canadians to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A number of Indian residential school survivors travelled with us, including Bobby who impressed me by his grace, resilience and wit. On that trip I became committed to working with Bobby to protect Indigenous culture and find ways to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations.

Later I joined Bobby, Karen, and other First Nations leaders, along with local ecumenical advocates for healing and reconciliation from across the Lower Mainland to prepare for the TRC’s National Event in Vancouver in September 2013. The highlight of our activities together was a walk, in the rain, with over 75,000 people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, walking for reconciliation.

Bobby and Karen are spiritually alive witnesses to what reconciliation is all about. They give lectures and hold workshops locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, inspiring tolerance, understanding and good relations among Indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

3. This story relates to these articles in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 7.2 *Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security...and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide...including forcibly removing children...*

Article 2 *Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination...*

This story is from Kenneth Stright. Kenn is the minister of the Church of Saint David in Halifax. He writes:

Vivian Ketchum is an Anishinnabe woman of Wauzhushk Onigum, a First Nation community outside Kenora. She is also a residential school survivor. At first it wasn't easy for her to express her hopes for the church's truth and reconciliation initiative. But soon, she found her voice, speaking to people from Halifax to Vancouver, about the nightmares she wanted to change into dreams of healing. Despite trauma, overt racism and personal loss, today Vivian writes for the *Presbyterian Record* about the residential school policy that violated the collective right of Indigenous people to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples. She reminds the church at every opportunity that it has promised to walk together on the healing journey that will reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as free and equal.

"When society realizes the hurt and acknowledges the need for healing," says Vivian, "we will move forward." She continues, "I want to be seen as an equal. What happened to us was real. Don't tell us to get over it because I still live with it on a daily basis. I have long term health effects. My finger was snapped back and broken for a minor infraction, a finger which is bent and broken to this day since the school refused to have it set. I have scarred lungs from tuberculosis. I still have nightmares."

One day we stood at the empty site of the Residential School she had attended. There was a broken sidewalk, cracked and yielding weeds. It was the only physical reminder of the forcible removal of children to be schooled in this place and the discrimination they faced. Vivian later described the moment in a poem:

*There are small colourful flowers
Growing in amongst the cracks and weeds.
Beauty and strength
can grow despite their harsh beginnings.*

4. This story relates to this article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 12 *Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies...*

The story comes from Keith Randall, a Presbyterian who worships at St. Andrew's and St. Paul's church in Montreal. Keith is a member of the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee. The church has a twinning partnership with the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry. Keith writes:

I stood on the Saskatchewan prairie in Wanuskewin Heritage Park north of Saskatoon with Rev. Stewart Folster and other visitors. We heard songs and stories – some of the spiritual and religious traditions and customs of the Indigenous people who had sought sustenance in that place for 6,000 years. Earlier, at the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry, Stewart taught the lessons of Jesus Christ, bathing us in smoke wafting from dried sweet grass, passing the talking stone from hand to hand around the circle of worship. Stewart is a Presbyterian minister. He was raised by his grandparents on an Ojibwe reserve in Manitoba.

Stewart often signs off his e-mails with *Kitche Mitakwias. All my relations*. Leroy Little Bear of the University of Lethbridge notes that English is noun-oriented, identifying categories like saint-sinner, black-white; Indigenous languages of the Americas are generally verb-oriented, stressing process, actions and constant flux. “The flux,” he writes, “gives rise to the belief that all of creation is made of energy waves. If all is animate, then all must be somewhat like humans with energy forces that we call spirit. If all have spirit, then all of creation are ‘all my relations.’”

Remembering that moment when I sensed God's vast creation, I feel deep humility. If everything is spirit-filled, I am related to all creation. That perspective – like Jesus' lilies of the field – seems close to the “gentle Indian way” – another favourite Stewart expression. Stewart told me, “The teachings of faith, honesty, kindness, caring, sharing, love, honour and respect are the same in both beliefs.” He continued, “I don't have to give up any part of my Native spirituality to be a follower of Christ to the fullest.”

Now the gentle rain of all my relations softens my soul's arid soil. The seeds of Jesus' words find more fertile ground. Listening to prayers, scripture, sermons and hymns, a loving God is closer than ever before. God touched us on the Saskatchewan prairie.

5. This story relates to this article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 11 *Indigenous people have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs... such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies, and visual and performing arts and literature.*

The story comes from Katharine Masterton, the Program Coordinator for Justice Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Katharine writes:

One Saturday afternoon I sat and listened to Sam Thomas explain Iroquois beading. Sam Thomas is a member of the Lower Cayuga Band of Six Nations of the Grand River, near Brantford, Ontario. His research into traditional Iroquois raised beading has recovered lost artisan techniques. He is revitalizing a cultural tradition and teaching a new generation of people. “We are beading strawberries,” he said and explained that strawberries are sacred medicine.

In the beading session some people spoke about their time in residential school. Others spoke about why reconciliation is important to them. Some people expressed concerns and anxieties about sitting in a room of strangers sharing stories that made them feel vulnerable.

Sam reminded us that each strawberry we created by beading was medicine for healing. He had created a safe space where the hurts that kept Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples apart could be named. He created sacred space where healing became possible, and where forming strong, healthy relationships between us became a possibility.

Sam’s art is beautiful. Sam’s use of his artistic skills makes his art visionary. He has a vision to create spaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together, learn and practice a cultural tradition, and talk, face to face.

The fabric we are beading with strawberries will be draped over doors recovered from residential schools. Sam explains that these doors associated with hurt will be covered by symbols of healing. The healing symbol, the traditional beadwork, is created by hundreds of people – Indigenous and non-Indigenous, travelling with the Holy Spirit through the pain of the past and the present into a new relationship with their neighbors.

Sam’s project is called “Opening the Doors to Dialogue.”

6. This story relates to this article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 24.2 *Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.*

The story comes from Yvonne Bearbull, the executive director of the Anamiewigummig (Ojibwe for House of Prayer) Kenora Fellowship Centre in Kenora. Yvonne writes:

Brokenness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada is evident in the poor physical and mental health of many Indigenous individuals, like an elder named Mary Louise. She told her story during a time of profound grief following the loss of her husband, which also meant the loss of her home and security. She was 68 years old. With tears streaming down her face, she said quietly over and over, “I miss my husband.”

Mary Louise talked fondly of her parents and upbringing on the land, and of being on the trap line with her father. She briefly mentioned her time in residential school, tightly closing her eyes as if to shut off the memories.

She married a non-Aboriginal man and they owned a home in a rural town. But she often felt discriminated against and isolated from her community; she began drinking to forget her loneliness. She was on and off the street for years due to chronic alcoholism. Sometimes she spent her days with her eldest son, who was also homeless and suffering from alcoholism and mental health issues. He was precious to her as her other children were “taken away” by the Children’s Aid Society. She thought about contacting them, but knew she had nothing to offer. Sleeping at the city detox center, she had given up on finding another home and had no desire to return to her community.

Mary Louise and others like her keep reliving the nightmares of residential school, lost culture, torn apart families, and systemic racism. The outcomes include poverty, physical and mental illness, addictions and sometimes death – outcomes that affect future generations.

Mary Louise is remarkable for surviving, but the hope is for so much more – for thriving in life. We can and we must take steps to restore relationships and wholeness, working for the wellbeing of Indigenous people in Canada.

7. This story relates to this article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 5 *Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate...in the political... life of the State.*

The story comes from Jacques Dalton. Jacques is Métis. He is a husband, proud father of three teens and an elder at Grace church in Ottawa. Jacques writes:

The story of Elijah Harper is a story of a First Nations man who courageously pursued the right of his people to maintain and strengthen their institutions. At the same time he participated fully in the Canadian political process.

There were many important milestones in Elijah's life. He was a residential school survivor who went on to study at the University of Manitoba. At age 29, he was elected chief of his band. At age 32, he became the first First Nations individual to serve in the Manitoba legislature – and he was minister of two portfolios. In 1993, he was elected the federal Member of Parliament for the Churchill riding in Manitoba. He received numerous accolades and awards.

Elijah is probably best remembered for helping to defeat the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 when he was a provincial Member of Manitoba's Legislative Assembly. The Canadian government was trying to amend the Constitution in order to include Quebec, but had not consulted Indigenous people. The amendment needed the consent of every provincial and territorial legislature. Holding an eagle feather, Elijah vetoed the passage of the bill; the deadline passed; the amendment died. Speaking years later, Elijah said, "It wasn't done out of being negative, or out of spite, or anything. We were just trying to be recognized for our rightful place in Canada."

The **eagle feather** means the speaker is not afraid. It gives strength to talk about difficult things. The eagle flies overhead and can see the problems of the land or sickness.

Elijah had a tremendous heart for healing and reconciliation, bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together across vast divides such as religious, national and continental boundaries. I was blessed to meet Elijah in his home just before his sudden passing in 2013. His gracious and humble nature was an example to me. Elijah will be remembered for his commitment to Indigenous rights, and for his engagement in the political process which advanced the position of Indigenous traditions and institutions in Canadian society.

8. This story relates to this article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 2 Indigenous peoples...are free and equal to all other peoples... and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination...

The story comes from Whitney Hanna, an elder at Trinity church in Victoria. She writes:

I have blue eyes and pale skin so my parents never felt the need to talk with me about racial profiling. I learn about it from Sara. She tells me about conversations she has with her son. She talks to him about how to navigate situations with security guards and police. When he is followed in stores or refused service, she finds a balance: she reminds him that he is free and equal to all other people, but at the same time how he must submit to authority in order to save himself from further trouble.

Sara's whole life is a balancing act. She cares for the children of her family members when social services become involved in their lives. She sends her own children away to be cared for by family and to receive cultural wisdom from elders. She's told me painful stories about addiction and hurt, but her sharp wit and sense of humour make us laugh, despite the subject matter. Sara is naturally optimistic even when facing complications that seem insurmountable from my privileged point of view.

Article 2 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says that Indigenous people have "the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity." Yet there are times that Sara and her children have had interactions with police or social workers because people have made assumptions about their lives, rather than begin by learning about Sara and her family. Sara is frustrated, but she handles each situation steadily and peacefully. She has an inspiring inner strength drawn from her traditional spiritual beliefs. She also draws inner strength from connecting and identifying with her Indigenous community.

9. This story relates to this article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 24.1 *Indigenous peoples...have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.*

Article 22.2 *States shall take measures...to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.*

This story comes from Linda Patton-Cowie. Linda is the minister at St. Mark's in Orillia and is the convener of the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee. Linda writes:

Cindy Blackstock is the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. She is a member of the Gitksan First Nation in British Columbia. Cindy is an advocate for the rights of Indigenous children. She works to keep children and families together and to ensure they have every opportunity to be happy and healthy. This includes identifying discrimination and fighting against it.

In 2007 she and the Society took their landmark child welfare case to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. In 2016 the Tribunal found that the Government of Canada racially discriminated against 163,000 First Nations children by denying them the same funding for child protection, education and health as other Canadian kids. Indigenous children receive between 22 and 34 percent less funding than non-Indigenous children.

Cindy is determined to make sure discrimination is made visible, and to stand up against it. She says it's our job as adults to stand up for kids. I agree. The prophet Isaiah spoke poetically of a time when "a little child shall lead them..." (Isaiah 11:6). We should listen to the voices of all children so we can recognize the gift that all children are. We should not ignore Cindy's wisdom: "Children are the keepers of the possible and they are experts in love and fairness so when a weary country cannot find its way forward, it need only grasp the hands of the young children to be guided lovingly and firmly forward."

Children's Stories

Shannen and the Attawapiskat School

For the storyteller: *Read the story a few times. Become familiar with the main points so you can look up at the children when telling the story. Substitute your own words and phrasing. Bring a grocery bag with a winter toque, scarf, gloves, snow boots – all in children's sizes if possible. If you have a pair of moccasins, you could put them in the bottom of the bag, pulling them out the first time you say the phrase "Just keep walking in your moccasins" and holding them up every time you say the phrase (in boldface). Perhaps it could become like a refrain. Instructions to the storyteller are in italics. The storyteller may wish to explain that Aboriginal people are the first people to live in Canada (even before the land was called Canada) and that they were here long before people from other parts of the world came to Canada.*

"Just keep walking in your moccasins." – An expression that means "Don't give up."

Good Morning children! Since today is Aboriginal Sunday, I want to tell you a true story about a girl named Shannen Koostachin. Shannen lived in the Attawapiskat First Nation community in northern Ontario. The story starts when Shannen was six years old, in Grade One. It's about Shannen and her school. It's a story with some sad parts but with a happy ending.

Can any of you tell me something about your school or your classrooms? *(Encourage them to talk about the physical characteristics: What's their classroom like? Is it warm on a cold inside on a winter's day. What other rooms are there in the school e.g., a gym, or library?)*

Your schools sound pretty nice. But Shannen's school wasn't nice at all. The nice school building was closed down when a fuel pipe burst. After that all classes were moved into portables. Look at what Shannen needed to wear in class on a winter's day... *(one by one pull out of the bag and name the items)*. Imagine needing to wear these things in class. Shannen had to because the portable doors didn't shut properly! The winter winds blew in through cracks in the walls. Students' fingers got so cold and stiff they could hardly write! And the portables were small and crowded. The school made Shannen feel ashamed and sad.

But away from school, Shannen felt happy and proud of her family and community. For example, she loved the annual spring camp when they all spent two weeks in the bush. She learned where to find berries, how to recognize animal tracks, how to make a fire, and how to imitate the call of geese! And after dark, sitting in a circle around the camp fire, Shannen and her brothers and sisters and cousins loved to listen to the elders telling stories about long ago. One night, snuggled up to her father, Shannen exclaimed, "It feels so good to be here. But I never feel like this at school. School makes me feel like we don't matter. Why can't we have a real school, like other kids do?" Shannen's father said, "You feel like you are part of this place; together we keep the circle strong. But never give up when you face difficulties. **Never give up. Just keep walking in your moccasins.**" (*If you have moccasins, hold them up and place them beside you.*)

School day after school day, school year after school year, Shannen kept hoping. Finally, when she was in Grade Eight and about to graduate, the government said there would be a new school—a real school! Shannen was so excited! But just as suddenly the news changed. The government said, "No! There's no money."

Shannen exclaimed, "How can they say no?" Her friends said, "Oh, government leaders don't care. They live far away. They don't see our problems." Shannen thought of her father's words and said to her friends, "**We can't give up. Just keep walking in our moccasins.** We must help them see." So one winter day Shannen and all the other students stood outside their portables in the icy wind holding signs, saying things like "*We've never seen a real school. And if the government has its way, we never will.*" Photos of them appeared in newspapers around the country. Shannen and her friends also wrote to the government asking for help. But nothing happened.

Shannen kept thinking, "**We can't give up. Just keep walking in our moccasins.**" She knew they needed a bigger, stronger circle. So Shannen and her friends made videos of themselves and they posted the videos on YouTube. In the videos they asked other students to write letters to the government, to spread the word. And little by little, word did spread. Shannen was invited to speak at other schools. She even travelled to Ottawa to speak to government people.

Some days Shannen got tired; she was discouraged when she saw how beautiful other buildings were. But her father still urged her, "**Don't give up. Just keep walking in your moccasins.**" So she kept going. Even though she was now in high school in New Liskeard in Ontario, she kept making speeches, writing letters, telling the story in different places. The more Shannen spoke, the more people listened. The more they listened, the more they cared. Students, teachers, churches, all around Canada and around the world, people joined the circle and brought strength to the voices of Shannen and the students at her school. It seemed like nothing could stop Shannen.

But one day something did. Shannen was in a car accident and she died. However, when her family and friends gathered in a healing circle to share their sadness, they knew what they needed to do. Shannen had shared her dream of a new school. So her friends said, “We can’t give up. Just keep walking in our moccasins.”

Four years later in 2014, a new elementary school opened in Attawapiskat. It has long hallways, big warm classrooms, a library, a music room, bathrooms, and a gym. One of the first big events in the gym was a play put on by the students. The play retold stories celebrating people who lived there since long ago, people who spoke up for the community, people who dreamed of a better world, people who had made a difference. It celebrated people like Shannen. So you see how this story has some sad parts, but it also has a happy ending.

Note to Worship leaders: Older children may have heard about Attawapiskat because of high levels of suicides reported by the media in the winter and spring of 2016. Be prepared if children ask questions.

Now let’s close in prayer. Repeat after me:

Thank you God,
for creating each one of us,
and for making us stronger
when we work together.
Help us learn from Shannen:
to believe in our dreams,
to never give up,
to keep walking in our moccasins,
to make a better world. Amen.

Sunday School Version of Shannen and the Attawapiskat School

By Laura Alary

Once every year, the people of Attawapiskat go out into the bush for the spring goose hunt. For two weeks they camp together by the river, hunting, fishing, and trapping, just as their ancestors have done for thousands of years.

Shannen Koostachin always looked forward to the goose hunt. She loved being outdoors with her mother and father, sisters and brothers, and her many friends, young and old. There was so much to learn: where to find berries, how to track small animals, how to make and tend a fire, how to imitate the call of the geese. There was always plenty of fun and laughter and good food—hot bannock and roast goose and s'mores cooked over the campfire.

At night the elders told stories and legends from long ago. In the circle of the firelight, Shannen snuggled up to her father. She felt warm and cozy.

"It feels good to be here," she said.

"You are part of this place," answered her father. "Part of the water and the land, part of the ancestors who came before you, and part of those who will come after you. We are all connected. Together we keep the circle strong." Shannen felt proud to be part of something so wonderful.

"I wish I felt this good about school," she said.

"Someday you will," her father replied. "Never give up. Just keep walking in your moccasins."

It was hard for Shannen to feel proud of her school. For one thing, it was not even a real building. Shannen and her friends went to class in portables. The portables were small and crowded and not built to last. There were cracks in the walls and mould around the windows. The doors did not shut properly, so in the winter, icy winds blew in and Shannen's fingers grew so cold and stiff she could hardly write. Mice crept inside to find shelter. Now and then Shannen found them scampering over her sandwich at lunchtime. Simply going to gym class meant a ten minute walk outside, even on the most bitterly cold winter days. Even going to the bathroom was a problem. Because the portables were so tiny, the bathrooms were almost right in the classroom. You could hear everything.

"It's so embarrassing," complained Shannen. "Why can't we have a real school? With proper bathrooms and a gym and a library. Other kids have warm and comfy schools. Why can't we?"

Once there had been a real school in Attawapiskat. Shannen could remember going to kindergarten there. She had paraded through the hallways in her costume at Hallowe'en, and sung carols in the gym at the Christmas assembly. Everyone had been very proud of that school.

But one day a pipe burst beneath the building. Diesel fuel poisoned the soil and air. Children were getting sick, so their parents stopped sending them to school.

All the students were moved into portables. It was supposed to be for a short time, just until the mess was cleaned up. But seven years later the children were still waiting. The old school building sat empty, surrounded by an ugly chain link fence. Every year it grew more run-down. No one was proud of it now.

Finally, when Shannen was in grade eight, the government of Canada made a plan. There would be a new school—a real school, with hallways, a library, and a gym. Shannen was so excited! Even though she was graduating and would never have a chance to go to the new school, she was happy for her younger sisters and brothers, and all the children who would come after.

But the plan fell apart. The government said no. There was no money for a new school.

“How can they say no?” wailed Shannen. “A promise is a promise!”

“They don’t care,” said some of her friends. “Those leaders are not like our elders. They live far away. They don’t see our problems.”

“Then let’s help them see,” said Shannen.

So they did.

One winter day, all the students—even the youngest ones—stood outside in the icy wind holding signs. *We’ve never seen a real school*, said one, *If the government has its way we never will*. Photos of the children standing in the cold ended up in newspapers around the country.

Shannen and her friends wrote to the government of Canada to ask for help. But they knew their voices alone would not be enough. They needed to make the circle bigger. But how? They were just a few young people in a small community far from anywhere.

But they were determined to get their school. So they called on other students for help. They made videos and posted them on YouTube. They asked other young people to write letters to the government too. Little by little, word spread.

One day Shannen was asked to make a speech at a school in another northern community. This school was beautiful—bright, cheerful, warm. The halls were full of First Nations art, and the sounds of chanting and drumming. Shannen felt good to be there, but sad too. She could see that the students at this school were doing work that was much harder than what she and her friends were doing back home.

“If only we had a school like this,” thought Shannen. “Just imagine what we could learn and do and become.”

Some days Shannen got tired and discouraged.

“Keep going, Shanshann,” urged her father. “Don’t give up. Just keep walking in your moccasins. Take your strength from those who came before, and remember those who will come after you. Together we make the circle strong.”

Shannen kept going, making speeches, writing letters, telling their story in different places. She travelled all the way to Ottawa, to Parliament Hill, where the leaders of the country meet to make decisions. The man who had said no to building the new school invited Shannen to meet with him. They met in a beautiful room with high wooden ceilings, a marble fireplace, and rows and rows of bookshelves.

“How do you like this room?” he asked. Shannen was quick to answer.

“This room is bigger than our whole portable. I wish my brothers and sisters had a classroom this nice.”

But the answer was still no.

Speaking to the crowd outside, Shannen said,

“I was always taught by my parents to stand up and speak for what I believe in. I told him the children won’t give up. We will keep moving forward, walking proud in our moccasins until we are given justice.”

The more Shannen spoke, the more people listened. The more they listened, the more they cared. Students, teachers, churches, school boards—all across Canada and around the world people opened their eyes to the needs of the children of Attawapiskat. The circle was getting bigger and stronger. It seemed like nothing could stop Shannen.

But one day something did. While travelling with a friend, Shannen was killed in a car accident. Her family and friends gathered in a healing circle to share their sadness. They wondered what they should do. Shannen had dreamed of a new school. But more than that, she wanted the children of Attawapiskat to be proud of themselves and where they came from. And she wanted them to be free to imagine where they might go and what they might become. She had always thought beyond herself to those who would come after.

There was only one thing to do.

“We can’t give up,” they said. “We need to keep walking in our moccasins.”

Four years later a new elementary school opened in Attawapiskat. It is bright, cheerful and warm. It has sunny hallways, big classrooms, a library, a music room, bathrooms, and a gymnasium. One of the first big events in the gymnasium was a play put on by the students. The play told legends from long ago, stories of the people who lived along the Attawapiskat River. It told of their connection to the land, to one another, to their ancestors. The play celebrated those who have gone before, those who spoke up for and watched over the community, those who dreamed of a better future. Just like Shannen.

Look back. I wonder who has helped you come to where you are?

Look ahead. I wonder who is coming after you who needs your help?

I wonder how you can make the circle bigger and stronger?

“Just keep walking in your moccasins.” – An expression that means “Don’t give up.”

Two Hockey Players

For the storyteller: *Read the story a few times. Become familiar with the main points so you can look up at the children when telling the story. Substitute your own words and phrasing. If available, wear a hockey jersey and bring a bag with some hockey equipment e.g., skates, gloves, pads, stick, helmet, a puck. Instructions to the storyteller are in italics.*

Good Morning children!

Since today is Aboriginal Sunday, I want to talk to you about two Aboriginal people and hockey.

Do any of you play hockey? *(Pause)* Do any of you watch hockey games on TV? *(Pause)* OK, then maybe you can tell me what skills a hockey player needs to be a good player? What does he or she have to be good at? *(Encourage all responses e.g., skate well, be strong, good at stick handling, coordinated, fast, team player, good reflexes.)* Wow, a good hockey player sure needs to be good at a lot of things! And a person can have those skills, but they also need some equipment, don't they? Equipment like... *(one by one name and hold up the item if you brought it.)* So to be a good hockey player a person needs a lot of skills, the equipment and, of course, a skating rink where you can learn to skate, play hockey and practice!

Now that means that for most of us growing up in Canada, there's a pretty good chance that, if we want to, we can learn to play hockey. So I guess it isn't so surprising that people from many different towns and cities and regions all around Canada, and people from many different races living in Canada, learn to play hockey – and this includes Aboriginal people. In fact, did you know that there have been many Aboriginal hockey players in the NHL? In this past season alone, there were **ten!** Now of course those are all men, but there are also women Aboriginal hockey players – in the years to come, listen for sports coverage of up and coming Aboriginal women hockey players like Leah Sulyma, Kelly Babstock and Jamie Lee Rattray.

Jordin Tootoo (Inuk)
 Jordan Nolan (Ojibwe)
 Dwight King (Metis)
 Carey Price (Ulkatcho First Nation)
 Rene Bourque (Metis)
 Kyle Chipchura (Metis)
 T.J. Oshie (Ojibwe)
 Vernon Fiddler (Metis)
 Cody McCormick (Ojibwe)
 Michael Ferland (Cree)

Now I wonder if you can name a goalie who is an Aboriginal person and plays in the NHL...? *(Pause)* He's a very good goalie – some might say the best in the NHL...some might even say the best in the world. *(Pause)* This person plays for the Montreal Canadians. And in 2014 he won a gold medal with the Olympic Team Canada in Sochi! His name is... *(Pause)*... Carey Price!

Price grew up in British Columbia and is a member of the Ulkatcho First Nation. His mother is a former chief and his father was a professional hockey player, also a goalie. Now Price's parents did everything they could to help him grow up to be a good person and to develop his hockey skills. Today Price is not only an excellent hockey player, but also respected as a team leader by hockey managers.

Like other successful hockey players, Carey Price is making a difference (*count with your fingers*),

1. by being the best hockey player he can,
2. by setting a good example for others,
3. and by giving back to help others succeed.

Carey has donated thousands of dollars of hockey equipment to a minor hockey league in British Columbia.

Another Aboriginal person who loves to play hockey, and plays it well, is Eugene Arcand. Now Eugene isn't famous in the hockey world like Carey Price. But like Carey, Eugene did learn to play hockey as a kid and became good at it. Eugene is from the Muskeg Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan where he has worked in many, many leadership positions.

Eugene is famous with some people in The Presbyterian Church in Canada because he was a speaker at Canada Youth 2014 – a big youth event we hold every two years. There he talked to hundreds of young people from across Canada. Eugene is also famous because, over the past seven years, he travelled around Canada with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as a member of its advisory committee.

But unlike Carey, Eugene did not grow up in his own home. And his parents could not help him. He had to live away from his family and community. He had to go away to Indian residential school for 11 years. Playing sports like hockey helped Eugene get through some very difficult days and weeks and years. Now he speaks to people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, about his experiences. He reminds people that everyone matters; he encourages them to share their stories and to help each other succeed. While Eugene Arcand is in the Saskatchewan Indian Sports Hall of Fame, today he is better known for making a difference as a leader in his community.

Eugene Arcand is making a difference (*count with your fingers*),

1. by being the best he can as a leader,
2. by setting a good example for others,
3. and by giving back to help others succeed.

Now let's close in prayer. Repeat after me:

Thank you God,
for creating each one of us,
for making us stronger
when we work together.
Help us learn from people
like Carey Price
and Eugene Arcand –
to develop our skills,
to be the best that we can,
to be a good example for others,
and to make a difference. Amen.

About the Contributors

Laura Alary is a children's author and attends Guildwood church in Scarborough.

Stephen Allen is the Associate Secretary of Justice Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency

Yvonne Bearbull is the Executive Director of the Kenora Fellowship Centre in Kenora. She is a member of the Bird Tail First Nation in Manitoba.

Jacques Dalton is an elder at Grace church in Ottawa. He is a Metis, and the proud father of three teens.

Stewart Folster is a Presbyterian minister and the Executive Director of the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry.

Whitney Hanna is an elder at Trinity church in Victoria.

Vivian Ketchum is an Anishinnabe woman of Wauzhushk Onigum, a First Nation community outside Kenora.

Hans Kouwenberg is a retired Presbyterian minister and a former member of the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee.

Binesikwe (Thunderbird Woman) Cathy Lindsay is the Street Patrol Program Coordinator at Nechee Friendship Center in Kenora.

Katharine Masterton is the Program Coordinator for Justice Ministries. She is member of Glenview Presbyterian Church and a theology student at Knox College.

Margaret Mullin is the minister of Place of Hope church in Winnipeg and the Executive Director of the Winnipeg Inner City Missions.

Linda Patton-Cowie is the minister at St. Mark's in Orillia. She convenes the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee.

David Phillips is a retired teacher. He was the Healing and Reconciliation Program Animator from 2011 to 2014. He continues to coordinate the church's Leading with Care work.

Keith Randall is a journalist in Montreal. He is a member of St. Andrew's and St. Paul's church and is a member of the Healing and Reconciliation Advisory Committee.

Lori Ransom attends St. Andrew's church in Toronto. She is a member of the Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.

Ian Ross-McDonald is the General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency and a Presbyterian minister.

Anne Saunders is a Program Coordinator in Canadian Ministries, an elder and member at Beaches church in Toronto.

Kenneth Stright is the minister at the Church of Saint David in Halifax.