

Treaties Recognition Week

6-12 November 2016

The Province of Ontario has proclaimed the first complete week in November Treaties Recognition Week "to bring awareness to the treaty relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the province."

As Anglicans and Lutherans who seek to find healing and reconciliation in our churches' relationships with Indigenous peoples and each other we welcome this initiative. Treaties Recognition Week encourages communities and individuals to observe a time of discernment toward change and honouring of our place in history with a necessary eye to the future.

The Greek words "chronos" and "kairos" offer two different meanings for time. Chronos refers to the time that one can measure, while kairos means an ultimately God-given moment in time. The right, divine moment to be inspired, act, or speak. The concept of time as kairos is intensely personalized because no one else can take charge of it on your behalf. Kairos is yours alone and the summons it presents is yours only. No one else can live if for you.

This little booklet is presented to us in this same spirit. Retired Lutheran pastor Peter Mogk authored seven reflections for our daily devotion during Treaties Recognition Week. Peter offers helpful insight into the history and meaning of treaties and invites us to reflect upon both in light of the biblical message of God's call for peace, justice, reconciliation, and healing.

So here we are in the chronos or calendar time of Treaties Recognition Week. As we read the following pages, one for each day, we will recognize that we are living in the kairos time of discernment and response. May God bless our individual and communal journeys through Treaties Recognition Week in many ways!

The Lutheran and Anglican congregations of the Bay Ministry Area and the Waterloo and Brant-Norfolk Deaneries will also observe Treaties Recognition Week with a Blanket Exercise (Wednesday, November 9) and an afternoon of learning and worship at the Woodland Cultural Centre and Her Majesty's Royal Chapel of the Mohawks (Sunday, November 13).

For more Information please contact:

Rev. Thomas Mertz, St. John's Lutheran Church, Hamilton (905-527-6611)

Rev. Dr. Tim Dobbin, St. Mark's Anglican Church, Brantford (519-752-6451)

For the Anglican-Lutheran working group for Treaties Recognition Week.

We all are treaty people

Read Micah 6:6-8

“With what shall I come before the LORD . . . but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God?”

We are living in a kairotic time; we are called to discern the signs and commit to a response in God’s calling. The past is dead, the wounds are numberless, and hope is a necessary work in progress. We have work to do - together. Getting started summons each and every one of us to consider the challenges and the foundations for the future.

This is a time of great convergence and opportunity for reconciliation. We have Scripture, the ninety-four Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canada’s full commitment (10 May 2016) to implement the terms of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (commonly referred to as UNDRIP), numberless voices (biblical and secular) calling for a new faithfulness and relationship, many expressions of apology, KAIROS’ Strength for Climbing: Steps on the Journey of Reconciliation, and the Province of Ontario’s proclamation that the first full week in November will be known as Treaties Week.

A good starting point is the Two Row Wampum Treaty (Guswenta); more than four hundred years old. It provides an excellent illustration that a treaty establishes a **relationship** between two **nations**. The first quality of this relationship is respect. The two nations establishing the treaty anchor it in demonstrations of love. These nations commit to live respectfully with each other, without interference, without dominance, in shared territory. Mutuality is expected to be a way of life. Thus it is a living story of relationship intentions. This original vision of commitment features power for life together; not power of one way of life over another way of life.

Believe it or not, a treaty is all about relationship; we will repeat this word often to help focus on the true nature of a treaty. A treaty is an affirmative document that speaks of hope for wholesome relationships; a commitment to live and grow together as one family.

Treaty includes every person in both nations “for as long as the sun shines upon the earth, as long as the water flows, as long as the grass grows.” So, whether we are new in the territory or have old roots, we all are treaty persons. Everyone living in treaty territory is a treaty person. A treaty reminds us that each and every single one of us is in treaty relationship. I am a treaty person. You are a treaty person. We all together are treaty people. Daily living reveals our treaty health.

Does this sound like Genesis material where all come from the same earth, the same shaping by Divine hands, the same vitality by the Breath of Life?

Everyone on the territory is involved in living out the fundamental truth of the relationship acknowledged and affirmed in a treaty. This is family-community stuff and we all know that family relationships call for ongoing work. We all are family members. We all are treaty people.

“O God of ev’ry nation, of ev’ry race and land, redeem your whole creation with your almighty hand.” Amen.

from William W. Reid, Jr.’s O God of Every Nation

What is the problem with treaties?

Read Micah 4:1-4

. . . they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The problem with treaties is the same as problems with church and government; people, perceptions, and power. History is full and alive with illustrations of treaty ignorance. One painfully and potently clear example is provided in respect to the people on whose traditional land I live, namely, the Haudenosaunee aka the Six Nations of the Grand River.

Nathan Tidridge shares a vitally important insight into the difficulty with treaties, when he writes: Canada deals with modern Treaty negotiations as if they were divorce proceedings; lawyers are involved as details are hammered out in some sort of agreement that will settle things once and for all, so that both sides can move on separately with their lives. An indigenous perspective sees treaties as a marriage: a relationship that is constantly evolving. Filled with agreement and disagreement, times of intense love and cold distance, a marriage is always a work in progress. Never static, it is a relationship that requires constant communication, attention, and respect. As with any successful marriage, love must always be found at its centre.*

A treaty is the establishment of a chain of relationship, portrayed in the Covenant Chain wampum. Two nations are tied in relationship so that, if one nation pulls on the chain in time of need, the other nation will respond in friendship. If the relationship demonstrates static or becomes troubled, then "polishing the chain" is the expression for addressing the matter to revive, refresh, and reinvigorate the relationship.

Sir William Johnson was intimately familiar with Mohawk people, their language, and their ways. He knew both the treaty makers and the power shakers. He wrote from practical experience about the perception and use of power, when the commander of the day tried to get Indigenous treaty people to swear an oath of subjection and loyalty to King George III. Johnson tried to prevent perversion of the Treaty of Niagara, 1764, and wrote:

. . . none of the Six Nations, Western Indians &ca. ever declared themselves to be subjects, or ever will consider themselves in that light . . . the very Idea of Subjection would fill them with horror.*

Power perverted a relationship into subjection, turned people into objects to be manipulated, and perceived land as a commodity and possession to be taken to oneself; a fatal approach to treaties.

Let us build a house
where love can dwell
And all can safely live,

from Marty Haugen's hymn "All are welcome"

*Nathan Tidridge, The Queen at the Council Fire: The Treaty of Niagara, Reconciliation, and the Dignified Crown in Canada (Toronto: Dundurn, 2015), 44 & 69. Emphasis mine.

A treaty is listening?

Read Micah 2:1

Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power.

If you have not experienced the Blanket Exercise, you are missing a unique educational opportunity in treaty matters.

One Sunday the Blanket Exercise was incorporated into our worship time. We walked around shoeless on the Canadian part of Turtle Island (Indigenous name for North America). Over time the land diminished, our movement was restricted, people were removed because of death through disease, many were sent off to residential schools, some were isolated by distance, others were relocated and died in alien environments, and so forth. It was a powerful and emotional time.

The follow-up talking circle was an important part of this experience. Each person, including the elders and leaders, sat in a circle and spoke in sequence. This was a most informative and helpful time of sharing; the heartbeat of life.

I later spoke with an Indigenous gentleman and asked what impact the residential school experience had had in his life. Not surprisingly, he indicated that he had not been to residential school. I accepted his response and asked if it would be offensive of me to ask another related question. He said that he would take no offence. Then he indicated that "Yes" members of his family had been to residential school and there had been a spillover into his personal life.

He told me his mother's name, the number that had been given to her in the residential school and used instead of her name. Tears began to form in his eyes. He tenderly informed me that he had never told this to anyone; not in his complete lifetime.

Then he shared that his mother had died. As she had been growing older and he knew that her days were numbered, he approached her. He asked if she would accept a question that he had been wanting to ask all his lifetime. She welcomed his question, "Mother, will you give me a hug?"

He explained that her time in the residential school had stolen from her the fundamentals of family gentleness and care, which we take for granted. She had been removed from her own home at a young age, when identity and life skills were being formed. She had been placed with strangers and disciplined into impersonal compliance. Identity and self-worth were stolen from her; part of what the Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Canada in 2015 called attempted cultural genocide.

Yes, his mother hugged him and years of emotions were shared during her remaining days. But he had to ask for a hug. This is what happens, when we deny or forget that treaties are relationships and listening with love and respect is the life blood of every relationship. Listening is radically different than exercising the dominating voice. Who do we become when we refuse to listen? We have decades and centuries of listening to do, if we are to grow toward reconciliation.

O, God of earth and altar, bow down and hear our cry. Amen.

from Gilbert K. Chesterton's [O God of Earth and Altar](#)

When treaties go wrong

Read Micah 3:1-12

Should you not know justice?

My brain contains an indelible image that screams about what happens when treaties "go wrong."

Do you remember the photo from the 1990 Oka crisis? A uniformed Canadian soldier stands firm, while a mask-wearing camouflaged Mohawk warrior gets fully into his face from a distance that seems to be no more than ten centimetres. The power compressed into this image is explosive. Uniformed power of the state vs. camouflaged Indigenous resistance. Standoff. Confrontation. The potential for violence is palpable. Just looking at the picture has a powerful visceral impact.

I was amazed at what happened within me, as I looked at this image. It took some time to move beyond stereotypes and confrontation to actually come to the issue that sparked this demonstration.

Do you know that this involved land in Oka, Québec, that was held "in trust" by a seminary for the nearby Mohawk people? Do you know that seminary officials decided to ignore this trust and independently sold the land, even though this contained a cemetery with memorial stone markers?

When a local golf club **unilaterally and without consultation** decided to expand and a proposal was made to "develop" this sacred site, confrontation resulted. Several people died and the world witnessed Canada's historic abuse of treaties and Indigenous people. This was prior to the United Nation's development of UNDRIP, which became a major problem this century because previous federal governments did not like and ignored the five little words, whose active recognition could have prevented and avoided the total Oka crisis; "**free, prior, and informed consent.**"

It has become quite clear to me that Private Patrick Cloutier was following his military orders and Brad Larocque had stepped away from his economics studies at the University of Saskatchewan to stand forth in the name of justice. It is just as clear that, when I take time to learn the facts, the focus of the crisis changes from two men to two **nations** and it all is rooted in ignorance or denial of the true nature of treaties; no relationship, no mutuality, no love, no trust.

Does this picture change for you, when you learn that violation of treaties leads to violation of life and lives; our own lives too? https://www.nfb.ca/film/my_name_is_kahentiiosta/

With God we weep, lament, confess
how holy zeal and bloodied hand
Reached out to kill and dispossess,
proclaiming love and taking land.

We tell our varied memories,
assembled in our global room,
that Christ may wash our histories,
as threads for Love's eternal loom.

from Brian Wren's "The Gospel Came with Foreign Tongue"

What do we bring to treaties?

Read Micah 7:13

But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their doings.

When Jacques Cartier sailed into what now is called Baie des Chaleurs, he was greeted by Indigenous people in canoes. They had been fishing to feed their people and approached the ship. His ignorance and fear projected onto them hostile intentions. He fired his cannons to bolster his own sense of security. He did not know or understand the biblical history and practice of the hospitality being lived out before his wary eyes. The open kindness displayed was interpreted as weakness to conclude that these people would be suitable for subjugation.

Pausing to consider the subsequent history of struggle by these Indigenous peoples to have access to the waters and forests that had constituted their home for some 11,000 years, I am appalled that the darkness of settler ignorance has been permitted to continually pervert hospitality into hostility. For nearly five hundred years, we have demonstrated profound lack of discernment. The religious concepts and practices of empire have followed the same pattern. Hospitality is converted into hostility, abuse, and attempted cultural genocide. Thus apologies have been offered.

But what have we learned? Have we been converted to right-mindedness that knows the true practice of hospitality? Are we prepared to move beyond the penance of welcoming war refugees as a beginning sign that we are at the threshold of genuine reconciliation and wholesome treaty recognition with our Indigenous hosts? I hope that we honestly are learning that:

To welcome the stranger is to acknowledge him as a human made in God's image; it is to treat her as one of equal worth with ourselves - indeed, as one who may teach us something out of the richness of experiences different from our own. The stranger's gifts may come to a family circle or a society. Yet the undocumented foreigner . . . is not greeted with hospitality or even acknowledged as a human being in God's image.

Ana Maria Pineda, "Hospitality" in Practicing Our Faith

To offer hospitality to a stranger is to welcome something new, unfamiliar and unknown into our life-world. . . . Strangers have stories to tell which we have never heard before, stories which can redirect our seeing and stimulate our imaginations. The stories invite us to view the world from a novel perspective.

Thomas Ogletree, Hospitality to the Stranger

Our challenges are immense, as we are invited to move to a sustainable way of life and environmental stewardship in place of the business model that perceives resources as mere things to be devoured without recognition that we are devouring ourselves and the future of all we love.

For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

from Fred Kaan's "For the healing of the nations"

Treaties test us

Read Micah 1:3-4

For, lo, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. Then the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will burst open, like wax near the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

I am embarrassed by my country's history with Indigenous peoples. Ashamed, too. This pain increased, as I read James Daschuk's Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013). The subtitle and two quotes provide a shocking summation. Historically

Malcolm D. Cameron, a Liberal MP, accused the Indian department of being driven by "a policy of submission shaped by a policy of starvation."

Communities that entered into treaties assumed that the state would protect them from famine and socioeconomic catastrophe, yet in less than a decade the "protections" afforded by treaties became the means by which the state subjugated the treaty Indian population.

What I learn about my country's perception and use of treaties is profoundly disturbing. It leads me in two directions. First, it points toward an answer to a question often posed to Germans of the Nazi era, "How could you let Hitler do that?!" Secondly, my Bible reading leads me to ask if we have been worshipping an idol or idols, to which too many lives have been sacrificed.

Yes, I do recognize that we have high regard for our first Prime Minister and local attention has been given recently to the placing of a memorial statue. I also know that he served as the first Superintendent General of Indian Affairs with destructive design. Thus one may wonder how his reputation will stand the test of time and truth.

Along with this, I know that I have glowed with pride at Canada's international reputation in justice and peace-keeping. It has been great to travel abroad and be recognized as Canadian; past tense. The reputation was either a lie or it has been squandered. But the glow is fading rapidly. It is being washed away to show feet of clay and the truth of what is hidden in our treaties history. Will we respond to establish an honest recognition?

Difficult decisions and humbling actions seem to fill the forecast for the path ahead. We will be tested. We will be measured in our responses to the Calls to Action as well as in our response to God's living Word.

Let there be light, let there be understanding,
let all the nations gather, let them be face to face.

Let there be light, open our hearts to wonder,
perish the way of terror, hallow the world God made.

from The United Methodist Hymnal

Treaties are wonderful teachers?

Read Micah 7:18-20

He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot.

I am thankful that an author friend in England encouraged me to read Hugh Brody's Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier. The dedication touches into a world of wisdom.

. . . dedicated to an old man whose gentleness of manner never got in the way of his persistent demand for an end to the war against his people. He also knew that to win in the white man's way would be another, and perhaps fatal, defeat. . . . And the undeclared objective of this war has always been to deprive the indigenous inhabitants of their resources: territory, water, wildlife, fish, language, religion, even their children.

He recognizes the truth used by empires, that is, the terra nullius doctrine; the empty land premise that comes with the idea that anyone not like yourself is not human, does not exist, or is of no value or consequence. This pompous self-delusion denies the past as well as the narrowness of insight into the violating specific self-aggrandizing interests of the newcomer. It is totally contrary to any biblical teaching. Yet terra nullius has been known to find validation in imperial religious interests. For whose glory, indeed?!

Thank God that the survivors of residential schools have been supported to share the criminal anguish of their lives with redemptive intention. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) graciously honours this knowledge in the forty-ninth of ninety-four calls to action.

We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.

Being present at the healing circles of the TRC provided potent witness to the healing liberating power of speaking the truth, being embraced in this truth, and being accompanied as an honoured human person on the endless journey of healing that opens into the future. I have been touched to tears and sorrow by these testimonies to abuse of power, position, and persons. I have been embraced in gracious gentle wonder in this circle of new beginnings; humbled beyond words and expectations to ask, "Will you forgive me?"

The future, however, is not a matter of words but a call to learn how to walk together in a new way, which is the right way. We are called to begin a long journey; a new exodus.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

from Fred Kaan's "For the healing of the nations"

Your perceptions, please

We would like to learn from your reading of this brief material. Your responses will assist us in future planning activities. Please give your replies to the person providing this reading material.

1. Has reading this booklet provided you with new information?

Yes ___ No ___

2. Have you experienced challenges? (Please explain in as much detail as you wish.)

Yes ___ No ___

3. How does this new information touch your faith?

4. What areas or aspects touched upon here would you like to explore further?

5. Would you like to speak with others about what you have learned and experienced?

Yes ___ No ___

6. Would you like to participate in

a talking circle? Yes ___ No ___

a reconciliation study or reading group? Yes ___ No ___

a movie exploration series Yes ___ No ___

(If interested, please provide personal contact information on reverse side of this page.)

7. Will you recommend this booklet to others or offer a copy to read?

Yes ___ No ___

8. What suggestions and other comments would you like to share?

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____