

NEW—Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group (JTRAG)

A number of interested people from Sydenham St and Chalmers United Churches have been meeting regularly since November to consider our collective responses to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. You will recall that the Commission, chaired by now Senator Murray Sinclair, found that Canada had attempted cultural genocide in its treatment of First Nations People. Canadian churches, including the United Church of Canada and its pre-1925 predecessors played a role in this policy by operating residential schools. The United Church of Canada issued a formal apology for its part in 1986 and again in 1998. For more information, see <http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apologies>

There is much more to do. Senator Sinclair has called specifically on church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop education strategies to ensure learning about the church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools and what the apologies were necessary (Call to Action 59)

To date, the group hosted the KAIROS blanket exercise for church members in January and will offer this interactive narrative on the relationship between Canada's First Peoples and Europeans across 500 years of history on consecutive Sundays in June--on June 11th during worship at Chalmers and on June 18th in City Park, with St. James Anglican Church. We are looking to establish lending libraries on Indigenous history and culture, our relationship across time, and reconciliation at each of our churches. On Saturday, June 10th, Mary-Stewart Ross (CUC), who chairs this group with Lynn Freeman (SSUC) organized a concert with proceeds benefitting the Ontario Native Women's Association Indigenous Food Project.

Over the coming months, we will be exploring opportunities to connect with others in Kingston who share our interest to affect change in our relationship with First Nations people and advance reconciliation. We will also be looking at new opportunities to educate ourselves and others in our congregations on these issues.

A new website (<https://sites.google.com/site/jtragkingston/home>) provides information on our group activities and a calendar on coming events in the area that may be of interest. Please feel free to contact Lynn lynn.freeman@queensu.ca or Mary Stewart marystewartross@gmail.com if you have questions or suggestions. Please also watch for further invitations to join in the path to reconciliation.