

The Three Sisters Soup Luncheon

(prepared by Lynn Freeman and shared with SSUC congregation on September 17th, 2017)

This year Canada celebrates 150 years since Confederation. This anniversary also provides an occasion to recall that North America, known as Turtle Island to many Indigenous peoples, was their home for more than 10,000 years before Europeans arrived on this continent.

At its August meeting, the executive voted to recognize that our church and community are located on the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee—five of the Six Nations that constitute the Iroquois Confederacy and the Anishinaabe which include the Ojibway and Algonquins. Extending our commitment to inclusivity we will include on the front cover of the weekly bulletin formal recognition of the historical stewardship of this territory by these peoples.

Our congregation, with Chalmers United Church, recently established the Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group. In response to the 2015 release of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee that suggests that we all have a role in advancing reconciliation among all of Canada's people. Our goal is to learn — and in some cases relearn — our history and the truth about our relationship with Canada's First Peoples and to contribute—as we are able—to Reconciliation of our relationship with First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples.

A first step is learning about the history and culture of Indigenous Peoples. Today we offer Three Sisters Soup at the lunch hosted by the Social Justice and Outreach Circle. For at least 500 years, the Iroquois and other Indigenous peoples grew corn, beans and squash together. Like good sisters, they supported each other in a sophisticated and sustainable system.

Corn, a staple crop, grows best in combination with other crops. It provides a natural pole for beans and beans in turn supports the corn stalks. Beans also absorb nitrogen from the air and improve soil fertility for the future production of corn. Squash and pumpkin plants shade the corn and bean roots as a natural mulch; their prickliness protect the corn and beans from raccoons and other predators. Together these three foods provide a diet rich in carbohydrates, protein and vitamins.

In the coming weeks and months, the Joint Truth and Reconciliation Action Group will look to create new opportunities for learning and action—in

cooperation with other local churches—to advance reconciliation. SSUC group members include Rev. Rienk Vlientstra, Jim Leake, Kate Mackrell, Barbara Parrott and Lynn Freeman (co-chair). You are welcome to join this small group and share your ideas for change. In sharing Three Sisters Soup today, we recall that Canada's First Peoples have given thanks for the harvest to the Great Spirit for thousands of years, just as Christian settlers have done on this same land for hundreds of years.