



YELLOWKNIFE UNITED CHURCH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2014

An Update on Internship

In the winter edition of the Yellowknife United Church newsletter I described the importance of internship as part of the educational journey into ministry. However, as I also pointed out, the educational experience is not limited to the person serving as an intern. It is a journey of learning for everyone involved: intern, supervisor, lay supervision team, congregation and wider community.

It was heartening to have the budget for a four month internship approved at our financial congregational meeting, but of course with any decision, the allocation of dollars to the cause is only a part of the requirements for a successful internship.

Alison will come to the experience of internship with a number of learning goals – specific things she wants to experience, learn and develop. Some of those goals will be specific to Yellowknife and Yellowknife United Church and some will be more general in nature. Everyone doing an internship will want to use the experience to develop or brush up on the many skills required for pastoral ministry.

However, as the comments above will suggest, there are many learners in this situation, and so it will be expected that I as the supervisor will also have a set of learning goals, specific things I want to work on in partnership with Alison. Not only that, but the Lay Supervision team will also be expected to develop some learning goals for their time spent with Alison.

There are also some logistical issues we need to consider. As was previously announced, we have been extremely blessed by the donation of housing for the four months of the internship, but we won't know the details about the housing until close to when we need it. So, we should be prepared to donate some household items in case it is unfurnished space that is provided to us. We will also need to create office space for Alison for four months. I have a few ideas about how this might happen. It even adds a bit of excitement to the process as the opportunity to reconfigure space, time and location can lead to some other insights and positive changes in the way things are done.

This is a wonderful opportunity for our congregation. I think the presence of Alison and her family among us will bring a freshness and vitality to our community and I am looking forward to all that we learn about ourselves in the process and as we explore together the changing nature of God's mission among us.

Stay tuned for opportunities to contribute to the success of this venture and to contribute to ministry formation for an eager and excited intern.

Peter Chynoweth

**WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED –
OR WHY YOU ARE NEEDED AT OUR ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

“For where two or three have gathered in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20)

Yellowknife United Church will be holding our 2014 Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, May 25th, following worship. We hope you will be there.

In case you're thinking – “didn't we just have a meeting in February?” – you're right, sort of. Our February meeting is our Annual Financial Meeting, at which we review the financial results for the year just past, and review and approve a budget for the current year.

In May or June we hold a Congregational Meeting to do a number of things - we receive annual reports from the Official Board, Committees and other church groups, nominate and elect officers and raise and discuss issues of concern to the congregation.

The Annual Congregational Meeting is run according to the rules set out in *The Manual*, the document that outlines the by-laws of The United Church of Canada. Anyone may attend a congregational meeting. The members of the congregation are entitled to vote on all matters relating to the congregation's life and work. Adherents are those who participate in a congregation and who contribute regularly to its life while not being a member. With the consent of the members, adherents may vote on matters of a “temporal” nature (those secular matters that pertain to the daily life, work, and finances of a congregation). If you are not sure if you are a member, please contact Rev. Peter Chynoweth or Gwyneth Davis at the church office. If you would like to become a member, please let Rev. Peter know.

A quorum for the meeting consists of 20 members, or one third of the membership roll, whichever is less. In our case, this means 20 members. Our tradition in the United Church of Canada is very much inspired by the belief that the Holy Spirit has a better chance of creeping into the discussion when at least two or three are gathered. That is why *The Manual* does not allow 'proxy votes'. You have to be physically present so you can hear the debate before you decide.

Which brings me to my final point: your presence is needed on May 25th. Not just for a quorum, although this is important so that the administrative business of Yellowknife United Church can happen, but more critically, so that the life and work of our church can be inspired by the vision, contributions, and ideas of all of us.

See you on May 25th!

Margaret Melhorn
Board Chair

Update from the Affirm Committee

The Affirm Committee continues to work on ways to reach out to our broader community to share and celebrate our status as an Affirming Ministry.

Last November, Sharon Chynoweth attended an Affirm event in Calgary on behalf of the congregation. We benefit from the guidance and wisdom of our brothers and sisters who have also walked this path.

The May issue of “Faith in Action” newsletter is now available at united-church.ca/communications/newsletters/faith-in-action and it provides a link to Toronto Conference's new website for WorldPride, and relates several interesting examples of local communities – from seniors' facilities to affirming ministries – putting their faith into action.

For more information, please ask a member of the Committee, and check out affirmunited.ause.ca.

United Church Women News

The Yellowknife United Church Women (UCW) would like to offer a big thank you to the whole congregation for supporting us in our endeavors over the past year. With your help we have raised just over \$3,000 which will be used to help support the life and work of the church locally, nationally and internationally.

There is one more activity in our year and we invite the women in our congregation to come out and join us:

June 16/14 6:30 p.m. - Year-end pot luck and penny auction (great opportunity for food, fellowship and fun); hosted by Gwyneth Davis at 150 Herriman Road.

Please bring a pot luck dish to share and one or two new or gently used wrapped gifts which will be auctioned off. We will also distribute the funds we have raised over the year.

For more information, please contact Gwyneth Davis at 873-5856 or Jeannette Hall at 873-3942.

A Familiar Face in the Church Office!

Spring brings with it much welcomed sunshine and warmth. This spring has also brought back to us the warmth of Gwyneth as our church office administrator. If you've been by the office during the week you'll have noticed that Deanna is no longer there, having departed to pursue other opportunities. The M&P Committee conducted an open competition for her replacement and had a number of well qualified people apply. Unexpectedly, Gwyneth was one of those and was the successful applicant. Gwyneth brings with her lots of experience with managing the Multi-Purpose Area and administration for our church and will continue to implement changes made during the last year.

Please join the M&P Committee in giving Gwyneth a warm YKUC welcome back.

Northern Lights Presbytery Meeting

In September this year, Yellowknife United Church will be hosting the Northern Lights Presbytery meeting. The members of Northern Light Presbytery are looking forward to their trip north with much anticipation. Although much of the time will be taken up with business, as hosts we are planning to set aside a little time to give our visitors a wonderful northern experience.

We are currently looking into activities that can be achieved in the short time we will have together. The group will be travelling by bus, arriving on the afternoon of Friday, September 19th and departing after a potluck lunch following services on Sunday, September 21st.

There will be a number of opportunities to volunteer your services, as we will need food prepared, billets for accommodations, and other miscellaneous things that will become more evident closer to the date. Keep us in mind during your busy summer season.

I feel privileged to be able to be your representative in this endeavour and thank you for this opportunity. See you around.

Cynthia Creed

Truth & Reconciliation National Event

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Truth and Reconciliation National Event held in Edmonton March 27 – 30th. It was a busy, profoundly moving experience. I volunteered in the churches' listening area. It was one of the official listening circles available in the Shaw Centre.

I was staying with my cousin, Theresa Wynn, who had been working on this event for several months. We began on the Wednesday by helping set up the area we were volunteering in. We spent most of our time hauling in huge bags of prayer shawls that had been knit by people as far away as Florida. Most of you have heard the story of the loaves and fishes prayer shawls. They were to be given as a gift, from the churches, to those who shared their stories in the listening circles and the commissioners panel. It was thought that we would need about 500. Since we were worried there wouldn't be enough, the call went out far and wide for them. We ended up with close to 2,000. They were coming in 300 at a time, it was unreal. They were stacked up to the ceiling, bags and bags of them. When we were deciding what we would do with them, Trevor, a young Anglican priest, suggested that we want the church to be seen as a place of abundance, so we should give them away. Over the next four days, we gave away hundreds and hundreds of prayer shawls to survivors, children and grandchildren of survivors. This drew many people to the churches' listening area and gave us opportunities to visit with them. Men, women and children wandered all over the Shaw Centre wrapped in these shawls and the loving thoughts and prayers of the people who made them.

Thursday morning, the Opening Ceremonies began with The Grand Entrance of the Chiefs, dignitaries, commissioners and flag bearers. The drums beat long and hard. It was a stunning display of tradition and power. I sat in the huge auditorium surrounded by more than 2,000 indigenous people from all over western Canada and the north. I felt the strength and energy in that room radiating from the people there and I thought "Change is possible, that it can be different and that these people can rise up again to take their place as leaders and teachers in our country."

I had the opportunity to hear many people talk about their experiences at residential school as they gave their statements in a listening circle or in the commissioners sharing panel. I also had many conversations with people in the churches' listening area. All of these stories had a common theme of loneliness and fear. Over and over again, I heard about the horrific treatment, beatings, and rapes. In spite of all of this, these people had survived. It is a testament to the strength of these people, that this could be possible.

Long ago, at least it seems like that to me now, I had believed that the residential school system in Canada was the government's attempt at providing an education for indigenous people. I know now, that it was a system deliberately designed to strip a people of their culture and literally beat them into submission. This became crystal clear to me, as I listened to statement after statement given by people describing what had happened to them. The sheer volume of numbers of people willing to come forward and share their stories proves, once again, this was not just something that happened to a few children and that they were not isolated incidences.

At the same time, in the midst of all this sadness, there was much joy and laughter as friends and relatives greeted each other. The talent show and the concert were well attended and enjoyed by all. I heard stories of peoples' parents who had met in residential school and married one another and were still married.

Throughout the weekend, I felt I held it together pretty well. I would breathe deeply and try hard not to cry as I listened to people speak and at other times, I was filled with helpless rage. But come Sunday, I found myself ambushed by grief and I cried throughout the day and was simply powerless over it. I cried for those little children who suffered needlessly at the hands of an uncaring country and for those parents left behind. I cried for all those people growing up carrying this shame and believing they are "less than" because that's what they were taught.

On a happier note, as volunteers for the church, we had a part in the closing ceremonies. The churches baked cupcakes, thousands of cupcakes. In the packed big hall, church volunteers, adults and children, distributed cupcakes to the crowd. We then sang happy birthday in honour and memory of all the survivors, who had not celebrated birthdays in residential school. There were two giant screens at the front of the hall at the Shaw and they had a huge fireworks display on them while "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" played over the loud speaker. It was a spectacular end to a spectacular event!

I feel privileged to have witnessed this last National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). As I have said many times "I thought I knew, but I didn't know" and now I can't not know the truth of what happened in the residential schools and the ongoing legacy of that brutality and abuse. A British journalist, when writing about boarding schools in Britain, said something like this - the physical and sexual abuse grab the headlines but the underlying cause of the complex trauma surrounding this is "the withdrawal of love and the denial of safety". I believe this with all my being. I believe it is our responsibility as United Church people, as we work toward reconciliation, to begin by learning as much as we can about the residential school system in order to understand what happened here in the north and the rest of Canada.

I cannot emphasize enough the amazing work done by the TRC and the process of these events themselves. As Yellowknife United Church, we can be so proud of and grateful for the work done by Marie Wilson. Watching her perform her duties as a commissioner, I saw grace and compassion in action. I was there for a weekend and still am deeply moved by what went on. She has been doing this work for years, so I can understand in only a small part, what this has been like for her. Please take the time to look at the TRC website, the CBC Aboriginal site and the United Church site for the many videos and stories about the TRC.

Kathy Burns

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper



Family Games Night

On Saturday evening, March 15th, cries of “SkipBo!”, “Hey, you played a Wizard on my ace!”, “Cheat!” could be heard at the first Family Games night held in the auditorium at NUP.

Fourteen adults and four kids played games such as Connect Four, Cheat, SkipBo, Wizard, Tarabish. The kids were great at teaching the adults how to play the games they brought and judging by the laughter and excitement all evening, it was a great time. Everybody agreed that another games night should be planned for the Fall/Winter.

Food Rescue provided game snacks – popcorn, chips, nuts, licorice and pop – perfect for munching on while enjoying a most enjoyable and fun evening with friends!



Recent Baptisms

What do you think about our Health Care System.....

April 16th, a few people interested in our Health Care system gathered at NUP to listen to Wendell Potter and Michael McBane from the **Canadian Health Coalition**. This coalition is a public advocacy organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of Medicare.

Did you know that the United Church of Canada is a member of the Canadian Health Coalition? In fact the United Church of Canada has advocated in support of universal health care for 60 years.

Michael McBane talked about a number of issues relates to our current health care system. We have all heard, “that our health care system is unsustainable”. In fact this is a myth. Public health care is sustainable. Increases in spending often come from private services not covered by Medicare and inappropriate use of expensive services. I have worked as a Public Health nurse for many years. I feel strongly that we need more preventative services rather than continuing to put money into more and more diagnostic equipment.

Our system of health care does have challenges but we need to ensure that “quality health care is based on need, not ability to pay” and we “must improve our public health care for everyone, instead of expanding private for-profit services that benefit only a few.” It was very interesting to listen to Wendell Potter who worked in the past as an insurance broker in Pennsylvania. He talked about the inequitable system in the US. He sold expensive health insurance that many could not afford. He talked about his personal story and how he could not in good conscience continue to be a part of this system where a few with money can benefit and those who cannot afford insurance do not access care. Even someone like Christopher Reeves (Superman) who was a millionaire before his accident had to rely on fundraisers to pay his medical bills. Private insurance is the thing that is not sustainable.

Did you get a chance to sign the Medicare Pledge? It is not too late...

United Church members are invited to sign a pledge in support of Medicare. See the United church web site or see the following link:

<http://www.united-church.ca/communications/news/releases/140324>

If you are interested in talking about this more please chat with Karen Hamre or myself, Nancy Trotter. Check out the Canadian Health Coalition web site at www.healthcoalition.ca



YKUC Altar



Anita Gue and Karen Wilford transferring church memberships to YKUC

A Reflection on a Youth Group Visit to the NWT

I came to visit the north two summers ago as a leader with a group of youth from three United Churches in Toronto. We call the group 'YouthonBloor' after Bloor St, the major street that the three churches are situated on. During the planning phase of the trip we reached out to the community of Yellowknife United and Elaine Stewart became our indispensable guide and helper. We were blessed with your hospitality at Northern United Place and the generosity of your congregation with camping equipment and car lending. We spent twelve full and glorious days divided between Yellowknife, Lutsel K'e and Wekweeti. Our time was spent meeting and learning from Dene and non-Aboriginal people and discovering the land and water. We also spent intentional time together reflecting on our experiences and thinking about our positions as settlers from southern Canada and what we might begin to do to live in solidarity and work toward reconciliation with, in particular, northern Aboriginal peoples.

Presently, I am in the midst of a ten week nursing placement at the Adele Marie Bishop Health Centre in Behchoko. I am studying nursing at the University of Toronto, and when a special Aboriginal Health program opened the door for me to come back to the north I jumped at the opportunity. My experiences here in July 2012 made the decision an instantaneous one. There were three broad draws that developed during those twelve days and deepened my desire to come back: connection with people, connection with the land, and a call to continue to find my place in the troubled web of settler-Aboriginal relations.

The People – We met with many notable folks during our trip and they each inspired and challenged me in different ways. Stephen Kakfwi arrived in the upstairs landing of Northern Place with his guitar in hand. He shared his music with us intertwined with stories about his experiences in residential school, his work as an activist and leader and his struggle with substance use. What struck me the most was his emphasis that anger and bitterness cannot sustain an activist and for him music is what has helped him find healing and strength. We met with eighty-eight year old Rene Fumoleau in the community of Lutsel K'e. He came to the north from France in 1953 as an Oblate priest and has lived amongst the Dene ever since. He is an incredible storyteller and I have continued to treasure *Here I Sit*, his book of poignant stories. In Wekweeti at the Tlicho Annual Gathering we intermingled and spoke informally with Tlicho young and old. We sat in on the open forum sessions and listened as Tlicho people addressed their leaders. I felt welcome at the gathering, but it was a new experience to feel like such a complete cultural outsider while still within the boundaries of Canada. I am glad to be back amongst the Tlicho here in Behchoko. I have more time to build relationships, learn about their culture and history, and be a privileged part of the health centre team caring for them.

The Land – It is difficult to describe exactly what feels different about this land, but it fills me with a sense of awe and gladness. July in Toronto is very humid and I was in love with the dry crisp air of the north the moment I stepped off the plane and took a deep breath. It was delicious. I did not realize before I came here two years ago just how many lakes dotted the landscape. We were able to appreciate the scale and beauty of them from the air during a plane ride, on the water in canoes and on a motorboat ride across Great Slave Lake from Lutsel K'e back to Yellowknife. Elaine led us on a hike to Cameron Falls and we took in the jutting rocks of the Canadian Shield and the small but determined trees and bushes that grow here. In Behchoko I have enjoyed wandering along tracks through the forest and especially love the many groves of birch trees that stand in contrast to the evergreens in this early spring time.

Our time here also allowed me to begin to appreciate that the land is not just for "enjoyment" as many city slickers like myself tend to treat the great outdoors. Neither can it be totally "preserved" in its natural state. It is the means for sustaining the Dene people and they have struggled for many years against settlers and the government for control of their land and to use it as they see fit for their people. I identify as an environmentalist and am generally a critic of natural resource extraction because of the cost to the entire ecosystem. However, this trip helped me see that I was coming to those views from a privileged position as a settler who has benefitted immensely from Canada's wealth of natural resources taken from Aboriginal peoples' lands. How can I then turn and criticize the Dene for wishing to be included in accessing that kind of wealth for their people by agreeing to resource extraction projects on their land? On the other hand, the staff of the Tlicho Land Protection Department at the Tlicho Gathering taught our group about how resource extraction projects affect caribou routes, water and fish. Preserving land and water for traditional activities is also a clear priority of the Tlicho and they are working to find the right balance for them. The land is powerful and these decisions are challenging. I was grateful for the opportunity to think about my environmentalism from a new vantage point, and I continue to be open to these questions.

The Call – Our excursions to Lutsel K'e and Wekweeti opened my eyes to the ways in which I was continuing to think with what I call "a colonial mindset," especially when it came to healthcare and its provision. I saw health problems like diabetes and poor dental hygiene as the result of settler impacts and my response was a desire to "help." That is not entirely bad in itself, but I also continued to see the power and resources for solving such problems lying with aspiring health professionals like myself, instead of with the Dene people. Through reflection and discussion with our group, I began to recognize that "fixing and helping" have been major sources of justifying and perpetuating colonialism, and healthcare has been and continues to be especially implicated.

I brought those reflections and realizations with me when I entered my Toronto nursing program in September 2012. I have continued to try and recognize and deconstruct my colonial thinking as it has arisen. I have come to the (unsurprising) conclusion that this is a long term ongoing process. I came back to the north partly because I want to become a nurse capable of serving Aboriginal peoples' self-determined needs, and to be a critic of a settler-imposed healthcare agenda. My time at the health centre in Behchoko has helped me realize it's not quite that simple. However, I continue to be open to learning from everyone and everything I encounter, and I

reflect on my experiences through conversations with close friends and writing. I also appreciate this placement for the opportunity to continue building personal relationships amongst the Tlicho.

I was drawn back to the north for a wide variety of reasons. The Yellowknife United Church congregation was and continues to be a strong source of welcoming hospitality that makes me feel like I could easily belong here. I will end with a quote from a novel I just recently finished called *Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese. It is a grandmother talking to her grandson about mystery. It inspires me to keep opening myself to the mystery of Creation as I continue on my journey.

““We need mystery,” she said. “Creator in her wisdom knew this. Mystery fills us with awe and wonder. They are the foundations of humility and humility, grandson, is the foundation of all learning. So we do not seek to unravel this. We honour it by letting it be that way forever”” (p.60).

Blessings on your community and thank you for inviting me to share this reflection.

Madeleine Endicott



The Toronto Youth Group – Summer 2012

The following link is to a video made by the youth group from Toronto entitled *Planning an Exposure Trip*. The video describes planning for the trip and their experiences visiting the NWT. Have a look, hear from the youth and see their beautiful pictures of Yellowknife, Lustle' Ke and Wekweeti.

<http://vimeo.com/60305874>