

CYM Annual Report on Truth & Reconciliation Work

Period covered: August 2016 – June 2017

Prepared by Quaker Indigenous Rights Committee – 20 June 2017

At its annual gathering in 2016, the Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) approved a minute (see <http://quakerservice.ca/reconciliation>) that reported on the work done by Quakers in Canada in support of Indigenous rights and Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The minute also listed six action points for Quaker Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups to take forward into the coming year. One of the action points asked local Quaker groups to report back to the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) on their annual reconciliation work, and tasked CFSC with preparing a report for CYM. The present report is compiled in response to this action point. It is based on reports sent by eleven Monthly Meetings (Annapolis Valley, Calgary, Coldstream, Cowichan Valley, Edmonton, Hamilton, Ottawa, Peterborough, Vancouver Island, Winnipeg, and Yonge Street), one Worship Group (Lillooet), and one Allowed Meeting (Prince Edward Island) about their activities since August 2016.

Each Monthly Meeting and Worship Group (MM & WG) has several individual Friends and/or attenders who are committed to reconciliation, connected with local Indigenous peoples, leaders and organizations, and involved to varying degrees in relevant local efforts. Some of the MMs & WGs established working groups, committees, or sub-committees (usually under Peace and Social Concerns) to work on Indigenous rights. The individual Friends and attenders, either on their own or through these committees, brought relevant information to their MMs & WGs, connected the Quaker community with local reconciliation efforts, and helped organize events and educational initiatives within their MMs & WGs and in the community. This appears to be the primary process through which the work of Truth and Reconciliation is moving through our Quaker communities. It is a process with both advantages, e.g. individuals who feel called to this work are deeply committed and can inspire and help their Quaker communities to learn and become involved; and pitfalls, e.g. Indigenous concerns sometimes are automatically assigned to, or seen as the responsibility of, the committed individuals, while the larger MM or WG receives reports/information but remains disengaged. Thoughtful awareness can help MMs & WGs navigate these dynamics and avoid pitfalls, and some of the reports hint at such awareness.

The MMs & WGs engaged in one or more of the following types of (sometimes overlapping) activities:

- a. By far the most frequent was attendance by MM & WG members and attenders at **local events** focused on Indigenous rights: conferences, symposia, talks, workshops, art exhibits, campaigns, demonstrations, powwows, films, etc.;
- b. The second most frequent type of activity was **education** of MMs, WGs, and local communities on Indigenous rights and issues, including The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Doctrine of Discovery, and local Indigenous history. This often included production and distribution of **educational materials**, and distributing information on local issues and events through newsletters, listservs or calendars;
- c. Individual Friends and attenders were actively involved with **local Indigenous peoples and organizations** and contributed organizational, educational, legal and other types of services;

- d. MMs and WGs provided **resources** (funds, meeting space, time, materials, organizing support) towards local projects, groups and organizations promoting Indigenous rights;
- e. Individual Friends and attenders participated, helped to organize, and/or supported **local ecumenical efforts** for Indigenous rights, with KAIROS and/or local congregations (particularly United, Unitarian and Anglican);
- f. Some MMs and WGs began acknowledging the traditional and treaty territories on which their members and attenders worship and live;
- g. Many individual Friends and attenders, some MMs and WGs as a whole, and the newly established (sub)committees and working groups have been engaging in **processes of self-reflection** around issues of colonization, privilege, oppression, disenfranchisement, and racism in relation to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Below are examples of such activities, organized loosely by the five action points from the 2016 CYM minute. These examples cover many, but not all, of the details included in the MM and WG reports.

1. to continue to educate themselves, including children and youth, about the doctrine of discovery, the ongoing effects of colonialism, the UN Declaration, residential schools and their legacy (including the TRC Report), the history of the land on which they live, and reconciliation efforts.

Annapolis Valley MM established an Ad-hoc Truth and Reconciliation Committee, which among other activities that keep the Meeting engaged and informed, has been publishing a newsletter with relevant events and campaigns. The Committee has also been working to create a background document on the history of treaty relationships in the Annapolis Valley, and engaging in continued learning of how to approach right relationships.

Coldstream and Winnipeg MMs supported local Blanket Exercises with facilitators and/or volunteers. Ottawa and Vancouver Island MMs members participated in local Blanket Exercises during the year.

Ottawa MM supported the Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights, a 600 km walk from Kitchener to Ottawa in support of the adoption and implementation of UN Declaration. One OMM member was part of the discerning circle that guided the planning and execution of the event, and another member participated in the Pilgrimage itself, with the support of the Meeting.

Peterborough MM engaged in a reflection session using the CFSC materials on repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, and produced a response later approved by the MM. Recently, the Meeting drafted a query about relations with Indigenous peoples, based on a query from Australian Yearly Meeting.

Vancouver Island MM established a working group on Relations with First Nations, in response to the 2016 CYM minute. The working group committed to education, sharing new learning, and circulating information on First Nations-related events; it also organized a number of events engaging the whole Meeting, including an exploration of the six action points from the CYM 2016 minute.

Winnipeg MM engaged in a series of learning sessions during 2015 and early 2017 on topics related to Treaty Relations and reconciliation. Outcomes included Meeting participating in a talking circle, planning a Treaty Celebration, and printing and distributing over 5,000 pamphlets with TRC's 94 Calls to Action, among other actions.

Several members of Yonge St. MM conducted extensive research to learn about the history of the land on which the Meetinghouse is located.

None of the reports spoke of engagement of children and youth in education activities. How much of this is due to the low numbers of young people in MMs & WGs, rather than a lack of attention to educating youth, is not clear. It is hoped that future reports would include details on this matter.

2. to formally acknowledge the traditional territories where their Meetings are located and engage in processes of reflection on the meaning of this. Acknowledgments can be accomplished through signage, statements during the close of Meeting, and inclusion in information provided to any community groups who use Meeting House space.

Annapolis Valle MM added an acknowledgment of the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq to its website and Facebook page, with the understanding that "land acknowledgments must be the beginning, not the end."

The Cowichan Valley MM added an acknowledgment of meeting on traditional lands of the Cowichan Tribes to its brochure and website.

Hamilton MM has established an acknowledgment, verbally at business meetings and special events, and in a framed notice in the foyer of the Meetinghouse, of being located on traditional Indigenous land.

Ottawa MM recently approved revisions to its Guidelines for Use of the Meetinghouse that included specifics on how to provide free use of the premises for local Indigenous events, groups and organizations. This amendment was adopted in response to the TRC Calls for Action, the CYM 2016 minute, and in acknowledgment of the Meetinghouse being situated on unceded Algonquin territory.

Two members of Winnipeg MM were instrumental in the formation and work of *Share the Gifts – Honour the Treaties*, a grassroots organization of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who work towards honouring the Treaty relationships.

3. to find out about current concerns of Indigenous Peoples from those territories, including land appropriation or resource development, with which the Meeting could be engaged.

Through the Coldstream MM's contact with the Chippewas of the Thames, a coalition was formed between that First Nation and people in Beechville to prevent the formation of a garbage dump that would leach into the Thames River.

Members of Cowichan Valley MM attended an awareness and fundraising presentation in Duncan by the Unist'ot'en in support of their traditional camp and healing lodge in the Wet'suwet'en matrilineal territory, preventing pipeline and tanker logistical support.

Several members of Hamilton MM have had long-standing active concerns on Indigenous issues and rights. One member has been working with CFSC's Indigenous Rights Committee for 20 years; another has been collaborating with the Mississaugas of the New Credit for 30 years, and working with the Hamilton Sisters in Spirit Committee for 10 years; another member has been working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on a collaborative book project titled "People of the Moose River Basin."

Ottawa MM has been supporting Centre 510, a drop-in center for homeless Indigenous people run by the local Friendship Centre, with annual Meeting and individual donations. One member of Ottawa MM

has been coordinating the 100+ volunteers supporting Centre 510, and several Meeting members have been volunteering at Center 510 on a regular basis.

PEI Allowed Meeting continued to support the initiatives of New Brunswick MM in First Nations matters, e.g. supporting NBMM and Passamaquoddy efforts to urge the federal government to recognize the Passamaquoddy as a nation.

Several members of Peterborough MM supported local groups and Curve Lake First Nation with the organizing of community education events such as documentary showings and a local conference. One attendee has remained actively involved with the Kawartha Truth and Reconciliation Support Group beyond these events, and helps to connect and inform the Meeting.

Members of Vancouver Island MM working group are actively involved with many local concerns, such as the Moosehide campaign, a grassroots movement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men who are standing up against violence against women.

4. to investigate projects of cultural revitalization that Indigenous Peoples are involved in and discern if there is an appropriate role (including funding) that Friends can play.

A member of Calgary MM, who works with Cold Lake First Nations in Treaty 6 Territory, has been coordinating potential Meeting support for their youth summer camp.

A member of Lillooet WG is designing a leadership training for Indigenous women to be delivered in a series of workshops over three years, at the request of the local Friendship Center, and with support from the Equitas International Centre for Human Rights Education.

A member of Winnipeg MM developed a workshop on a Community Resilience approach to suicide prevention in Indigenous communities and, in response to a call for help with a youth suicide crisis in Pimicikamak Cree Nation (Cross Lake, MB), successfully fundraised for and organized a three-day Gathering of Artists at Cross Lake, with the support of the MM. Eleven local artists and 75 community people participated.

Yonge St. MM sent four parcels of art supplies, accompanied by messages of support from people in the Meeting, to Attawapiskat after the youth suicide crisis in that community.

5. to uphold and support individual Friends involved with grassroots Indigenous rights and provide spiritual support to Friends led to this work. This might include offering committees of care and approving minutes of support.

Each of the thirteen reports names individual Friends who are committed to and involved with grassroots Indigenous rights. Often it is these Friends who wrote the reports themselves. No committees of care or minutes of support were specifically mentioned in the reports. This does not mean that the respective Friends did not receive support from the MMs or WGs; in fact, reports included words of support and appreciation. It is hoped that future reports will also include information on any minutes of support, committees of care, and other practical support offered, as this would reflect on the commitment of MMs and WGs to support efforts towards right relations with Indigenous peoples and possibly inspire other Meetings across Canada.