

**Toronto Southeast Presbytery  
Inter-church Inter-faith Team Meeting  
May 17, 2011, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.**

**Roll Call:**

Present: Amy Thornton, Wenh-In Ng, Debra Schneider, Cynthia Scott, Hans van Nie  
Regrets: Marion Current, Richard Choe, Karen Hamilton, Margaret Mooney,  
John Joseph Mastandrea, Jennifer Palin

**Welcome & Check-in:** Team members brought each other up to date on various personal news items and participation in various events.

**Minutes of March 15<sup>th</sup>:** minutes of our March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed and adopted.

**Items arising from the Minutes:** We had a “follow-up” discussion about the Mission Strategy for Southeast Presbytery and talked about any further input we might try to provide.

**Multifaith Formation Working Group:** The group is willing to work on the preparation of a presentation during a Presbytery plenary session in 2011/12 if we are asked to do so.

**Relationship Building with Muslim Communities:** We are waiting for a progress report from John Joseph on plans for a pilot project at St. Luke’s United Church which is looking into establishing relationships with neighbouring mosques.

**Reports from liaison persons with partner groups:**

1. **Toronto Urban Native Ministries.** Jennifer Palin shared by email, some of the responses from persons who attended the day long workshop on March 26<sup>th</sup> at Council Fire:

Jennifer:

First I would like to thank you for encouraging me to attend today's session. I wish I was better at expressing myself so I could make you understand how much listening and being part of this group meant to me. I was very interested in all the other comments but very shocked at hearing about the tragedy and the sorrow that our leaders caused the first nation people and their descendents. I hope that more learning and understand could take place in groups like this. Personally I have already tried to tell Don and my daughter Leanne. She taught in the Toronto school system for 10 years before living in the US. We must continue with love and hope for the future.

Sincerely,  
Barbara

Three people from the Noor came to the workshop, they were a great asset – here are some comments from one of them:

Greetings Jennifer:

First of all I wish to thank you for making me aware of the event yesterday.

As for commenting on my experience at the workshop, I found it educational, interesting, welcoming and warm. It is for me always a positive learning experience to meet with and learn from Native People, and Fatima and I are hoping to maintain dialogue with some of the folks we met yesterday.

I found Andrew Wesley's "spirituality" presentation informative and inspiring, and the Blanket Exercise a compelling, innovative and effective technique of encapsulating the tragic history of the Native Peoples. However, if I had to rate my experience of the day - on a 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) scale- I would settle on a 7.5. I humbly and respectfully offer the following suggestions, which could improve any future workshops:

1. Andrew's presentation on the Medicine Wheel needed to have been prefaced with a more directive context. His presentation assumed that each one of us would use the wheel in teaching Native spirituality, for which, I am sure, many of us would not have the necessary depth of knowledge. I may be wrong, but that is how it came across to me.

2. The impact of the Blanket Exercise would have been further enhanced if the instructions to the participants were clearer.

3. As you know, I had to leave during the afternoon session, so my comments apply only to that portion before you took over the presentation. The portion for which I was present consisted of a reading by the presenter of Native historical information.

For future workshops I respectfully suggest that the material that was read instead be mailed to attendees in advance so they could read it themselves. Then, during the workshop, the presenter could summarize the highlights and convert the session into a discussion/participative format, based on pre-selected key issues from the material. (As you well know, a participative format is much more conducive to learning than one in which the audience are in a passive receiving of information mode).

Having said what I did, I felt that the workshop provided for me very valuable insights and understanding of Native spirituality and history, and would hope that the United Church would continue its support of this initiative. Among some of the things that I feel would be a very positive contribution toward making Canadians aware of Native history would be to have a polished pre-packaged presentation of the Blanket Exercise made available to high schools in the country.

In conclusion, Jennifer, I once again express my very sincere thanks to you for giving me the opportunity to experience the Workshop. May God bless you for your noble efforts in bringing all God's children closer to each other.

Kassim

Hello Jennifer,

I found the TUNM Aboriginal Spirituality Day to be a great learning experience. It was new for me to learn how the First People's Spirituality is related to the Christian Way. The review of our history and the resulting consequences for Aboriginals was a most worthwhile exercise.

Charles Stafford (Cosburn United Church)

Hi all,

I appreciate leaders and participants planning this wonderful event with presentation and sharing. It was for me significant learning moments for better understanding and being in solidarity with friends in pain. I hope we continue our journey of transformation for just relationship with mutual respect towards perichoresis. Here are some photos with reduced density. For higher density ones, please email me.

Thank you.

Blessings,

John

The Reverend John Young-Jung Lee  
Minister, Dentonia Park United Church  
Chairperson, Toronto Southeast Presbytery

This is from an Aboriginal woman who came with her grown up daughter:

Hello,

I'm thankful too. We all call Creator God and we all carry the medicines and teachings to heal together. I received so much that day, and was honoured to be present with leaders and other members of our communities, together in a circle. Andrew, you packed in so many teachings during the morning session, I thought you would drop from exhaustion before lunch, all the good ones... but as always I love the most is the story about the brother who remembers and the important reminder of the Seven Grandfathers - Love, Respect, Wisdom, Humility, Honesty, Bravery and Truth. So it was a good circle. It was a good day. Thank you Sandra and Allan and Jennifer for planning the workshop. Also, thank you John, for taking the pictures. See you again, to all of you.

love and respect,  
sabrina

2. **Toronto Area Interfaith Council.** John Joseph Mastandrea reported by email that the Mayor's Breakfast will be held on Thursday June 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. The theme is CEASE FIRE- Ending Youth Violence in our neighbourhoods with MPP the Rev. Dr. Cheri Di Novo as key note speaker. The interfaith trip to Israel and the West Bank being planned in early September still has room for more Christian participants.

3. **MultiFaith Alliance To End Homelessness.** The MFATEH held its AGM on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Wenh-In Ng provided us with some updates. MFATEH has a pretty good website: a [www.mfateh.ca](http://www.mfateh.ca)
4. **Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto.** Cynthia Scott reported on some recent activities and an initiative to begin some fund-raising. We agreed that Doug McKenzie should be invited to act as an official representative. Hans will be in touch with Doug.
5. **United Methodist Church/World Council of Churches: “Monitoring news coverage of religion in prime time”** - Wenh-In provided a report on an interfaith project being sponsored by the United Methodist Church in connection with the World Council of Churches’ World Alliance of Christian Communication. The project will focus on monitoring news coverage of religion in prime time. When-In has agreed to be the Canadian contact person for this project and she is inviting individual ICIF Team members to be involved in the actual monitoring along with a few people in their congregations and local faith communities. There was enthusiastic response to this invitation from the small number of Team members present at this meeting. We will discuss this project again at our meeting in September.

**Next Meeting Date / time /place:** Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 4 p.m. before the plenary meeting of the Presbytery

**Adjournment:** We adjourned at 5:30 p.m.