



CANADIAN  
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## Sharing Our Faith

2016

Sharing Our Faith is a program of the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC), and it encourages greater associational awareness in our congregations, the fostering of relationships, and a sense of community and connection among and between our member congregations and communities.

Each year, the CUC encourages all congregations to hold a Sharing Our Faith service, and to take up a special collection. The collection is administered by the CUC and given directly back in the form of grants to congregations applying for projects they may otherwise not afford to undertake, and which enhance ministry, growth and/or outreach for that congregation and for the Unitarian and Universalist movement

The 2016 Sharing Our Faith service package focuses on **Truth, Healing and Reconciliation** and was coordinated by Rev. Samaya Oakley and Rev. Meg Roberts, with help of other members of the CUC's Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Task Force - Amber Bellemare, Casey Stainsby and April Hope. Over the past two years, Canadian UUs have increasingly focused on reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. This Sharing Our Faith package contains readings, spiritual exercises and rich resources to help congregations and communities reflect on the theme of Reconciliation.

This package is offered for use by congregations as they plan their Sharing Our Faith services. It is the hope that as congregations create their worship service, they will remember others are using the same resource package and that the connections and relationships between congregations and communities will be strengthened.

Where a Canadian Unitarian Council maple leaf chalice symbol  is displayed after the name of a writer, it indicates that he or she is a Canadian or has served a Canadian congregation as their minister.

If you have any questions about this package, the program or would like to apply for a Sharing Our Faith grant, please contact us at [sharing-our-faith@cuc.ca](mailto:sharing-our-faith@cuc.ca).

We hope this collection will be a valuable aid in preparing your Sharing Our Faith service.



## SHARING OUR FAITH SUNDAY RESOURCES

2016

Prepared by Rev. Samaya Oakley and members of the Truth, Healing  
and Reconciliation Task Force

### Table of Contents

Some Suggested Activities to Undertake During Our Month of Reconciliation	3
Suggested Hymns	5
Selection of Opening Words and Chalice Lightings	6
Selections for Time for All Ages	8
Selection of Meditations	10
Selection of Readings	13
Selection of Sermons	177
Words for the Offering	29
Selection of Closing Words	30
Suggested Template for Order of Service	35



## SOME SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO UNDERTAKE DURING OUR MONTH OF RECONCILIATION

1. **Look for, and share** your own, additional resources on an online platform for exactly this purpose. You can access the information at <https://canadianunitarianuniversalistthemes.wordpress.com/category/reconciliation-feb-2016/>
2. **Consider participating in a local walk in support** of the Annual Women’s Memorial March on Sunday, February 14, 2016 instead of holding a service. For local walk information please visit <https://womensmemorialmarch.wordpress.com>
3. **Host a Reconciliation Dialogue** in your home with family, neighbours, and colleagues! Reconciliation Canada provides a Community Action Toolkit to help you do it. The 6-page Kitchen Table Dialogue Guide is found at [http://reconciliationcanada.ca/reconciliation-begins-with-me/downloads/CommunityActionToolkit\\_KitchenTable.pdf](http://reconciliationcanada.ca/reconciliation-begins-with-me/downloads/CommunityActionToolkit_KitchenTable.pdf)
4. **Express yUUrself! Join the Canada-wide community art project!**  
In addition to Sharing Our Faith this month, the Truth Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guide Task Force has joined the Canadian Unitarian Council and the Vancouver Conference Host Team in a nation-wide community art project for the CUC’s National Conference during May 20-22, 2016 in Vancouver, BC. UU congregations and individuals are asked to name their actions towards truth, healing and reconciliation. The theme of the 2016 National Conference is **Bolder Ways of Being**, and we invite you to help us create this bold expression:

***“May our Unitarian Universalist chalice light our way to truth, offer its warmth in our healing, and may its fire strengthen our commitment to the process of reconciliation.”***

### Here’s how:

1. Print out the [flame template](#) provided onto cardstock.
2. Please hand out copies to anyone who is engaged with or wants to engage with the process of truth, healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people: members and friends, children and youth. We suggest using this as an interactive piece in a Sunday service, youth group discussion, or perhaps at a craft table during coffee hour. If your congregation has done a project or program, or is planning a project or program this congregational year (Sept.2015 - June 2016), have the organizers also do one for each project/program, along with the name of the congregation.
3. Invite everyone to reflect on the following questions:



1. **What action(s) have I taken on the journey of truth, healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in this congregational year?**
2. **What is one step I commit to taking this next year in that journey?**
4. Cut out the flame, write your name, your congregation (or where you're from), and one action or step you took, and/or one you commit to take. Then decorate it! Use colours, text, sparkle, whatever you feel best expresses those commitments. Feel free to decorate both sides of the cardstock flame, if you are so inclined.
5. These expressions of reconciliation can either be:
  - mailed to Vancouver's Host Committee c/o Amber Bellemare  
6-1803 MacDonald St.  
Vancouver, BC. V6K 3X7
  - or designate one person in your congregation to collect them and give them to your congregation's CUC delegate(s) to bring with them to the conference.

We will be using all the flames from UUs across Canada to form one great flaming chalice in Vancouver for the CUC's National Conference, May 20-22, 2016. Or, even better, come to Vancouver for the Conference and bring it with you and deliver it in person to our project table!

If you have any questions, please contact:  
Amber Bellemare  
514.686.0763  
[amberdawnbellemare@gmail.com](mailto:amberdawnbellemare@gmail.com)



## SUGGESTED HYMNS

### 1. HYMN: #1023 Building Bridges

### 2. HYMN: Evening Breeze

Introduction to the chant

One of our sources is:

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

For some that is Aboriginal spirituality, some turn to other earth-centred spiritual traditions. This is a chant for rituals from the other spiritual traditions—it comes from Circle of Song: Songs, Chants, and Dances for Ritual and Celebration by Kate Marks.

Evening breeze, spirit song,  
sing to me when day is done.  
Mother Earth, awaken me  
with your heartbeat of the sea.

Turning in, turning out,  
heal me true and all about.  
Spirit song, sing to me  
with your heartbeat of the sea.

***Please see Appendix A for a suggested template for an order of service.***



## SELECTION OF OPENING WORDS AND CHALICE LIGHTINGS



### 1. Acknowledgement of the Land, Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Reflection

#### Team:

We gather this morning to turn the attention of our minds and hearts to the theme of truth, healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples. We begin by acknowledging the traditional territory upon which we gather across this country. For many thousands of years, the Aboriginal, Metis and Inuit peoples (or insert the name of the specific peoples on whose land you gather) have sought to walk gently on this land. They offered assistance to the first European travellers to this territory and shared their knowledge for survival in what was at times a harsh climate. We seek a new relationship with the Original Peoples of this land, one based in honour and deep respect.

We light our chalice, symbol of Unitarian Universalism, inviting in the light of truth, the warmth of community, and the fire of commitment.

### 2. Response to the Government of Canada's Apology, Chief Phil Fontaine:

Our opening words are from Chief Phil Fontaine, when he was the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. It's an excerpt of his response to the Government of Canada's Indian Residential School Statement of Apology:

"We must now capture a new spirit and vision to meet the challenges of the future.

As a great statesman once said, we are all part of one "garment of destiny". The differences between us are not blood or colour and "the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us". The "common road of hope" will bring us to reconciliation more than any words, laws or legal claims ever could.

We still have to struggle, but now we are in this together.

I reach out to all Canadians today in this spirit of reconciliation.

Meegwetch."

In this spirit, we light our chalice today.

(Note: Meegwetch is an Ojibway, an Algonquin and a Cree word that is translated into English as 'Thank you.')

### 3. Words written by the Unitarian Universalist Association's Leadership Council:

This is "A vision for Unitarian Universalism in a multicultural world":

With humility and courage born of our history,  
we are called as Unitarian Universalists



to build the Beloved Community  
where all souls are welcome as blessings,  
and the human family lives whole and reconciled.  
With this vision in our hearts and minds, we light our chalice.

#### **4. When I Change, Illuminations, Ma. Theresa Gustilo Garrado:**

“We are here to derive meaning in our actions. We are here to win our power back over our areas of powerlessness. We are here to deepen our understanding of ourselves in order to strengthen self-discipline. We are here to abolish prejudice with an appreciation for our diversity and differences. We are here to feel our personal power and our capacity to affect the lives of other people. We are here to become teachers to each other. I am here to see that my singular life become a gateway to countless possibilities. When I change, the world changes.”

#### **5. Words from the UUA website, Author Unknown<sup>1</sup>:**

“Our first task in approaching another people,  
another culture is to take off our shoes,  
for the place we are approaching is holy.  
Else we find ourselves treading on another's dream.  
More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.”

#### **6. Opening Words and Chalice lighting by Rebecca A. Edminston-Lange:**

Reader 1:

Come in. Come into this place which we make holy by our presence.  
Come in with all your vulnerabilities and strengths,  
fears and anxieties, loves and hopes.

For here you need not hide, nor pretend,  
nor be anything other than who you are and are called to be.

Reader 2:

Come into this place where we can touch and be touched,  
heal and be healed,

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<sup>1</sup> found on the UUA website, <http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/introduction/misappropriation/37852.shtml>



forgive and be forgiven.  
Come into this place, where the ordinary is sanctified,  
the human is celebrated,  
the compassionate is expected.  
Come into this place.  
Together we make it a holy place.

Reader 1:

In celebration of the warmth and light of this congregation,  
we light our chalice this morning.

(Reader 2 lights the chalice)

## SELECTIONS FOR TIME FOR ALL AGES

### 1. “When I was Eight” By Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard.

Introduction:

This true story is based the life, courage, and resilience of Margaret Pokiak-Fenton (the author’s mother-in-law). She lived far north in Canada, so far north that if she lived another mile north, she’d live with Santa Claus!

She lived in a time when they used to send First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children away to school—their parents didn’t have a choice. Over 150 years ago, many people who moved to this land we now call Canada thought that they had the right ideas about how to raise children, how they should look, and how they should behave. This carried on for generations and generations of children. This book is about one girl's experience.

(read the book)

Follow up questions:

How do you feel after hearing this story?

(responses)

What do you think about Olemaun (OO-lee-maun) burning her socks?

(responses)

When someone has done something at school to hurt you or a friend of yours, what have you done?



(answers)

Many of the children who went to the residential schools had hurts from being there. And some of them, like Olemaun (OO-lee-maun), learned things they loved, like reading, playing new sports, different music. Not all nuns and teachers were like this one, there were kind people in some of these schools as well. But it caused pain to the children, their families, and communities. This is a story of a girl who was brave and stood up for herself when people were being unfair.

Those schools don't exist anymore. Now we're learning not to treat First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children and their families that way, but to respect them and their cultures.

If you have any questions about this story, including how you feel about it, you can talk to your parents, or to me, so we can talk about it together. Thanks for being such good listeners. Now is the time to go off to your programs.

## **2. Shi-shi-etko, Nicola I. Campbell – available through your local library or you can watch the Youtube<sup>2</sup> video**

Introduction:

Gather together children, because I'd like to tell you a story. It's a story of how a young girl prepares to go to her first day of school. How many of you remember your first day at school? I'll bet some of you were scared? Excited? Looking forward to it? Because Shi-shi-etko came from a First Nations community, she was being sent away to school to live. As she gets ready, she gets some important lessons from some important people in her family. Let's read the book and find out what she learns.

(Read the book.)

Shi-shi-etko was going away to school for a year. Why do you think her mother, father, and yahyah spent time with her in the creek learning to pray, in the woods, and on the water? What's the one thing they kept saying to her? To remember. This happened at a time when children like Shi-shi-etko were sent to a school so that they would not be taught what her mother, father, and yahyah taught her and so that they would forget about their way of life and take on a new way of life. As Unitarians we believe it important that we learn from what used to be done so that we learn new ways to accept each other and keep on learning together.

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<sup>2</sup> The Youtube video is about six minutes long: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKErhCGjSDE>



## SELECTION OF MEDITATIONS

### 1. Words from Tomson Highway:

Tomson Highway, an Aboriginal musician, storyteller, and eternal optimist says that "Native theology works in a different way. There is no heaven, there is no hell, there's just a circle. The circle of life and death that interconnect, and that when we pass away, we leave this planet, we don't go up or down. We stay [in] another part of the circle." As we enter the reverent space of silence, let us reflect on where we stand in the circle.

### 2. Flying Down Thunder and Rise Ashen Video<sup>3</sup>:

This video could be used in a variety of ways: as music coming out of a time of meditation, or to read the paragraph and have the video as the meditation.

“Ottawa, Canada duet Flying Down Thunder and Rise Ashen blend traditional Algonquin chanting with globetrotting dancefloor mixology. On Kijigog Nimiwan, the chant summons the listener to come together into a community. This community is all of Creation. Birds, trees, grasses, all respond to the rhythm and Flying Down Thunder is connected to them, dancing with their spirits and dialoguing with the beauty of the forest. Anishnabe people view us as keepers of the land, and these images are an expression of deep interconnectedness in our natural world, a reminder that Creation is ours to cherish and protect.”

### 3. 'Nukum' (meaning 'Grandmother' in English) by Innu singer/songwriter Florent Vollant<sup>4</sup>:

Let us enter a time of meditation and contemplation by listening to the music of Florent Vollant. As an Innu author, composer and singer, Florent expresses his commitment for life and the love of the land through his music. As a peace artisan he wishes to “share and to abolish the frontier of the ignorance and the intolerance between the natives and non-natives.”<sup>5</sup> Let us enter into a time of reflection.

### 4. "Sing Our Own Song" by Buffy Sainte-Marie (Cree singer-songwriter), from 'Power In the Blood' album won the 2015 Polaris Prize for best Canadian album<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> Flying Down Thunder and Rise Ashen Video on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXL3uRqX4I>

<sup>4</sup> Available on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada CD.

<sup>5</sup> From: <http://www.mckenzie-vollant-fans.com/?page=bios-discos&lang=en>

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://www.vagalume.com.br/buffy-sainte-marie/sing-our-own-song.html#ixzz3tEZ8Y93m>



As an alternative option for meditation you could play Buffy Saint-Marie’s “Sing Our Own Song.” If so, we recommend that you print the lyrics in the order of service.

The great flood of tears that we've cried  
For our brothers and sisters who've died  
Over five hundred years has washed away our fears  
And strengthened our pride, now we turn back the tide

We will no longer hear your command  
We will slide your control from our lands  
Re-direct the flame of our anger and pain  
And pity the shame, for what you do in God's name

We will stand for the right to be free  
We will grow our own society  
And we will sing, we will sing,  
We will sing our own song

When the ancient drum rhythms ring  
The voice of our forefathers sings  
The will to live will beat on, we will no longer be pawns  
To greed and to war, We will be Idle No More

We will stand for the right to be free  
We will build our own society  
And we will sing, we will sing  
We will sing our own song

When the ancient drum rhythms ring  
The voice of our grandmothers sings  
Native America run, we will no longer succumb  
To oil and to ore, we will be Idle No More

We will stand for the right to be free  
We will build our own society  
And we will sing, we will sing  
We will sing our own song

We will teach about the right to be free  
We will build our own society  
And we will sing, we will sing



We will sing our own song

Dance dance for the right to be free  
We will build our own society  
And we will sing, we will sing  
We will sing our own song

And occupy for the right to be free  
We will rebuild a just society  
And we will sing, we will sing  
We will sing our own song

Amandla a-way-thu

#### **5. Prayer for Living in Tension by Joseph M. Cherry, Voices from the Margins: An Anthology of Meditations:**

If we have any hope of transforming the world and changing ourselves,  
we must be  
bold enough to step into our discomfort,  
brave enough to be clumsy there,  
loving enough to forgive ourselves and others.

May we, as a people of faith, be granted the strength to be  
so bold,  
so brave,  
and so loving.

#### **6. Parts We Play ... Parts We Write by Harold Rosen, Sharing Our Light, Nurturing Group Spirit at the North Shore Unitarian Church:**

Each of us needs to take some time for ourselves...  
time to pause from the busyness, and the worries;  
time to find the quiet centre within.

I invite you, then, to settle into a little more comfort  
perhaps closing your eyes ... enjoying the breath  
of Life, the warm togetherness, the calm surroundings.

We can easily imagine that the world's a stage, and



all the men and women, merely players ...  
they have their exits, and entrances ...  
and each of us, in our own time, will play many parts.

We play the parts of Yes-sayer, and No-sayer, praise-giver and critic ...  
with our love and understanding.

Let us own our power to shape many of the parts we play ...  
and let us accept, gracefully the parts we cannot alter.

Enjoying now, the Wise Silence that brings peace.

## SELECTION OF READINGS

### 1. With words from “An Expression of Truth and Reconciliation”<sup>7</sup>:



As Canadian Unitarians we draw from various sources for inspiration: direct experience of the forces that uphold life, science, world religions, and spiritual teachings of earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. We hold in common seven principles, and see how these were transgressed in the Canadian Indian Residential School system and by government legislation.

This was denied when First Nations, Aboriginal, and Metis people were forced to relinquish their cultural identities and denied the nurturance of their families and communities.

Reader 1:

We affirm justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Reader 2:

These were violated when parents were forced to give up their children to a school system where so many children were emotionally, physically and sexually abused.

Reader 1:

We seek to accept one another and encourage each other’s spiritual growth.

Reader 2:

This was disallowed when your spiritual practices were outlawed and another religious tradition imposed upon you.

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<sup>7</sup> From March, 2014: <http://cuc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CUC-Expression-of-Reconciliation.pdf>



Reader 1:

We support a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

Reader 2:

Although many children received basic education, they were also used for manual labour, living in unsanitary conditions, leading to thousands of deaths from tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.

Reader 1:

We promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

Reader 2:

The mere imposition of this school system was a clear violation of the use of any democratic process.

Reader 1:

We affirm the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Reader 2:

How could this be achieved when government legislation revoked the basic rights of Aboriginal people to govern themselves?

## 2. “I’m Not the Indian You Had in Mind” Video by Thomas King<sup>8</sup>:

Thomas King is a novelist and also more recently wrote the non-fiction work *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. He wrote and directed this short video, “I’m Not the Indian You Had in Mind,” which challenges the stereotypical portrayal First Nations peoples in the media. This spoken word short offers an insight of how First Nations people today are changing old ideas and empowering themselves in the greater community.”

(Show video)

It is suggested that a time of quiet reflection is allowed after watching the video for people to consider stereotypes we might hold, and what we are learning to see differently.

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<sup>8</sup> Video (5:28) found at: <http://www.nsi-canada.ca/2012/03/im-not-the-indian-you-had-in-mind/>



### 3. Words from the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson:

“The history of Indian Residential Schools in this country, and what needs to be done to address the legacy of them, is not just something for, and about, Aboriginal people. As a country, this chapter of our history belongs to all of us. As its citizens, we all own our past, just as we will all own its future. ... [W]e are all called to “Witness the Future”. Not just the survivors, not just the children, but all of us. Bearing Witness to something important is spiritual work. One of our spiritual advisors recently reminded me that the ancient Greek word for Witness is martyr. The martyr is someone who is willing to risk...though others may try to silence, weaken or distract. Witnessing such a future will also take kind hearts, willing to feel the experience of the other. Witnesses will also need wide vision, to see that Reconciliation is not about individuals. Restoring right relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is about the well-being of family, community and country.”

### 4. "What is Reconciliation?" Video from Murray Sinclair, the chair of the TRC<sup>9</sup>:

(Play the video)

### 5. Reading from Meg Roberts<sup>10</sup>:



In 2012, an Aboriginal-led organization, Reconciliation Canada gathered Aboriginal elders from various Nations, as well as people from those communities who have received official apologies from the government of Canada, including the Jewish, Sikh, Chinese, and Japanese peoples. After two days of sharing, they released a statement. Here is an excerpt:

Our purpose is to speak some truths about the trauma of Indian Residential Schools and other atrocities that have been imposed upon humans around the world. As Canadians, we share a responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured – a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal together, and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren.

How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings, we found that we are interconnected through the same mind and spirit. Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing, and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and

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<sup>9</sup> Video (2:55) found at: <https://vimeo.com/25389165>

<sup>10</sup> From: <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/about-2/history-and-background/elders-statement/>



restore dignity. We discovered that in all of our cultural traditions there are teachings about reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, healing, and balance.

We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth. With those ways of being in mind, join us in facing the challenge of healing Canada of its painful past so we can leave a better future for our children.



## 6. Reading from Casey Stainsby-Thorne<sup>11</sup>:

In June, 2014, Unitarian young adult Casey Stainsby, who was at that time Religious Education Coordinator at the Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Lachine, Quebec (on the island of Montreal), did a pilgrimage between Old Montreal and Kahnawake outside Montreal as part of a Concordia University course.

Casey says, “So many of the contemporary Aboriginal-initiated sacred journeys that we looked at in class (and actions that I've seen happening across the continent in recent years) uphold healing and reconciliation as their central purpose, and are adamant that both Natives and settlers have need of healing from colonial trauma. And, as I have really come to understand over the past few weeks, reconciliation is about healing the relationship. This is not a one-sided affair. So I see it as utterly appropriate and way past due that a group of Non-Native settlers from a Christian university department are making a trek of our own initiative towards understanding. That we humble ourselves with walking on foot into ‘Mohawk territory’, that we make this small effort and gesture of willingness to learn what has come to pass and how we can move forward together.”

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<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from a Canadian Unitarian newsletter article, fall issue, 2014. (Casey was interviewed on CBC radio: <http://www.cbc.ca/allinaweekend/episodes/> under, "Kanawake pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Kateri.")



## SELECTION OF SERMONS

### 1. "How Do I Engage in Truth, Healing & Reconciliation?" By Rev. Meg Roberts



Sermon delivers to South Fraser Unitarian Congregation

Oct.25, 2015

I grew up in Saskatoon in the 1960s and '70s. The first ideas I had about Aboriginal people came from the Hollywood stereotypes shown on cowboy movies. Then, when I was a bit older, I saw some homeless people outside rundown hotels close to the city centre. I may have seen some Aboriginal leaders on TV, but I don't really remember. I remember talking to my mom about when she grew up on a farm outside of Sonningdale, Saskatchewan; she remembers my grandpa having a good relationship with some of the Cree men in the area, who would stop for a chat when they were riding by on their horses.

In school, we learned a bit in social studies about the people who were on the land before the Europeans arrived. But then it was about the Europeans after that. The one significant piece of history we learned in grade seven was about Louis Riel--the second rebellion, in 1885, called the North-West Rebellion at Batoche (in what was then the North-West Territories, later to become Saskatchewan). We made a special one-day field trip to Batoche--we heard about the two-month stand off between Riel and his Métis fighters, and the North-West Mounted Police--we saw the bullet holes in the church. It is a treasured part of the history of that area, and Riel is a hero for many. But my education did not include what happened after that.

If you're Non-Aboriginal, like me, what are some of your early memories of learning about Aboriginal people or of meeting them? (If you are Aboriginal, what are your early memories of learning about Non-Aboriginal people, or meeting them?)

Canada's colonization of Aboriginal peoples and the impacts of the Residential School system are part of our shared history and present reality. I realize that part of learning about that shared history is becoming aware of my own experiences growing up, looking at them as an adult with curiosity and a willingness to learn more about them.

This last June, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools released the summary of their report, including 94 Calls to Action. I was able to be at their closing event in Ottawa when they did, as were other Unitarians. It was an amazing experience sitting in that large room, packed with people in every available chair, others sitting on the floor, people lining the walls and spilling down the hallway. It was live-streamed around the world. It was an important day in Canadian history, one full of hope and promise.

Now what do we do? As a Non-Aboriginal person, as a Unitarian, what is my role in engaging in the truth, healing and reconciliation process?



- First, I realize I need to ground myself in my own Unitarian principles, and recognize where I come from culturally, what my personal history is with these issues (as I was just telling you).
- Then, I need to learn more about the truth of what happened and is happening.
- Next, I learn from Aboriginal peoples what it would take for healing to happen, and what reconciliation might look like. I need to take the time to think about these things as well from my own perspective, and decide on the next steps I am going to take.

First: at the root of the first Unitarian principle is the concept that each person has worth just because that person is a human being. We also believe that that person has a right to explore how to make meaning out of what happens to them, and how to express themselves in the world (as long as that expression isn't harming others or themselves). Each person's identity is created by them, and they have a right to it. This seems like a good idea in theory, but it can get messy and uncomfortable at times when we encounter differences between us.

As Unitarians, when we aim to be fair and compassionate in how we relate to one another, we may think of a guide such as 'The Golden Rule': "Do to others what you would have them do to you." On the whole, the Golden Rule seems like a useful guide, and it has its limitations. If that other person is a lot like you, you may have an idea what they would like. But does this rule consider the differences among us culturally? What if how you like to be treated is not a way that is comfortable or acceptable to me? What if I try to impose my way of living on you? It comes back to considering how your action might be received by the other person. There's a Farside cartoon that illustrates this: picture a diner, at all the other tables are seated pigs and chickens customers--the waitress is standing at a table with a human customer--he looks at the menu and says, "Well, I guess I'll have the ham and eggs."

Then I learned about a Platinum Rule: 'Treat others as they want to be treated.'

It is about not only imaging yourself in their shoes but actually getting to know what another person likes and how they feel. It is also about becoming more aware of who you are and how you behave in the world, and what that says about how you understand the world. When each of us becomes more aware of these things, we can begin to understand how others may perceive the world from their life experiences and cultures.

When the Platinum Rule is not lived out individual-to-individual---such as serving meat to a vegetarian---these kinds of differences can be identified, explored, and negotiated. But when the Golden Rule is applied by a dominant group of people who think that they know what's best for a minority group, this can lead to disastrous results.



A case in point: the way the Canadian government treated Aboriginal people. As many of you know, but for those of you who may not be as familiar with some of these facts, during the formation of this country, the Canadian government (and many Canadians) saw Aboriginal people as less than they were, ‘uncivilized’ according to the rules of the civilization by which they judged (not valuing the civilizations Aboriginal people came from). In an ill-conceived move, the government set up schools that Aboriginal children were required to attend and where they had to reside. The purpose of these schools was to get the children away from their families and communities, to kill the culture they were raised in, and to instill in them a Euro-centric worldview and a religion that the government deemed superior to the children’s spiritual traditions. The government thought this would lead them to become farmers, and thereby recognized as contributing members of society. By the 1850s, the government official policy was the assimilation of Aboriginal people into mainstream society.<sup>12</sup> I read: “While religious orders had been operating such schools before Confederation in 1867, it was not the 1880s that the federal government fully embraced the residential school model for Aboriginal education. While the government began to close the schools in the 1970s, the last school remained in operation until 1996.”<sup>13</sup> In that time—over one hundred years—at least 150,000 Aboriginal children went through the residential school system.<sup>14</sup>

There was terrible physical, emotional and often sexual abuse these children experienced. Not all the children suffered extreme abuse but many did; some children had positive experiences. But all experienced the trauma of being torn from their families, and deprived of their cultures, languages, spiritual traditions, and communities. The government began to contract out the running of these schools to the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church, and the Anglican Church. By 1920, residential school attendance for Aboriginal children between the ages of 7 to 15 was mandatory—some children were put there when they were even younger and some stayed until they were older. The children’s parents would be put in jail if they refused to send their children; nonetheless some did secret their children away from their communities so that the Indian Affairs agent wouldn’t hear about the children and send them away. Many children in residential schools were kept away for 10 months of the year; some, who lived in remote areas, the whole year, year after year.

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<sup>12</sup> Information found on the Indian Residential School timeline at the TRC BC National Event in Vancouver, September 18-21, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=12>

<sup>14</sup> CBC News article: At least 3,000 died in residential schools, research shows. Dormitories for Aboriginal children in disgraced system were disease 'breeding grounds.' The Canadian Press Posted: Feb 18, 2013 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/at-least-3-000-died-in-residential-schools-research-shows-1.1310894>



It is estimated that at least six thousand children died at residential schools (according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Missing Children project).<sup>15</sup> Many deaths were due to the ill health that came from overcrowding, underfunding, poor nutrition and sanitation, and inadequate medical care. For those who contracted tuberculosis, it went untreated and many died—others died from influenza.<sup>16</sup> You might have heard the revelations a couple of summers ago about the nutritional experiments done on over a thousand children in six residential schools across Canada during the 1940s-50s. We have not even begun to understand the impact of those experiments, which no doubt changed many lives not just during those years but also over their lifetimes.<sup>17</sup>

The head of the Supreme Court, Beverley McLochlin said this past May: “After an initial period of inter-reliance and equality, she said Canada developed an “ethos of exclusion and cultural annihilation.” [She said] “The objective – I quote from Sir John A. Macdonald... was to ‘take the Indian out of the child’... In the buzz-word of the day, assimilation; in the language of the 21st century, cultural genocide.”<sup>18</sup>

It took until the 1980s and 90s until those who committed the abuses against these children were taken to court. I read that in 2005,

With the support of the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit organizations, former residential school students took the federal government and the churches to court. Their cases led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. The agreement sought to begin repairing the harm caused by residential schools. Aside from providing compensation to former students, the

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<sup>15</sup> <http://globalnews.ca/news/2027587/deaths-at-canadas-indian-residential-schools-need-more-study-commission/>

<sup>16</sup> In one Globe and Mail article I was reading, from research they did in the national archives found that “As many as half of the Aboriginal children who attended the early years of residential schools died of tuberculosis, despite repeated warnings to the federal government that overcrowding, poor sanitation and a lack of medical care were creating a toxic breeding ground for the rapid spread of the disease, documents show.” “Natives died in droves as Ottawa ignored warnings: Tuberculosis took the lives of students for at least 40 years” by BILL CURRY AND KAREN HOWLETT, Tuesday, April 24, 2007  
<http://www.globeadvisor.com/servlet/ArticleNews/story/gam/20070424/SCHOOLS24> There is also a good short concise summary of IRS system: <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-residential-school-system.html>

<sup>17</sup> “Hungry Aboriginal people used in bureaucrats' experiments  
Food historian published details of nutritional experiments that began in the 1940s,”  
The Canadian Press Posted: Jul 16, 2013 3:20 PM CT Last Updated: Jul 17, 2013 8:02 AM CT,  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/hungry-Aboriginal-people-used-in-bureaucrats-experiments-1.1317051>

<sup>18</sup> “Chief Justice says Canada attempted ‘cultural genocide’ on aboriginals” by Sean Fine, Globe and Mail, May 28, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/chief-justice-says-canada-attempted-cultural-genocide-on-aboriginals/article24688854/>



agreement called for the establishment of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.<sup>19</sup>

So, the Commission is created by and responsible to report to all the parties of the Settlement.

From about the mid-1990s, I have been learning things about colonization and the residential school system (reading various sources and talking to some survivors about their experiences), but I knew there was so much I did not know. I was fortunate to be able to attend the Commission national events in Vancouver, Edmonton, and as I said earlier, this past June in Ottawa.

When I went to the TRC event, I encouraged myself to be curious and to put myself out there, even when I make a mistake or put my foot in it; I was trying not to take myself so seriously or to be so earnest in my approach, but to learn as I go, taking another step along the path. I was trying to live the Platinum Rule, treating others as they want to be treated. And I was able to see more clearly the effects on a massive scale when that doesn't happen group-to-group as well as individual-to-individual.

There are two stories I want to share with you. The first one I heard at the public sharing some survivors did with the Commission members. The man who was sharing was a professional who had created much success in his life. He had grown up in a residential school. He said that like others who had spoken that day, he too had experienced various types of abuse during his time growing up in that school. What he wanted to talk about, however, was the impact these schools had on their communities. What I remember him saying were words to this effect: when I think of when I was taken away as a young child, it didn't have a big impact on my community. It had an impact on my immediate family, sure they missed me, and it had a devastating impact on me in my life. But the loss of one child in a community wasn't really going to be noticed over the long run. But when you consider the loss of all the children, over a number of generations: it collapsed our society, our community's way of being.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=4>. Also

<http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-residential-school-system.html>

The Commission's mandate is to provide a safe and culturally appropriate settings for former students and their communities to tell their stories, to facilitate truth and reconciliation events at both national and community levels, to promote public awareness and education of the Indian Residential School system and its impacts, and finally to submit to all the parties of the Settlement and the Government a report on this system and its recommendations (including establishing a research centre with archives). These are generally stated, with the details of their Mandate as per the Settlement to be found at The Truth and Reconciliation website:

<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=7>

“Its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The Commission will document the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience.” From FAQs page: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=10>



The impact of the residential schools was immense to Aboriginal communities like this man's all over the country. It happened to seven generations---it will take more than a few generations for the healing. The cycles of abuse, addiction, and dysfunction continue through generations, begun by the abuses done to Aboriginal people through the Indian Residential School System. And what kind of loss did it also mean for Canada as a country: can you imagine what it would have been like if such damage had not been done to the many Aboriginal communities across Canada over that century---what would have been the additional contributions of Aboriginal people to our country's cultures, ways of being, arts, economy, and our spiritual understanding of how to live together?

Here's my second story: one day I took part in a dialogue circle, sponsored by the Aboriginal-led organization Reconciliation Canada (based in Vancouver). We each went around, sharing our names, our cultural backgrounds, and where we came from. Near the end of the circle, a Non-Aboriginal woman spoke of the shame she felt about what had happened; then an elder spoke. As a survivor---and she believed the other survivors would feel the same---she did not want other people to feel shame, she said we are just so grateful you are all here---all that we want is for you to hear our stories, to hear what happened to us, so that it won't be forgotten.

I had amazingly transformational experiences at the TRC events, there are so many stories to share. These experiences helped me learn more about what happened, and how it truly is a part of our shared Canadian history. And for healing to happen, I have to get involved. How can we now in Canada, between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people, move from the past's misguided interpretation of the Golden Rule to learning how to live the Platinum Rule: 'Treat others as they want to be treated'?

In the words of Justice Murray Sinclair: "Education is what got us here and education is what will get us out". Education is the cornerstone for change. That is why I am co-chairing, with Rev. Samaya Oakley, the task force that is creating the Canadian Unitarian Council's Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guide. We have collected quality materials for various age groups, and put them into a Unitarian context and provided tools to help people reflect on what happened, how we feel about it, and what we want to do next.

As I am learning more about the truth of this shared history and present realities, my mind turns to how can we approach reconciliation?

Was anyone in Vancouver on the Walk for Reconciliation that happened in September 2013? 50,000 in the pouring rain took to the streets of Vancouver---people of all ages and cultures---we even had a Unitarian team in the walk. It was an inspiring day. It was organized by Reconciliation Canada. A year before that, they gathered Aboriginal elders from various Nations, as well as people from those communities who have received



official apologies from the government of Canada, including the Jewish, Sikh, Chinese and Japanese peoples. After two days of sharing, they released a statement. I want to share a bit of it with you:

Our purpose is to speak some truths about the trauma of Indian Residential Schools and other atrocities that have been imposed upon humans around the world. As Canadians, we share a responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured – a pain that has been handed down to the next generations. We need to right those wrongs, heal together, and create a new future that honours the unique gifts of our children and grandchildren.

How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings, we found that we are interconnected through the same mind and spirit. Our traditional teachings speak to acts such as holding one another up, walking together, balance, healing, and unity. Our stories show how these teachings can heal their pain and restore dignity. We discovered that in all of our cultural traditions there are teachings about reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, healing and balance.

We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth. With those ways of being in mind, join us in facing the challenge of healing Canada of its painful past so we can leave a better future for our children.<sup>20</sup>

I ask myself, in my cultural traditions and in Unitarian Universalism, what are the “teachings about reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, healing and balance”?

As part of our development of the CUC reflection guides, we piloted a ‘Dialogue on Reconciliation’ workshop at the BC Fall Gathering in Nanaimo the first weekend of October. We had a rich time of exploring what brings each of us to this conversation, what reconciliation means to us, and asking ourselves “What could reconciliation look like in Canada?” I also asked my ministerial colleagues that question. In closing here are three responses to that question:

Rev. Debra Faulk (Unitarian Church of Calgary minister) said:

“First is acceptance of the need for conciliatory action and then educating ourselves about the circumstances involved that led to the need for reconciliation. Forgiveness involves opening to the pain, current and endured, and being willing to hold it without being controlled by it. Finally unity moves us to a place of willingness to recognize our commonality and our differences and strive to be related.”

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<sup>20</sup> <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/about-2/history-and-background/elders-statement/>



Rev. Brian Kiely (minister at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton and founding minister of this congregation) said: “Reconciliation is more than confession and forgiveness. Reconciliation only occurs when both parties are willing to listen and accept the truth of the other and then find ways to move ahead together in mutual respect and with a new enlightenment. The key is that all parties are changed.”<sup>21</sup>

What does reconciliation involve for me? Learning more about what happened and is happening to Aboriginal people in Canada. Acknowledging the wrong, and what led to it. Not getting trapped in feelings of shame for things I did not do. Instead, owning what I could have done in my lifetime and didn't do, acknowledging my feelings, and forgiving myself. Then finding out what I can do now in the process of healing, and advocating for proper redress and justice. Reconciliation is based on the process of building a relationship again—which is founded on seeing the worth and dignity of all those involved. It means risking being vulnerable when getting to know others. It means knowing I will make mistakes and not letting that stop me: owning them, learning from them, apologizing, offering redress, taking the time to rebuild trust. And it means staying engaged in the process, with humility and humour.

What does reconciliation mean to you? How do you want to engage in the truth, healing and reconciliation process?

In the words of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, who helped found Reconciliation Canada, “Let us find a way to belong in this time and place together. The future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

So might it be.



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<sup>21</sup> From a Canadian Unitarian newsletter article Rev. Meg Roberts wrote for the fall issue, 2014. In it was also included this other sharing:

“Last June, Casey Stainsby did a pilgrimage between Old Montreal and Kahnawake outside Montreal as part of a Concordia University course. A Unitarian young adult, Casey says, “So many of the contemporary Aboriginal-initiated sacred journeys that we looked at in class (and actions that I've seen happening across the continent in recent years) uphold healing and reconciliation as their central purpose, and are adamant that both Natives *and* settlers have need of healing from colonial trauma. And, as I have really come to understand over the past few weeks, reconciliation is about healing the relationship. This is not a one-sided affair. So I see it as utterly appropriate and way past due that a group of Non-Native settlers from a Christian university department are making a trek of our own initiative towards understanding. That we humble ourselves with walking on foot into ‘Mohawk territory’, that we make this small effort and gesture of willingness to learn what has come to pass and how we can move forward together.” (Casey was interviewed on CBC radio: <http://www.cbc.ca/allinaweekend/episodes/> under, “Kanawake pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Kateri.”)”



## 2. Doctrine of Discovery By Rev. Samaya Oakley

A Sermon Delivered to the First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo  
Sunday, October 11, 2015

I can remember the day clear as a bell. It was one of those moments that leaves such an imprint that it always stays with you. I was never one of the popular kids – at 13 or 14 I had bookish eye glasses – seriously – these were the days before plastic lenses and my eyes are bad enough that I needed coke bottle bottom glasses. Add to that stringy hair and one of the meanest cases of acne that you’ve ever seen. We were standing out in the hallway, waiting for something – for some reason I can’t remember what. I was standing a short distance away from some of the popular kids. Across the hallway were the Aboriginal students that had started to come to the school. I can remember making eye contact with one of the girls across the hallway – someone who was not part of the “in” crowd just like me – we stood there looking at each other – I wanted to reach out – to make a connection with her, but suddenly I was pushed by one of the cool kids on my side of the hallway saying something like, come along – we don’t talk to “them”. I can still remember the way in which she said the word “them.”

At the age of 14 it felt like it was a hallway that separated us, and it’s only now with my adult eyes that recognize that it was not a hallway that separated us, but an incredible vastness of culture, attitude, and respective identity that separated us. I had no way of knowing that this gulf that separated us had its origins in a series of papal bulls called the Doctrine of Discovery – and it all started with land.

A story that provides an excellent example of its effects comes from the book *The Nootka: Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, 1868. Pioneers on Vancouver Island studied the Nootka, Seshat people that lived in the area that is now Port Alberni. In 1860 to 1865 there was a unique experience that allows us to see how poverty of spirit comes about. Gilbert Malcolm Sproat arrived in the area in 1860 on two boats in to the Alberni Inlet area. Up until that time, there had been very little contact between the Seshat people and the whites. Sproat arrived on two gunboats to open a sawmill. I can just imagine it. Here are these two strange ships with these pale-faced people telling them to leave their land.

Were the Seshat going to listen? Of course not! Sproat told the village to leave, the people refused. No matter what Sproat said or did to convince them to leave, they wouldn’t. In frustration, he ordered the cannons be shot into the village destroying homes. Finally, the people left. Note the year – 1868 – this was before the trauma of residential schools or the introduction of alcohol.

Sproat was a man of his time and believed that the Europeans had a natural right to the land due to the right of God; a belief that came from the Doctrine of Discovery. Now I



know some of you are wondering what exactly I’m talking about and how that ties in with the story of the Nootka people here on Vancouver Island.

These papal bulls – basically orders from the Pope – that were issued in the 15th century that gave Christian explorers the right to claim lands they “discovered”. Any land that was not inhabited by Christians was available to be “discovered”, claimed, and exploited. Joseph Trutch, the first Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, was one of many who insisted that Aboriginal had never owned land.

Unceded land is land where no treaty has been signed and therefore permission is required from the First Nation government before activities such as fishing, farming, mining or the building of pipelines are engaged in. This stems from the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that “declared that all unceded, unsold land would be reserved to them. ... British Columbia is unique in Canada in that most of the province (an area that’s about 95 percent of the land base, or nearly 900,000 square kilometres) is unceded, non-surrendered First Nation territories.”<sup>22</sup>

We are living in a time and place where more mining operations are coming online, where tar sands operators are looking to vastly increase current production, and where plans are being made to lay nearly 10,000 km of new pipelines across the continent. All of this is happening in the midst of a time when climate change will soon make life more and more difficult. These current practices “are on a collision course with the current legal regime surrounding Indigenous land rights.”<sup>23</sup> It’s pretty hard to say yes to life, truth, or love, when there are so many demands being made of our land and the people who live on them.

We’ve already seen warning signs that things are heating up, such as the 2013 militarized efforts by the RCMP to shut down an anti-fracking movement in New Brunswick.” If you ask Thomas King, author of *An Inconvenient Indian*, he’ll tell you “If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land. Land contains the languages, the stories and the histories of a people. It provides water, air, shelter and food. And land is home.”<sup>24</sup>

The Seshat people of Port Alberni are an example of how the loss of land or home affects a people. Over time what was described as a “poverty of spirit” began to descend upon the people. The symptoms included that they lived listlessly, their curiosity of mind was stunned – they distrusted themselves and their ways, and became suspicious of others. They eventually disregarded their own routines and traditions, and a sickness came over

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ictinc.ca/blog/why-you-should-avoid-using-crown-lands-in-first-nation-consultation>

<sup>23</sup> <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/colonial-past-colonial-present>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.macleans.ca/culture/thomas-king-asks-what-do-whites-want/>



the people. They basically stopped functioning as a culture; families broke down. The people were so traumatized that it became difficult to say yes to life.

The other part of the Doctrine of Discovery had to do with the people living on the land. If the “pagan” inhabitants could be converted to Christianity, they might be spared. If not, they could be enslaved or killed. “So, fundamentally, it was a doctrine of domination, of Christian superiority or supremacy. And it declared that indigenous people didn't have souls, that they weren't full human beings and therefore should be enslaved.”<sup>25</sup>

It's this kind of thinking that allowed the Indian Residential Schools to operate across Canada from the 1880s until the late 1900's. These government-sponsored religious schools were established for the purpose of “assimilating” aboriginal children into the mainstream culture. The Nicholas Flood Davin publication titled Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds (1879) included the assumptions of the 1870's that “Indian culture” was a contradiction in terms, Indians were uncivilized, and the aim of education must be to destroy the Indian in the child.

“Separated from their families and prohibited from speaking their native languages and practicing their culture, the vast majority of the over 150,000 children who attended these schools experienced neglect and suffering. The impacts of the sexual, mental, and physical abuse, shame, and deprivation endured at Indian Residential Schools continue to affect generations of Survivors, their families, and communities today.”<sup>26</sup> Many of the children who attended residential schools never saw their own families again.

These aboriginal children were completely stripped of their identity. Their birth names, native language, traditional clothing, familiar foods, long hair, braids, and cultural customs were all taken from them. They were compelled to meld into the dominant culture and to convert to what passed as Christianity. Harsh punishments were used routinely. Reports of physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse were widespread. An inordinate number of children died in the schools.”<sup>27</sup> Nutritional experiments were performed on the children that resided in the schools to allow researchers to explore the effectiveness of nutritional supplements such as vitamins.<sup>28</sup>

It's in our every day attitudes, our laws, our policies – the actions we take, and the actions that we don't that we see the effects of this Doctrine. For those who don't question, who don't bother to look below the surface, prejudices against Aboriginal people are justified

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPQxCnuojkw>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.legacyofhope.ca/downloads/hope-healing-2014.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <http://us.thinkt3.com/blog/the-doctrine-of-discovery-a-legacy-of-disgrace/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/aboriginal-nutritional-experiments-had-ottawa-s-approval-1.1404390>



and allows a moral imperative to impose the “superior” beliefs and practices on those who are “inferior.”

I think of the constant pleas that Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond makes on behalf of Aboriginal children in care. “Whether it is the startling number of children who experience homelessness each year, violations of treaties to build oil pipelines, ... disparities in wealth and health and access to power, the school-to-prison pipeline, human trafficking, and more, the disgraceful legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery lives on.”<sup>29</sup>

It’s the kind of thinking that allows a candidate running for federal government to make this statement about the murdered and missing Aboriginal women: “One of the major drivers of missing and murdered aboriginal women is the lack of economic activity, or simply put, the lack of a job. Ultimately, when people have a job, they’re not in despair. They can stay on reserve, and that’s where we want them to be.”<sup>30</sup>

As Unitarians our principles call us to join hands across all lines of ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, geography, and other things that make us different from one another so that every person is treated equally under the law. In order to do this work we need to begin the process of reconciliation – of beginning to understand how the effects of what has been done has been harmful to peoples different than we. We personally didn’t cause these atrocities, but we benefit from it and it is part of the work of reconciliation to learn how we benefitted and to challenge the assumptions that we all carry within us.

As Canadian Unitarians we offered an Expression of Reconciliation at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Edmonton in 2013. In it we made a promise to educate ourselves about the effects of the Indian Residential School System. We read out the Expression of Reconciliation in our congregations last year tying the many ways in which the principles we hold dear to us have been violated when it came to treatment of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Our principles call us to do the work of looking for what is implicit – what is not visible, knowing that over ninety per-cent of who a person is remains invisible. We need to be willing to examine how Aboriginal cultures and practices remain curiosities, how treaties and laws continue to be challenged or ignored, how lands that are sacred to Aboriginal are taken and sacrificed to this new religion that combines capitalism and consumerism. We join as one to pledge ourselves anew to a greater understanding of who we are and what in us is true.

If you haven’t done this yet, take the time to read through the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Report. You can find it online by googling Truth and

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<sup>29</sup> <http://us.thinkt3.com/blog/the-doctrine-of-discovery-a-legacy-of-disgrace/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bob-zimmer-conservative-mp-ubcic-1.3265736>



Reconciliation. If you've already done that, dig around their website and do some further reading. And if you haven't had an opportunity to engage in an exercise called "The Blanket Exercise" by Kairos, please do so. It's an excellent experiential exercise that allows one to have a felt sense of the loss experienced by our Aboriginal people.

As Unitarians and Universalists in Canada, we need to be willing to engage in a process of reconciliation and the need for reconciliation cannot be made clearer. We need to be willing to work towards an end to the abuses and offensives that exist in our governmental systems and in our own thinking. "Reconciliation cannot simply become synonymous with interpreting Indigenous voices and visions in ways that are compatible with what we think we already know. Any real learning and change has to be a bit discomforting, painful even."<sup>31</sup>

And so for us, an initial step in reconciliation is the recognition of a need to listen to Indigenous voices and visions, to those who have been wronged, and to try and address and redress those injustices. We do this as a people listening, knowing that as we listen the interconnected web of existence begins a process of healing. We do this in order to build for tomorrow a nobler world than we have known. As we do so, that vast gulf that separated me and that young girl I made eye contact with as a young teenager becomes just a little bit smaller.

May it be so.

## WORDS FOR THE OFFERING

Today, our congregation is marking Sharing Our Faith Sunday.

Sharing Our Faith is a program of the Canadian Unitarian Council.

It encourages greater associational awareness in our congregations, the fostering of relationships, and a sense of community and connection among and between our member congregations and communities.

During Sharing Our Faith services, the collection taken is in support of the Sharing Our Faith fund. This fund consists of monies collected by congregations at special Sharing Our Faith services during the year and contributions from a Foundation Fund administered by the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto. These funds are sent to the CUC to be allocated in the form of grants to congregations applying for projects they may otherwise not afford to undertake, but which enhance ministry, growth and/or outreach for that congregation and for the Unitarian and Universalist movement in Canada.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/colonial-past-colonial-present>



Between 2001 - 2013, through the generosity of our congregations and members, the Sharing Our Faith program has awarded over \$135,000 to congregations. Initiatives include:

- Support for part-time professional ministry
- Communication, publicity and increasing visibility
- Religious education and music programs
- Youth programs
- Commissioning of music for “Missa Brevis Pro Serveto, a mass for UUs”

Today’s collection is in support of the Sharing Our Faith fund.

Let your giving this morning be a true expression of spiritual generosity.

After:

Our relationship with the larger Canadian Unitarian Universalist movement is a gift. Our generous support today is an expression of our gratitude for the larger community and our hope that together we can serve the needs of our congregations, our communities, our country and our world.

## SELECTION OF CLOSING WORDS

### 1. In the words of Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, who helped found Reconciliation Canada:

“Let us find a way to belong in this time and place together.  
The future, and the well-being of all our children,  
rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

As we extinguish, let us bring the light into to light our way as we build our relationships.

### 2. Responsive reading with the congregation (with 1 or 2 readers) by Meg Roberts:

Reader 1:

We are on a journey seeking truth.

Congregation:

We walk this journey together seeking understanding.

Reader 2:

We seek healing for ourselves and for our communities.



Congregation:

We seek healing for each other and our land.

Reader 1:

We walk the path of reconciliation.

Congregation:

We walk the challenging and renewing path of reconciliation together.

Reader 2:

May the light of truth move from this flame into our minds.

Reader 1:

May the healing warmth of compassion move from this flame into our hearts.

Reader 2:

May the fire of commitment move from this flame into our actions.

All respond:

So may it be.

**3. Words from Justice Harry S. Laforme (member of the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation in Southern Ontario. He is the only First Nation person to ever be appointed a judge of any appellate court in Canada. In 2014, he was appointed to the Ontario Court of Appeal.)**

"What is or should constitute reconciliation, is not at all clear. However, what I am convinced of is that the suffering of the survivors; the legacy of the Indian Residential School system must give rise to an equal and positive return; a legacy of hope — from the ashes of their disaster must grow the roses of success. Canada owes this to them. It owes it to us and indeed we owe it to each other and to ourselves."

**4. These closing words are from an Inuit leader, Mary Simon, an excerpt of her response to the Government of Canada's Indian Residential School Statement of Apology:**

"Let us not be lulled into an impression that when the sun rises tomorrow morning, the pain and scars will miraculously be gone. They will not.

But a new day has dawned, a new day heralded by a commitment to reconciliation and building a new relationship with Inuit, Métis and First Nations.



Let us now join forces with the common goal of working together to ensure that this apology opens the door to a new chapter in our lives as aboriginal peoples and in our place in Canada.

There is much hard work to be done. We need the help and support of all thoughtful Canadians and our governments to rebuild strong and healthy families and communities. This can be achieved only when dignity, confidence and respect for traditional values and human rights once again become part of our daily lives and are mirrored in our relationships with

governments and other Canadians.

I stand here today ready to work with you... to craft new solutions and new arrangements based on mutual respect and mutual responsibility.... May wisdom and compassion guide our efforts."

#### **5. From “The Human Spirit” by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley, Unitarian Universalist:**

The human spirit has enormous resilience.  
But it is pushed to the limit by grief [... ]  
We pray for strength, for  
a few more morsels of faith  
a few more nuggets of time [... ]  
and little spaces in our days and nights when we can touch another soul, and be held in someone else’s embrace.  
Help us to find the hope that lies  
beneath what our eyes can see and our ears can hear.  
Help us to hold fast to the belief  
that there is still goodness in this world.  
Help us to respond out of love rather than out of fear.  
Help us to trust again, knowing that  
‘the arc of the moral universe is long’ and that it does indeed ‘bend toward justice.’  
Mend once again our brokenness, and guide us toward the path of peace.

#### **6. Closing Words By Erika A. Hewitt:**

Suggests printing words in the order of service.

Reader 1:

We are going to do something a little different for our closing words today. I invite us to move at this point and take the hand or touch the shoulder of someone nearby if all are willing and able.



Then I will say our closing words, and then sing our closing song, the words are in your order of service for those who may not know it.

Reader 2:

The hand in yours belongs to a person  
whose heart is sometimes tender,  
whose skin is sometimes thin,  
whose eyes sometimes fill with tears,  
whose laughter is a beautiful sound.

Reader 1:

The hand that you hold belongs to a person who is seeking wholeness,  
and knows that you are doing the same.  
As you leave this sanctuary,  
may your hearts remain open  
may your voices stay strong  
and may your hands remain outstretched

(Reader 2 extinguishes the chalice)

## 7. Closing Words

May the fire of this chalice burn on in each of our hearts,  
connecting us to the whole web of life  
and inspiring us to help heal our world.

## 8. Closing Words by V. Emil Gudmundson Singing the Living Tradition, No. 693:

And now, may we have faith in life to do wise planting that the generations to come may reap even more abundantly than we. May we be bold in bringing to fruition the golden dreams of human kinship and justice. This we ask that the fields of promise become fields of reality.

## 9. Rejoice Together, by Edward Everett Hale:

I am only one  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something.  
And, because I cannot do everything



I will not refuse to do the  
something that I can do.

**10. Prayer for New Learning From Rev. Meg Riley:**



Source of all Life, all Truth, and all Beauty,

Thank you for this light in me, this planted seed which demands years of care to help it grow,

this light in me, mysterious and moving, which sometimes leaps forward, sometimes slows down,

which sometimes lifts me up with enthusiasm and sometimes frustrates me.

I pray for this thing, my mind, which runs after ideas, symbols and numbers,

I celebrate my ideas, which meld with the ideas of others like the fusion of two flames that brings more warmth and light.

Help me to see truth, and to understand the thoughts of others;

give to me the wisdom to know the meaning and purpose of my life and learning, so that my knowledge, understanding, and skills may help in some little ways to make this world a better place.

(Adapted from a 1958 French Catholic prayer by Fernand Lelotte, S.J.)



## SUGESTED TEMPLATE FOR ORDER OF SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME

GATHERING SONG: Gathered Here (3x)

*Gathered here in the mystery of the hour  
Gathered here in one strong body  
Gathered here in the struggle and the power  
Spirit, draw near!*

OPENING WORDS and CHALICE LIGHTING by Rebecca A. Edminston-Lange

TIME FOR ALL AGES: “When I was Eight”

By Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton; illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard

CHILDREN’S RECESSIONAL

SHARING OF JOYS AND SORROWS

HYMN: Building Bridges

*Building bridges between our divisions,  
If I reach out to you, will you reach out to me?  
With all of our voices and all of our visions,  
friends, we could make such sweet harmony.*

SERMON

MEDITATION

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING and OFFERTORY

HYMN: Evening Breeze

*Evening breeze, spirit song, | sing to me when day is done.  
Mother Earth, awaken me | with your heartbeat of the sea.  
Turning in, turning out, | heal me true and all about.  
Spirit song, sing to me | with your heartbeat of the sea.*

CLOSING WORDS

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

CLOSING HYMN



## SHARING OUR FAITH COLLECTION

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and for contributing to the growth of our national community.  
Please send funds in the form of a single cheque made out to  
**Canadian Unitarian Council** and marked “*Sharing Our Faith.*”

For any members wishing a tax receipt,  
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congregations or communities can be obtained by e-mailing [sharing-our-faith@cuc.ca](mailto:sharing-our-faith@cuc.ca),  
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or by calling the CUC office at 1-888-568-5723.