

**Annual Report on
Canadian Unitarian Council's
Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Initiative
2018 - 2019**

By Rev. Meg Roberts



The CUC's Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Initiative (THR Initiative) is now in its fifth year. We offer Canadian Unitarians and Universalists age-appropriate materials and means to learn the history and present realities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada so that we may develop relationships based on dignity, respect and justice.

Arising from our commitment to reconciliation, our first major effort from 2014-2018 was developing the *Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Reflection Guides (THRRG)* for various age groups. Due to the UU grassroots support for this work, the decision was made to shift from being a temporary task force to becoming an ongoing THR Resource Team. We added three new members last fall: Rev. Helen McFadyen, Melissa Horvath-Lucid, and Forrest Smith. We benefit greatly from working with the new CUC Social Justice Lead, Erin Horvath (who brings a lot of personal and professional experience to the work we do). We are fortunate Leslie Kemp continues on the team as well as Amber Bellemare as our THR Administrator. I continued on as chair this program year (to provide continuity while the new THR Resource Team develops connections, vision and plans). We thank our colleague, Samaya Oakley, for her incredible dedication, leadership and vision as co-chair over the past four years - without these, we wouldn't be where we are today. Samaya finished her time as co-chair end of last summer. We also owe our heartfelt gratitude to past task force members: Marlene Blake Seale, Casey Stainsby, and April Hope (who is presently on staff leave).

What Has Been Accomplished (2014-2019)

Last spring, we successfully received a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalist Social Responsibility of \$20,000 US. Along with yearly CUC funding, the 2016 Northern Lights donations, and individual and congregational special donations, we have accomplished a lot in these five years:

- The *THRRG* for Adults was offered in 16 congregations (14 using the multi-session guide and 2 using single session guides). At least two others plan to run the multi-session guide this coming congregational year.
- The on-line 10 session *THRRG* for Young Adults was piloted, revised, and uploaded onto the Google platform.
- Based on feedback by youth, the *THRRG Guide* for Youth will pilot in 2019 in a format suitable to be offered at youth conferences.
- The *THRRG* for Upper Elementary was piloted in 3 congregations and offered in 1 other.
- The *THRRG* for Lower Elementary version one was piloted by 3 congregations. After feedback, a second version was developed and is being piloted in 2 congregations this spring.
- THR workshops were offered at 3 CUC ACM (for adults), at 2 youth CanUudles, 2 young adult gatherings, plus at 1 BC Regional Gathering, 3 Western Regional Gatherings, 1 Central Regional

Gathering and 1 Eastern Regional Gathering. Also, a CUC THR workshop was offered at the World Parliament of Religions in October, 2018.

- There were 12 congregational facilitator training webinars over the last 3 years, with over 125 participants from across the country. The *THRR Facilitator Orientation and Introduction to All Guides* was created and uploaded onto its Google site. To make facilitator orientations available as the need arises, our new approach is to have an experienced *THRRG* facilitator act as a coach. The coach meets with each congregational facilitator team to practice adapting the *THRRG* to their context, troubleshooting challenges and sharing best practices.
- We have created a shorter *THRRG* Introductory Booklet to give a brief description of our approach and goals.
- CUC developed a partnership with the National Film Board of Canada. Two National Screenings of the film *Reel Injun* in 2017-2018 had a total of 55 participants. Three film screenings are taking place this spring: *Trick or Treaty?*, *Angry Inuk*, and *The Road Forward*. The CUC has also partnered with CBC's Curio.ca to access online content for various *THRRG* sessions.
- In response to some major national events touching on Indigenous issues, we worked with the CUC National Voice Team to develop statements, as well as collected resources to share with congregational leaders. We also recommend ways to integrate applicable Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action into our congregations and the CUC.
- A blog-site is currently being developing for sharing recommended resources, as well as providing a place for dialogue so UUs can engage each other across the land, sharing ideas, resources and learning from each others' experiences.
- We are developing a congregational workshop to learn about worldview, bridges and barrier to learning other perspectives, as well as about building respectful relationships with local Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers, educators, and organizations.
- We value the support of UU Ministers of Canada in all we have done. Colleagues share resources from their congregations, as well as engage in ongoing professional development. This includes a THR workshop at the UUMOC 2016 annual gathering, one on intercultural communication at their 2017 UUMOC West winter retreat, and their ongoing work on anti-racism, anti-oppression and multiculturalism.
- We appreciate CUC Board and staff support for the work of reconciliation. They have also demonstrated this commitment by having a THR session at their in-person meetings in the fall of 2016 and 2018.

Where We Are Going (2020-2025)

With a significant change in personnel in our group, the THR Resource Team spent time this fall building connections, assessing present needs, and deciding on areas of focus. We invite you, as members of our Canadian UU movement, to join us in working towards a **THR Initiative Vision**. Here is our present draft:

By 2025 we envision congregations, groups and members that:

- Speak with compassion, empathy and insight about the impact that colonization has had and continues to have on Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- Can locate themselves, their family history, and personal choices within the colonial experience.

- Can identify the Treaty and/or whose traditional lands they live on.
- Use coping skills to process the grief associated with colonization (both colonizers and colonized) and begin to explore the many ways trauma manifests.
- Can identify the colonial worldviews, beliefs, policies, and systems that are enabling colonization to continue.
- Are watchful for ways that colonial views and practices are expressed within the Unitarian Universalist tradition and are actively addressing these.
- Can articulate how our diverse theologies and the seven UU principles ground their THR engagement.
- Critically examine personal choices and beliefs as they relate to privilege, entitlement, learned helplessness, and the systemic nature of the colonial cycle.
- Can speak in open-minded ways with people who have worldviews that differ from their own.
- Are building respectful and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and communities in ways that do not repeat paternalistic patterns such as rescuing, fixing, or advocating on someone else's behalf.
- Take action in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in their work for justice and equity in ways that are relational and relevant.

Financial Sustainability

For organizational and financial sustainability of the CUC's reconciliation work, we are exploring other funding and income generating strategies. To cover costs and ensure the continuity of this initiative, this program year we are using a sliding scale donation model to make the *THRRGs* as financially accessible as possible. If your congregation is thinking of participating in the programme, depending on the size of your group or congregation, the number of participants you are facilitating, we suggest a donation amount between \$300 - \$500 for each age group. If your community cannot meet any of these requests, we welcome you to participate in the capacity you can. (We also plan to make the *THRRGs* available to groups and organizations outside the CUC, entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with them as to fees and access to the resources.)

I will finish my term as chair and team member at the end of June 2019. These past 5 years have been an incredible learning experience. It's been my privilege to work with a number of Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers and educators. I've learned alongside those doing THR work in our UU communities. I've been inspired by the dedicated members of the *THRRG* Task Force and THR Resource Team. A call for applications for the team chair will be made this spring. Please consider applying if you have background knowledge and experience in THR work, and want to support our Canadian UU movement continuing to walk this journey of reconciliation.

If you are thinking of beginning the *THRRG* programme in the fall, we strongly encourage you to contact reconciliation@cuc.ca in May. Preparing for the guides can take up to 6 months. The most important thing to consider is your relationship with Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers, and educators; together you can discern how best to offer THR programming for your specific context. Please contact us with any concerns, questions, or ideas: reconciliation@cuc.ca. Thank you for your ongoing support.