



Companion on the Road

Companion of the Centre for Christian Studies and retired diaconal minister, Aileen Urquhart, shares her learning on the road to Truth and Reconciliation and invites you to join her on the journey.

Working at West Broadway Community Ministry I saw the inequality of opportunities for Indigenous people. Then, former moderator, Stan McKay, shared valuable critique about Residential Schools. He managed to tell grim stories in such a way that, although I felt horror and shame, I wanted to join in rather than retreat in defensiveness. I learned to listen – with my heart.



You join Aileen on the path of healing when you support students learning about Right Relations

After commissioning I was settled in Fisher River Cree Nation. I had wonderful mentors in the elders and the competent local leaders who were very patient and forgiving with me, but also clear when I needed to learn. I learned to

*“I learned to listen —
with my heart.”*

laugh at myself. I was invited to attend a naming ceremony to bless a traditional drum at the high school. I almost didn't go. The students shared some songs and were thrilled that I knew some and joined in. They were pleased I had come. So was I. I represented the church – and the church was present.

One of my colleagues at Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre, was Diaconal Minister, Melody McKeller. She shared a great mantra to avoid thinking like one knows everything: “I know nothing and I understand even less”.

Over the years, as a Diaconal learner and white settler, I have learned these things about Truth and Reconciliation:

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- We are all teachers and we are all learners.
- Learn from the people with the experience.
- Turning up as a representative of the church means that the church can be seen as being respectful.
- It is not the place of white settlers to initiate traditional customs but if people ask, try to ensure their requests are honoured.
- I know nothing and I understand even less.
- The Creator is at work.
- Listen, Listen, Listen – with heart and soul and spirit.

The sad presence of racism means there are still many opportunities to work on healing.

Aileen Urquhart

To read a longer reflection on Aileen's learning go to ccsonline.ca



CCS and SSSC students learned from each other because of your support

Walking Together: Your Generosity Helps Right Relations

The hybrid (in person and online) Right Relations Learning Circle in the fall of 2021 was a wonderful collaboration between the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre (SSSC) and the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS). It offered ceremony as a means of relationship building for students from both centres. And you made sure the needed resources were there.

The Right Relations circle started with an “At the Wood’s Edge” ceremony. We gathered outside and Adrian Jacobs, representing Sandy-Saulteaux, consoled the visitors (those of us from CCS present in-person and online through Zoom and a mobile phone) of the griefs we brought with us. We (the visitors) were then asked to make an account of why we were there and what we wanted.



Thanks to you, students gathered at the edge of the woods to learn about right relations

While the Sandy-Saulteaux group discussed whether they would welcome us, the CCS group gathered to decide what we could bring as gift or symbol. These were deep conversations on both sides. The Indigenous SSSC group talked about the times in collective and personal history when welcomes had been exploited, when teachings had been misappropriated, and when wisdom had been rejected. The non-Indigenous group wrestled with how to express a desire for reconciliation that wasn’t facile or tainted by colonial paternalism. It was an appropriately awkward meeting of strangers trying to suss each other out, but the desire for friendship prevailed.

A high point of community-building was the day when students, together in person and on screen, spent the afternoon in small groups shelling beans, cutting up squash, and sharing stories about the cultural meaning of food while they prepared the evening meal of Three Sisters soup.

The focus on ceremony was significant. This wasn’t a circle talking “about” the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Settler peoples. This was an introduction to forms of peacemaking and relationship-building that have embedded within them particular values and a holistic worldview – the significance of land and place, of creation and non-human relations, the foundation of gratitude and humility. Non-Indigenous participants learned more about Indigenous reality through this than they could have through any lecture or reading.

Scott Douglas

The Good You Do: Walking with Students

You support the ongoing social justice programming at CCS, of which the Right Relations circle is a part. Students reflect here about what they learned about relationships through ceremony. Thank you for walking with them.

In his book *Embers: One Ojibwe's Meditations*, Richard Wagamese says the purpose of ceremony is "to lead you to yourself".

Gloria noticed that the ceremonies woven throughout the Right Relations Learning Circle provided new experiences that had a profound effect on who she is now in her thinking and learning and relating. It was similar for other students.

Susan found, "The physicality of holding a ceremonial pipe, gazing at a wampum belt and contemplating its significance for treaty-making, awakened my body and soul to the need for ritual to connect us with our Maker and Creation."

THREE SISTERS SOUP

2 tsp vegetable oil	1 butternut squash, peeled and cubed
1 onion, diced	1 ½ cups corn kernels
4 carrots, chopped	2 cans (540 ml) kidney beans, drained and rinsed
4 cloves garlic, minced	2 tsp dried thyme
4 celery stalks, chopped	1 tsp ground pepper
8 cups vegetable broth	

Directions

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan. Add onions and sauté over medium heat, stirring often until golden, about 2 minutes.
2. Add carrot, garlic and celery and sauté for another 8 minutes, or until softened.
3. Add vegetable broth and bring to a boil.
4. Turn down heat and add cubed squash. Simmer, covered, for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add beans, corn, thyme and pepper. Stir and simmer another few minutes, until squash is soft.

Credit: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/recipes/corn-bean-squash-soup-three-sister-s-soup/>



Simple soup making shows the value of your gift.

Heather found in the group process and ritual of making Three Sisters Soup another kind of ceremony. She said, "The barriers came down. It was all about community as we made a common product. It involved nurture, nourishment, and feeding our souls."

"This was a glimpse into what it looks like to live into Right Relations."

Hyerim was surprised when she participated in the smudging ceremony. She said, "Smudging is used to cleanse our mind, body, and spirit with sacred medicines. The interesting thing for me was that I used to smell the same cleansing smoke in my grandmother's house in Korea when I was young. We are here with different languages, culture, and faith but able to connect with each other."

At the end of the circle another student noticed, "I feel sent out, called to live in right relations, to look at what it means to be a neighbour, and listen to what it means to be a friend. I feel called to lean into the discomfort that comes with acknowledging the harm that has been done by myself and the community around me."

She felt forever changed, "The connections I made, people I met, stories I heard, ceremonies I participated in, will impact how I see the world and how I live my life from now on."



You can help make a minister!

Lily came to the Centre for Christian Studies Open House with questions about the program for diaconal ministry. She was pretty excited. She knows that is what God is calling her to do with her life.

She wants to help children and youth express their faith and find meaning in the church. Ministering to those who are young and seeking takes a unique person like Lily.

And it takes resources for someone with a calling to come to the Centre for Christian Studies. Finances are needed to gain the skills and experience to carry out God's work.

That's why I'm writing to ask for your help today.

Some students struggle to come up with tuition. And CCS wants to keep the costs affordable while continuing to offer a quality program.

I'm sure you would agree that interested people should not be prevented from studying for any reason.

Your gift will help a student like Lily become the leader God is calling her to be.

YES! I will help Lily follow her call into ministry

Please use my gift to send a person to CCS to become a capable minister.

My donation is in the amount of

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other _____

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