

Carol's Reflection – July 4, 2021

In speaking about the future of Canada, Dennis Meeches, the Chief of Long Plain First Nation and spokesperson for Treaty One Nation said: 'Canada can't be at peace with itself, unless it comes to peace and harmony with Indigenous governments, as was intended with the signing of the treaties'.

Doreen Angus, Indigenous Elder from British Columbia where the first unmarked graves of children at Residential Schools were found wrote:

As people around the world are learning of the tragic findings in Kamloops and reacting with their strong feelings it is important to acknowledge the dark history which is not yet behind us. It is important also to offer prayers and participate in ceremony even as individuals. If it is possible, gatherings in circle are powerful for sharing feelings, paying tribute to the memory of those children and adults who have been missing but not forgotten by their families. Lighting fires, candles, drumming and singing laments are all healthy ways of grieving and showing support. In the short term we must hold each other up in these ways of our people. In the long term we call on our leaders to keep on with the TRC calls to action so there may be justice and a better life for us all. Thank you to those in the United Church who stand and act in support of the TRC calls. Love and prayers to our people and all who are in mourning.

We are mourning.

We cannot imagine the tragedy that has been endured by our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Children suffered, as did the adults from whom they were taken, moms and dads, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, even other children.

When Indigenous people and settlers first met, it was the hospitality and care of Indigenous people who helped the settlers survive the first winters here.

Sadly, the vast knowledge of creation, the wisdom of the elders was not understood or appreciated the way that it might have been. We hang our heads in the shame of oppression.

And as we hang our heads, Rev. Blair Odney, president of the Pacific Regional Council in British Columbia, says:

Hanging my head also causes me to look at my feet, to consider the very next step I take, and to think about whose feet will be with me as I take that step.

I look up and there are the elders, the leaders of the Indigenous ministries, the ones whose lives are riddled with intergenerational trauma, calling me, calling us into relationship. A holy mystery, beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description, in love, seeking relationship.

My beloved friends, there is no us and them. What happens to one of these, the least of our brothers and sisters, happens also to us. I invite us all to look down at our feet and consider the very next step we take. What does it mean for us now to unite in one common quest, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope? The elders say make relationships.”

So now is the time.

Now is the time for us to focus on relationships. Sometimes in anger, frustration, or hurt, we act in ways that are not healing, or respectful. Violence to people or places or even to things is never a solution. A relationship is not just about one moment. A relationship is about how we are over the long term. The Calls to Action are not something that we read and then say, ok – we’re done. The Calls to Action are about the process of living in right relationship.

Now is the time for us to walk together.

As we hear in our music:
Walk with me, and I will walk with you,
and build the land that God has planned
where love shines through.

Now is the time to find our togetherness in all our differences.

When we think of creation, we know that God made differences – not sameness. God celebrates diversity. God celebrates our incompleteness. God knows that we need one another. No one can do everything, and yet together, we can do something.

We can do something amazing. We can sit in a circle and hear one another’s stories

We can do something hopeful. We can light candles and pray.

We can do something in love.

Let our steps be together. Let our hopes for a reconciled world be filled with listening to one another.

Let us build the land that God has planned where love shines through.

Thanks be to God, this day and always.