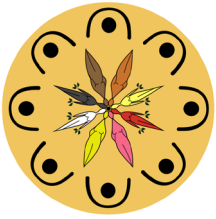


6TH VERSION | JUNE 2019



CIRCLES FOR RECONCILIATION

More Circles! More Themes! National Expansion!



We are pleased to provide all of you, our friends, the sixth update on the development of Circles for Reconciliation.

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Raymond Currie and Clayton Sandy, Courtesy of the Winnipeg Foundation

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Staff

Advisory Committee: 12 persons, half of whom are Indigenous persons.

Clayton Sandy, serves as our Indigenous Ambassador

Raymond Currie, Project Coordinator

Ingrid Dowan serves as Community Recruiter and Event Coordinator

Katelyn MacKenzie, Office Assistant

Scott Hadaller, Webmaster

Dianne Bulback, Executive Assistant in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba and oversees the expenditures of our project.

Jimmy Thunder, Sandra Barsy, Tiffany Paoletti, Kristen Hicks, and Ningzi Sun, Voluntary technical assistants

Our Website:
circlesforreconciliation.ca

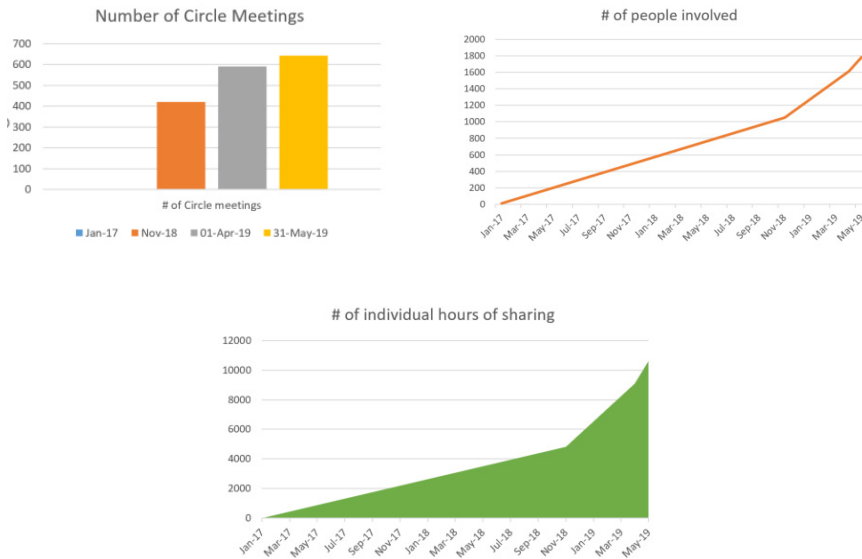
Find us on social media:



Circles For Reconciliation

Gathering Momentum

Circles for Reconciliation is continuing to gather momentum. Since January 2017, we have now completed, have ongoing or are planning more than 60 circles. We have already hosted almost 650 individual circle meetings, involving almost 1,800 people in over 10,600 person hours of sharing on reconciliation.



A full partnership

The most important component of our initiative is that it is an equal, grassroots partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We are not an Indigenous organization: we are not a non-Indigenous organization: we are a partnership. This is the core principle in reconciliation: we believe there is no way forward unless we walk the path together. This mindset is core to any success we may achieve. The 1613 Two-Row Wampum Belt of the five Iroquois Nations of the Haudenosaunee has two rows of purple beads set on a white background. The rows represent the courses of two vessels – a Haudenosaunee canoe and an European ship – travelling parallel together, each one containing their respective nation’s laws and customs but never crossing. The belt symbolizes that neither group will force their laws, traditions, customs or language on each other, but will coexist peacefully.



The Two Row is a foundational philosophical principle, a universal relationship of non-domination, balance, and harmony between different forces. The Two Row principles of peace, respect, and friendship can exist within any relationship between autonomous beings working in concert. These include nation-to-nation relationships, dynamics between lovers and partners, and the relationship between human beings and our environment.” (Tom Keefer, Two Row Times.)

Building mutual respectful relationships

For those of you first hearing about our project, you should know that a circle is composed of 10 persons (five Indigenous and five non-Indigenous) and each circle meets 10 times. Circles are led by trained volunteer facilitators, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous facilitator for each circle. Each circle meets for about 75 minutes. Circles meet at the most convenient places for the participants. Meetings can be morning, afternoon or evening, any day of the week.

Ten meetings is a serious commitment. However, over 90% of our participants say that number is ‘about right.’ Of course it is possible to learn some of the truth of the past with one day workshops. However, the TRC Commissioners state: “The Commission defines reconciliation as an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships” (TRC, p. 16). We have evidence that ten weeks is enough time to begin to establish such relationships.

Marion Buller, Chief Commissioner of the very recently released Reclaiming Power and Place, the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls urges us to “Read the report!”

National interest

We did not begin with the idea of establishing circles across Canada. Our original goal was 100 circles in Winnipeg in two years. However, in June of 2017, when we were in our very early stages, the CBC National radio program “Now or Never” aired a 25 minute segment of a circle, including interviews with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. The response was overwhelming: 110,000 Facebook hits and emails from people in over 65 communities across Canada. The thirst for reconciliation is very strong across the country. We felt compelled to respond.

“In order to understand the causes of violence and to make the changes necessary to ending violence, we must recognize the power and responsibility of relationships...”

“...We centre the voices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families, survivors, and others whose truths contain wisdom and guidance on ending violence that has been ignored or actively silenced for far too long; and, as we listen to this wisdom and guidance, we focus specifically on those teachings about how, through relationships, we can come to understand the underlying causes of violence and identify and implement the steps that must be taken to end violence. We all have an opportunity to transform relationships that continue to harm Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, but this work is not easy...” (Reclaiming Power and Place)

Circles, preparatory meetings and initial development plans:

<i>Chatham-Kent</i>	<i>Regina</i>
<i>Dawson Creek</i>	<i>Selkirk</i>
<i>Dryden</i>	<i>Sioux Lookout</i>
<i>Flin Flon</i>	<i>Thompson</i>
<i>Lloydminster</i>	<i>Thunder Bay</i>
<i>London</i>	<i>Toronto</i>
<i>Neepawa</i>	<i>Victoria</i>
<i>Owen Sound</i>	<i>Winnipeg</i>
<i>Penticton</i>	

Circles for Reconciliation is addressing a thirst for reconciliation that is present across the country.

We continue to hear from people across Canada. Our expansion in Toronto is beginning to gather momentum. It takes time to establish credibility in a new community, and so we have to be patient. Thanks to a generous grant from the Toronto Foundation, we are making progress. Our Indigenous Recruiter in the Toronto area, Susan Dowan, (Torontorecruiter@circlesforreconciliation.ca) has been working very hard making contacts with a large number of Indigenous leaders and organizations. In June of 2019 we hired our Event Coordinator for the Toronto area (Torontocoordinator@circlesforreconciliation.ca). Shortly, several circles will begin in Toronto. We have held one, 10-week circle in Thunder Bay as well as Lloydminster, Alberta. Preparatory meetings have been held in Victoria, Owen Sound, Edmonton and Olds Alberta. Soon we will train facilitators via Skype in a number of communities across Canada. Obviously, as we expand across the country, the content of some of our themes will be modified to reflect the cultural differences of Indigenous people by territory.

What are some trends?

•Women take the lead.

It is significant to note that over 95% of national respondents are women. In Winnipeg, two-thirds of our participants are women. Fewer men register on line as individuals. Men tend to participate when they are members of an organization that requests to host a circle. Women are clearly leading the way in reconciliation.

•Faith groups continue to be a regular source of requests for circles.

We are encouraged by plans for a Circle at a Synagogue in Toronto and interest from a Synagogue in Winnipeg. A full Presbytery meeting with 100 United Church leaders where we presented 10 circles simultaneously, has led to over 10 United Churches hosting 10 week circles.



“Before you try to build anything, build a respectful relationship.”

National Chief Perry Bellegarde

•The business community

Our success in the business community is increasing. On April 17, 2018, we held a very successful workshop on “Call to action #92” which focuses on the role of business in addressing reconciliation. This workshop was a result of our partnership with the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. We attracted a full house of 200 business leaders, including 85 Indigenous leaders. We also offered 20 simultaneous circles on a theme “Call to Business.” This has led to circles with architectural groups, banks, credit unions and Crown corporations.

We have a long way to go. Currently, 85% of medium and large businesses in Canada reported in a national survey that they have virtually no relationship with Indigenous businesses and only 2% report a full partnership (national survey for Indigenous Works, 2016).

Call to Action # 92 to the corporate sector:

- Meaningful consultations
- Respectful relationships
- Employment opportunities
- Informed consent before moving to economic development projects
- Access to jobs, training and educational opportunities
- Benefits to aboriginal communities and not just to individuals
- Education of management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples

Why businesses say they are not involved:

- “Never thought of it,”
- “We need people with specific designations so that is our priority,”
- “Not applicable to our business,”
- “We would if they reached out to us,”
- “Never occurred to us,”

(Source: Indigenous Works, National Survey, 2016)



*Photo by Raymond Currie.
Artists: KC Adams, Jaimie Issac, Val Vint*

•“Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children” (Call to Action #10)

Most school divisions are already committed to the education of their students on reconciliation. Our project will complement what they are already doing and allow us to participate in an important reversal of history. Residential schools separated the children from their parents. In partnership with school administrators from three large school divisions, and with the involvement of their students, together we plan to invite parents into the schools for circles in the evenings. This will extend knowledge of reconciliation issues into the families, so that the children and parents will be able to have more informed discussions of the issues in their homes.

If enough parents in a given district participate, this could lead to wider community engagement in reconciliation. We believe this is a simple strategy that could be adopted across the country.

“When I speak in schools, students are always saying to me: ‘I wish my parents could hear this.’” (Dr. Tricia Logan, Residential School History and Dialogue Centre)

•Health and Social Service Agencies

In addition to an increase in the number of health and social service agencies interested in Circles, one specific development is very encouraging. One agency is planning circles specifically for non-Indigenous parents who have adopted or are fostering Indigenous children. While we certainly do not want to encourage such a practice, we want to deal with the current reality in a helpful way.

•New Canadians

June 21, 2019, National Indigenous Peoples Day we will carry out our third collaboration with Immigration Partnership Winnipeg. We expect close to 1,500 to attend National Indigenous Peoples Day in Downtown Winnipeg, just one of many celebrations that day.

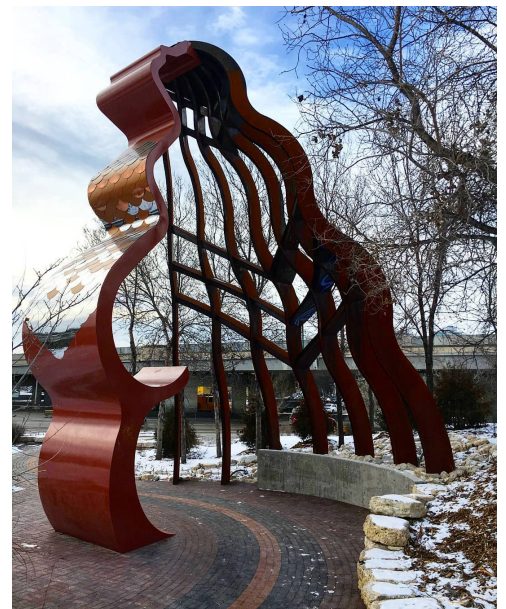
Photo by Raymond Currie.

Sculpture at The Forks, Winnipeg.

Work by artists: KC Adams, Jaimie Issac, Val Vint.

“Nimamaa is a word recognized by Cree, Ojibway, and Metis speakers as ‘My Mother.’ Nimamaa is a stylized sculpture of a pregnant woman that represents motherhood, mother earth and new beginning.

“We are all born into this world, the sculpture is a majestic symbol of motherhood and mother-nature, honoring people, animals and entities of all walks of life as her children. Her seven cascading strands of hair remind us of the seven sacred teachings: love, respect, courage, humility, honesty, wisdom and truth.” (Val Vint)



We have finished our Circle: now what?

We are gradually increasing the variety of activities relating to reconciliation beyond our Circles of 10 meetings. We have sent out a Call to all our participants close to Winnipeg offering them seven opportunities this summer to take part in events in and around the City. One example is to join a chartered bus to Lower Fort Garry, site of the 148th anniversary of the signing of Treaty #1 on August 3rd. We will host a circle ourselves after taking part in the ceremonies at the site.

Get involved:

*Sign a petition, Contact a politician,
Become a mentor, Make a donation
Sponsor an Indigenous event,
Invite an Indigenous person to sit on
aboard you are on...*

Our Facilitators

Since the fall of 2016 we have trained almost 100 facilitators in Winnipeg. We have also brought on board 12 in Toronto, six in Thunder Bay, and at least a dozen out of 60 who attended our recent workshops in Central Alberta have expressed interest in being facilitators. We are prepared to train facilitators via Skype.

Our facilitators range from university students to retired individuals. Each circle requires 15 hours of volunteer time. This is on top of the seven hours of free training and volunteering for “one time” circles. More than several facilitators are now leading their second circle. We now provide one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous facilitator for each circle.

We have held two meetings of our facilitators to thank them and to hear feedback on what is working and what can be improved. Several initiatives have arisen from their suggestions.

*Should any of you living outside of
Winnipeg wish to be trained as facil-
itators via skype, contact Raymond
Currie (address below). Your train-
ing would be supplemented by our
“Manual for Organizers, Indigenous
Recruiters, Facilitators and Hosts.”*

Our Website

circlesforreconciliation.ca

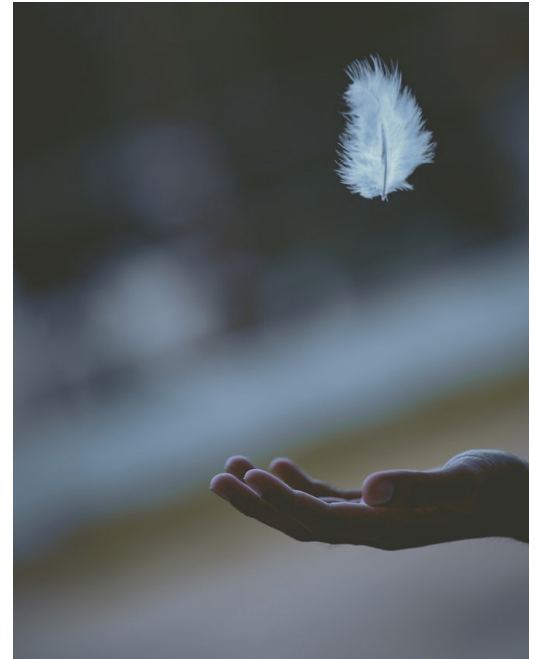
Our website is being updated constantly. There are now 21 themes on our site with still more to come. The circle participants decide which themes they wish to explore. Since our last “Update” we have simplified the registration process, added new themes entitled “Nation to Nation Partnerships,”

“Call to Business, “After the Circle: Practicing Solidarity and Living Reconciliation,” “Hope.”

Currently we are up to about 3,500 views of our website per month. We have learned that three themes tend to generate the most views; intergenerational trauma, misconceptions about Indigenous people and the meaning of land for Indigenous people.

Media Coverage

- CBC National Radio, 110,000 Facebook hits, emails from over 65 communities across Canada
- CBC Winnipeg Saturday morning radio, CBC Radio Canada T.V.
- CJOB, CTV, CJNU, NCI,
- The Winnipeg Free Press, The Selkirk Record, other
- organizational media outlets
- Facebook (circles for reconciliation)
- Instagram page (circlesforreconciliation)



How to donate?

To donate, please go to our website. circlesforreconciliation.ca

Or simply make out a cheque to “The University of Manitoba” where our grants are administered. You will be eligible for a tax receipt. Indicate your gift is for Circles for Reconciliation and mail it to Raymond Currie at the address below.

Raymond Currie

Project Coordinator

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www.circleforreconciliation.ca

(204) 487-0512

Feedback

“Voices of Participants” on our website features two 2-minute videos on the circle experiences of our participants.

Other feedback:

“The participants are wonderful individuals and were very responsive. These are truly people who embody the true intent and spirit of reconciliation and have the will to make a difference. If we can support this initiative in the future we would be honoured to do so.” (An Elder)

“I am so happy to have participated in this event. It was everything I hoped for and more. Now there is a lot of work to be done. I learned so much. The variety of relationships: Indigenous persons... one Black person so acquainted with the same issues on different continent, one person married to an Indigenous person, and the rest.”

“The amazing stories, personal sharing, mutual respect and recognition of challenges are what I liked best about the Circle.” (Indigenous participant)

“I am super thankful that the TRC happened and that there are these circles available to all who want to participate.”

“I appreciated the opportunity to share my experiences and learn from other perspectives.” (Indigenous participant)

“I just finished our group and I would absolutely love to be trained as a facilitator. The Circles have made a huge impact on me and I would like to continue and have others experience what I was fortunate enough to be part of.”

“I was particularly surprised and grateful to be participating in the circle with Elders. They had a wealth of wisdom and knowledge, including most having attended residential schools.”



Thank you to our donors!

Circles for Reconciliation recently completed a 5 week fundraising drive in which our valued supporters came together to raise over \$20,000. As the money was raised it helped to keep the doors open until other grants were received!



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Anna Harland
Annie Muldoon
Anonymous
Antonia Steinberg
Arlene and Richard Baschak
Art Martin
Barbara and Brian Crow
Barbara Kelly
Bonnie Loewen
Bryan Emond
Céline Le Bourdais
Charles Coffey
Christopher Adams
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Craig Robertson
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Diocese of Rupert's Land
Dr. Rebecca Coish (Med Corp)
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RECONCILIATION BEGINS WITH EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US

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