



HONORING OUR RELATIONS: KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE

THE CIRCLE IS EXPANDING

The Indigenous Sacred Circle seems to be getting bigger, according to one of the Memory Keepers.

"So far, I am enjoying my third Sacred Circle. It seems that it is better organized, and we are getting a lot more done in our group. People are willing to share; when at the last Circles others weren't ready yet. I'm finding a lot of encouragement."

There was a lot of encouragement voiced throughout the day, starting with energetic and powerful worship led by members of the Diocese of the Arctic. The Rev. Canon Dr. Martin BrokenJeg, director of Native Ministries at the Vancouver School of Theology (VST), set the tone for the day in his message about reclaiming our youth.

"Our cultural philosophy was always very respectful of children," he said, explaining the Lakota word for "child" translates "Standing Sacred." Our children and youth today are at risk due to an overall attitude that suggests children and youth are not important.

"In North America, people de-value the importance of human presence," noted Brokenleg. "How long is any mom talking to a child on any given day? On average, it is three minutes for the mom and 49 seconds for the dad."

Children and youth are at risk today because they are not seen as being valuable. As a result, gang activity and drug and alcohol problems arise. In order to create a healthy child. Dr. Brokenleg suggests four values are required—belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. These values when operating are called the "Circle of Courage." These are the values that will help a child develop inner strength.

"Talk to their mind, give them knowledge through words and teach their heart and spirit through their experiences," he added, saying our ancestors knew these principles, so we should return to our ancestral ways. To learn more about the Circle of Courage go to www.reclaiming.com or call 800-647-5244.

In-group discussion, many applauded the message shared by Dr. Brokenleg. "It was so powerful. I agreed with everything. I'd like to see this man talk to us again," said one member "I enjoyed the service and the speaker touched me. There are so many young people dying in my community, they don't know what to do," stressed another member from the Arctic.

In the afternoon, discussion groups reflected on the meaning of church today and what the church should be doing. During the discussions, the Grand Chief of the 30 Northern Manitoba First Nations communities, Sidney Garrioch, greeted the participants to the Sacred Circle:

"Your movement and discussions are important. We need to work together as a team, as partners. This is important for all of us," he said.

In the large plenary session under the tent, each of the discussion groups reported back. In their statement to the group, the bishops, acting as partners revealed some of their discussions. For example, one concern dealt with clergy families.

"We talked about the importance of the experience of all clergy who have been absent from their children. We wish all clergy children could come together."

Evening prayer was led by B.C. Yukon and Alaska. At the conclusion, Charon Spinks paid a moving tribute to elders who had passed away in the Diocese of the Central Interior.

The day concluded with a Gospel Jamboree under the main tent.

LANGUAGE

Lily Bell said "every word of our language we learn is very precious". She shared the word 'haa'daa' laas" - "good people". Fire keeper Bill Coclirane said the Cree word for "whiskey jack" means "lover of Spirit". Martin Brokenleg said the Lakota word for "child" means "standing sacred". One person told their circle that hearing people speaking their language was music to their ears. Another said that the Anglican Church has helped us to preserve, maintain and honour our languages and that is a gift.

WORSHIP

The morning worship led by members from the Arctic, with singing and reading and prayers in their language.

"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice!" Everyone was rejoicing. And someone said "this is what Morning Prayer is meant to be."

Evening worship was led by members from BC dioceses and Alaska- with lots of singing. "How great thou art" has emerged as "*the* hymn", and is sung with gusto.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Inventive in the moment: How many stories can you remember? The lipstick lip prints on the school washroom mirror every day until the janitor gave a demonstration of how long it took him to clean the mirror with water from the toilets. The moral was being inventive in the moment.

SUGGESTED READING

Martin gave us the titles of two books by Carl Hammerslag: "Dancing Healers" and "A Theft of Spirit"

MORE WORDS

As Lily Bell prayed for our children and grandchildren and sang, we all joined her, "Hawa Saalaana" "Thank you Jesus".

SIGHTINGS

- Theresa Mandricks and others toe, riding bikes
- the sacred fire burns warmly and draws participants
- the Grand Chief of the Northern chiefs dropped in on some circles

REFLECTIONS OF MEMORY KEEPERS

Hannah Alexie, Olive Elm, Leena Metuq, Robert Pike

"The first day I thought this was a small gathering compared with previous gatherings, but today it was alive and we're going to get something out of this and we already are and I have something to bring to my community."

"The youth had a smudge and heard some traditional teachings on Cree culture from Chris, compared traditional and biblical teachings, and shared knowledge of traditional aboriginal teachings. Most had to learn these teachings from others, not from their families."

"This is my first time here and I didn't know what to expect. I prayed that I would enjoy it and I am. I like the way people are organizing the programme. Our facilitator is doing a good job. I like listening to people; I get ideas."

I'm glad to see all the young people. Martin Brokenleg's speech touched me so much. He brought everything into focus. He just made my day today!"

"This is a peaceful place. No cars speeding by."

"Does anyone have a remedy for flies biting?"

CORRECTION

Many apologies for the incorrect spelling of "The Sagkeeng First Nation" in the first edition.

WEATHER

Cooler, scattered clouds