

Messy Church Reconciliation

In the following pages, you will find step by step instructions for holding a Messy Church event focused on reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

This approach has been under development since 2018, when we who are part of the Diocese of Edmonton's Indigenous Ministry Initiative were invited by a local Messy Church group to develop with them a Messy Church Reconciliation. Over a few months we were able to come up with an overall process that took seriously the need to look at everything we do through an Indigenous lens.

This means:

- recognizing the land we live on,
- praying in a way that honours Indigenous spirituality and Christian life,
- coming together to learn the hard history of the church in Canada and its relationship with Indigenous people,
- having Indigenous Christians involved,
- asking for forgiveness and to truly walk in the way of Jesus' reconciliation.

We are happy to share our work with you and hope that you will be able to find ways to share it with your Messy Church communities.

Families Enter

As the families arrive welcome them and show them where the colouring pages are along with crayons and felt tip markers. Search Google for Indigenous Canada reconciliation colouring pages to find a variety of colouring pages that will be useful in setting the theme of the gathering.

Welcome and Introduction with Land Acknowledgement

You will want to find out the Indigenous territory that you are meeting on. Go to this [website](#) and you can find out the traditional Indigenous territory and some of the history. If you are in treaty lands find out some of the history of the treaty, if you are on unceded territory find out some of that history. If you can find a flag or map of the territory print that up on the largest paper you have to have with you.

Thank the families for having built such a beautiful building. You are likely to get some responses that suggest they didn't build it. Then thank them for building the fine roads you came on to get to the building. Again you are likely to get responses that they didn't build them. Remind the families that it was our ancestors of the faith who built the building. People whose names are recorded in some of our histories. It was construction workers who built our towns and cities. Now ask everyone if they know whose land their church, their homes were built on. Explain to everyone that before there were churches, before there were stores, before there were homes, before there were roads, there were people living on the land and it is those people who invited many of our ancestors to come and share the land with them. *At this point bring out the flag or map of the territory to show everyone.* Explain that the land the church is on is part of Indigenous territories and share whose land they are meeting on today. Take a moment to acknowledge the land and to give thanks to the Indigenous people who share the land with us.

Here is an example of a land acknowledgement that you can adapt for your own particular area:

Recognizing that we are all Treaty 6 people, we would like to acknowledge the rich history of the territory in which we live in relationship with one another. We remember all of those who have come before us, indigenous, settler, and newcomer alike, who have shaped this land into a place in which we can live in peace, in truth, and in relationship with one another. In doing so we acknowledge the land on which we gather are the traditional territories of the Papachase and Metis Nations. We are all treaty people.

This version was done for a community in Treaty 6, you will want to acknowledge your own particular situation and history.

Opening Prayer

If you have an Indigenous member of your community or know someone in the wider community who is Indigenous ask them to lead the opening prayer. You may needIf you don't have such a partner then have one of the leaders do the prayer.

Story - The Wandering Spirit

Here is the original story as it was told by an elder. Following it you will find the interactive telling of it that all can partake in.

A Reading from "The Story of Wandering Spirit," as told by Walter Bonaise

Wandering Spirit would travel around and speak to whatever Nanabush would create. Wandering Spirit asked the man and the woman, "Are you satisfied with the way Nanabush made you?" "Yeah, but there are only two of us; we need more people. How can that be done? We only have one language; we will need more languages because this land is very big." Wandering Spirit asked them, "What do you mean—more people?" "Well," they said, "we need more people because this land is going to be a big country. We have four directions, so we also need to send people to all these directions. Then we can travel across this land to visit each other.

"We need to know who we are as a people," the man and woman said." "I will give you names, like Cree," said Wandering Spirit, "and I will give you more than one language. Where do you want me to send these people?"

She sent some up north, gave them a language and gave them ceremonies. Then she went east—put people all the way down to the big lake, as far as she could, and gave them a certain language and certain ceremonies, because we cannot just have one ceremony and one language. "They must be different," said the man and woman, "so we can understand the land and the creations and how everything is connected—in the future."

So Wandering Spirit did that—first to the north and east, and then she went south. She created people all the way to the other big lake—giving them languages and different kinds of ceremonies. Then she went west and created more people, languages and ceremonies.

And Wandering Spirit told them that they will be very rich people. For spiritual life, all they had to do was listen to everything that was around them. They would begin to understand who they were and why they were put on earth—to live in harmony with everything else. That's what happened.

Once Wandering Spirit finished all that, she went back to the man and woman. "Now what?" she said. "We have people, languages and ceremonies," said the man and woman. "What else?" said Wandering Spirit. "I think we've got everything; we need to concentrate on our ceremonies so that we understand. Everybody has to have an understanding of the ceremonies in relationship to nature."

From Listening to elders telling stories sitting in a circle : an oral history /
told by Walter Bonaise ; transcribed by Karen Hovelkamp ; artwork by Gerald Folster ;
2nd edition (Edmonton : Bonaise Publishing, 2012), Chapter 1, part 2, p. 22, 31-32

An Interactive Story telling of Wandering Spirit

Explain that this is a story from the prairies and the Cree people. Nanabush is a name given to the Creator.

Characters

Narrator

Wandering Spirit - if you can, have a shawl for the person doing this part

Man

Woman

Groups of people

Signs for North, East, South and West and put them up in the room as accurately as you are able

Have the Narrator and Wandering Spirit be two of the leaders and ask children who can read to take the Man and Woman parts.

Narrator

Wandering Spirit would travel around and speak to whatever Nanabush would create.

Wandering Spirit asked the man and the woman,

Wandering Spirit

“Are you satisfied with the way Nanabush made you?”

Man and Woman

“Yeah, but there are only two of us; we need more people. How can that be done? We only have one language; we will need more languages because this land is very big.”

Wandering Spirit

“What do you mean—more people?”

Man

“Well, we need more people because this land is going to be a big country.

Woman

“We have four directions, so we also need to send people to all these directions.”

Man

“Then we can travel across this land to visit each other.”

Woman

“We need to know who we are as a people.”

Wandering Spirit

“I will give you names, like Cree, and I will give you more than one language. Where do you want me to send these people?”

Narrator

She sent some up north, gave them a language and gave them ceremonies. *Wandering Spirit takes a group of people to the north.*

Then she went east—put people all the way down to the big lake, as far as she could, and gave them a certain language and certain ceremonies, because we cannot just have one ceremony and one language. *Wandering Spirit takes another group to the east*

Man and Woman

“They must be different, so we can understand the land and the creations and how everything is connected—in the future.”

Narrator

So Wandering Spirit did that—first to the north and east, and then she went south. *Wandering Spirit takes another group to the south.* She created people all the way to the other big lake—giving them languages and different kinds of ceremonies. Then she went west and created more people, languages and ceremonies. *Wandering Spirit takes another group to the west*

And Wandering Spirit told them that they will be very rich people. For spiritual life, all they had to do was listen to everything that was around them. They would begin to understand who they were and why they were put on earth—to live in harmony with everything else. That’s what happened.

Once Wandering Spirit finished all that, she went back to the man and woman.

Wandering Spirit

“Now what?”

Man and Woman

We have people, languages and ceremonies.”

Wandering Spirit

“What else?”

Man and Woman

“I think we’ve got everything; we need to concentrate on our ceremonies so that we understand. Everybody has to have an understanding of the ceremonies in relationship to nature.”

Thank everyone who took part.

Crafts

There are two crafts that can be run by two different people and can be done in about 15 minutes each, so there should be time to switch and do the second one for each group.

1. Talking Sticks

Materials needed:

Wooden dowels 3/4 to 1 inch wide cut in 8 to 10 inch lengths - one for each person

Ribbons

Feathers

Cord

Beads

Scissors

Glue

Back to back tape



Prepare a talking stick ahead of time.

Have the materials for making a talking stick nearby. Show the children your prepared talking stick and ask them if they know what it is. Wait for their responses. Explain that a talking stick is used by many Indigenous people when sitting in a sharing circle. Whichever person has the stick is the only person to talk and everyone has to listen. With the children go around the table passing the talking stick and getting each person to say one thing they are thankful for. When

done pass out the dowels and put out the other supplies and have the children each make a talking stick. Explain that they can take their's home but the one you started today with will stay here and get used during other story times.

2. Hearts for Heart Memorial

Materials needed:
Card stock
Wooden skewers
Strong tape
Ribbons
Felt tip markers
Stickers
Scissors



<https://fncaringsociety.com/honouring-memories-planting-dreams>

This will have the instructions for how to make the hearts and ideas about what to write on them.

Before making the hearts have someone read the story 'Amik Loves School' - here's a link that tells what it is about - <https://www.portageandmainpress.com/product/amik-loves-school/> It is likely that you will be able to get this from your local library.

This story is about a boy named Amik & his relationship with his grandfather who is a residential school survivor and it will help to guide the conversation about why we are making the hearts and who they are for.

You can also find more book choices here - <https://www.todayparent.com/family/books/books-to-teach-kids-about-residential-schools/#gallery/books-to-teach-kids-about-residential-schools/slide-4> and your public library can help you find other options if you need them.

Once you have finished reading the story take a moment to tell the children how the Anglican church (if you are from another denomination look up your own church's history) was involved with the running of the schools for the government. Then explain how the church has worked to say it is sorry for taking children away from their families. Answer any questions that anyone may have.

Hand out a prepared heart to everyone and explain that today they are going to decorate a heart that remembers the children who went to residential schools and

especially those children who didn't return to their families. Suggest they may want to write **We are Sorry, You are Loved, We will Remember**, or something like that on their heart. Let them decorate their hearts as they want and then have them tape the skewer to the back of the heart. Ask everyone to bring their hearts to the closing worship.

Church Celebration

Gather with everyone either in the church or if it is nice enough gather outside. If you are gathering inside you will need a styrofoam block to put the hearts, outside choose a garden spot that the hearts can all be placed in.

Spend a few moments asking the children about their talking sticks and how they are used.

Talk about the children who didn't come home from Residential Schools and those who returned and were very hurt by their experiences. Talk about how the church is so sorry for being involved with Residential Schools and that we are working on a new way to live with each other. Have the children and adults place their hearts into the styrofoam block or in a garden.

Ask everyone to stand up and face to the east (you will need to check where that is before the prayer):

Four Directions Prayer

Have everyone turn to the east

Creator, thank you for this day

Have everyone turn to the south

Creator, thank you for teaching us this day

Have everyone turn to the west

Creator, thank you for the four seasons

Have everyone turn to the north

Creator, thank you for being in our circle

Have everyone turn back to the east to complete the circle

Amen.

Thank everyone for joining you for this time of learning and to please go and enjoy a meal.

Evaluation

If you could take a few moments to let us know what went well, what could be improved, what needs more information and any other information that you think will help us to improve this Messy Church, please send an email to:

Fiona Brownlee f.brownlee@edmonton.anglican.ca or

Rev. Nick Trussell n.trussell@edmonton.anglican.ca .