



July 7, 2014

On behalf of the Good Hearted Women Singers (Mino Ode Kwewak N'gamowak) I would like to thank the organizers and attendees regarding the Eastern Synod event: "Together for the Love of the World" when the drum circle came to Toronto June 27, 2014. We were very pleased to have been asked to participate in this event as the topic was about the Truth & Reconciliation process that is taking place in Canada. You may be aware that Aboriginal Justice Murray Sinclair who is part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that began in 2012 is calling upon all Canadians to never let the past repeat itself with regard to Indigenous people of Canada. Following the Apology in 2008 by Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, there has begun to be acknowledgement by the Federal Government of Canada of the traumatic impact (i.e. spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically) of government policies on the forced attendance of Indigenous children at residential schools. The purpose of these schools was to assimilate them into the dominant society. The government now acknowledges that this was detrimental to Indigenous peoples and subsequent generations, to the retention of their languages and to many aspects of their culture. As a result of this acknowledgement and the offering of a public apology to the Indigenous peoples, Canada has entered a time of truth telling, reconciling the past and questioning how to move forward. With over 150,000 stories of Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors having been told, Justice Sinclair is calling upon all Canadians to ask themselves what their contribution will be to the reconciliation process.

Our drum circle offers our singing as a way of bringing people together, to talk about Indigenous peoples' history, present concerns, traditions and to get to know one another and what our concerns as Indigenous and Settler peoples are. It is our hope that we can contribute to the reconciliation process by Bridging Communities through Song. All cultures have song. When we can sing together – perhaps there is the possibility of getting to know one another. It is our hope that there will be a better future for the children and the next generations to come. We need to build those relationships with one another, learn from one another and plan for our future of what we want our world to be. At a recent conference at Wilfrid Laurier University where Indigenous leaders from around the world were present to discuss the resource and

environmental concerns they were experiencing in their countries, it was recognized by all that the solution needed to be Indigenous and Settler peoples coming together and working towards a solution. Thus, it is the building of relationships that will make a better future. I pray that the connection we have begun here will not be the last time we meet.

We are pleased that the Lutheran Church reached out to us and asked us to be partners in making the Friday evening a beautiful and collaborative experience. It was noticed that all faiths present were respected as equally valid ways/paths to the creator. Kindness and generosity was felt from having individuals meet us at the front doors of the hotel and guide us to our room, having a place to leave our belongings, seating us central in the room, and welcoming the smudging, singing and full participation in the evening. One woman commented that she had lost faith a bit in humanity but that the night gave her hope that we can all be relatives in a human family, truly. It was said by several that it was a good evening with wonderful, caring respectful people. Perhaps we all left this evening with a better understanding of one another as brothers and sisters and how we see each other and what we are all hoping to achieve, which is reconciliation.

We wish to thank everyone for the invitation and their openness to invite us into your world; alongside you. This is very significant to us! We were glad to finish the evening with the round dance that brought us to together in action; beyond just words.

Chi Miigwetch!! (Big Thank You)

Kelly Laurila

Mino Ode Kwewak N'gamowak (Good Hearted Women Singers)