

**JOURNEYS**  
**Theme Packet for February 2016**  
**The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough**

What does it mean to be people of  
**Reconciliation?**

*The overall purpose of human communication  
is - or should be - reconciliation.  
It should ultimately serve to lower or remove the  
walls of misunderstanding which unduly  
separate us human beings, one from another.  
~ M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community  
Making and Peace**

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## WONDERINGS *about* RECONCILIATION

About every six weeks or so, the UFP service leaders gather in a 'community of practice'...to reflect on, explore, and grow in the important role that they play on Sunday mornings. At that gathering, we spend a bit of time talking about an upcoming monthly theme; at our last gathering, 'reconciliation' was the topic.

As we are Canadians and Unitarians, it is not surprising that our first association with this theme was with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Its work, and the arduous process it has undertaken, has created in us the sense that reconciliation, while difficult, is something to be desired: if we are able to be reconciled...as colonialists/settlers with our First Nations...then our lives, our relationships, our hearts will be better for it. We desire reconciliation.

So, we were surprised to find that some dictionary definitions of reconciliation had a negative tone. For example, to reconcile is to force one view to be compatible with another, or to resign oneself to a less than desirable agreement.

If you google 'reconciliation,' you'll find that the majority of hits are Christian webpages that speak of being reconciled to Christ. In the particular faith of my childhood, (and certainly this understanding is not universal within Christianity,) I understood

reconciliation to have both a negative and positive aspect...that is, first, an assumption that the core of who we are is bad or wrong, and second, that to reconcile oneself to God would bring one into alignment with something better, something right.

As Unitarians, we might choose a slightly different way to look at reconciliation. We begin with a positive view of humanity and take seriously our responsibilities as people. We understand that relationships can be broken, that friends sometimes part with enmity, and that we are surely capable of making mistakes in our dealings with one another. But we also trust that we have within us the ability to take responsibility for our actions, the promise of restoration, and the irrefutable capacity to choose love over hate.

Reconciliation is, almost always, something to be desired. It may be difficult, it may be heart-wrenching, AND we are capable of it attempting it.

This month, as we consider the meaning and role of reconciliation in our lives, we will look at it broadly, while at the same time, aware that reconciliation has an important and specific context in Canada at this time in history. We are called to be people of reconciliation.

### **rec · on · cil · i · a · tion** **, rekən , silē ' āSH(ə)n/** **n.**

1. an act of reconciling; the restoration of friendly relations.
2. the action of making one view or belief compatible with another.
3. the state of being reconciled, as when someone becomes resigned to something not desired.
4. the process of making consistent or compatible, as in making financial accounts consistent; harmonization.
5. the process of finding a way to make two different ideas or facts exist or be true at the same time.

~ Rev. Julie

## A STORY *about* RECONCILIATION

### *The Wounded Selkie, a story from the Orkney Islands*

A long, long time ago there was a man whose small cottage lay by the shores. He had a wife and bairns who depended on him and he had to reap a cold and dangerous harvest from treacherous waters. He was also a hunter of selkies (as seals are called in the north), as the skins that he stripped from these animals could fetch a good price at market. People treated the selkies with caution and respect; some said that they were the souls of people who had drowned, but the selkie hunter ignored the warnings of his neighbours.

One fine morning the selkie hunter went down to the rocks where the selkies liked to lie and bask in the sunshine. He saw a big bull selkie with a lovely silvery grey-coloured coat. He lay down on his belly and slowly crawled along the rocks, and was almost right up to the animal when it turned its huge body to jump back into the water. The hunter thrust his knife into the selkie as hard as he could. Then, with a loud splash, the selkie escaped into the sea; the water was dyed red with its blood as it slowly swam away from the shore.

The selkie hunter returned home with a heavy heart, for not only had he lost the big selkie but he had lost his knife too.

Later that day, as the sun hung low in the sky, there was a loud knock at the door. The selkie hunter opened it to find a stranger standing before him. He was tall and well-dressed, and had large brown eyes whose expression betrayed a great sadness. 'I have a business proposition for you,' said the stranger. 'I have a customer who is interested in buying your selkie skins, but you must come with me now if you are interested.'

The selkie hunter agreed; the stranger had a large horse that he had ridden on, and told the selkie hunter to sit behind him. The horse set off at a gallop. Eventually the horse slowed down and stopped at the top of a high cliff. The stranger pointed towards the edge and said, 'Look down there.'

The selkie hunter stepped towards the edge and peered over but he could see nothing. Suddenly, the hunter felt two strong arms clasp around him as the stranger leant forward and pushed him over the edge of the cliff. The two of them plunged deep into the water, which closed over their heads far above them. A great door appeared from out of the depths and opened to allow them to enter a great hall. The terrified hunter saw that it was full of selkies, all weeping and sorrowing as though the end of the world had come.

He walked forward, through the great hall and past all the grieving selkies, knowing that these must be the selkie folk that he had heard of in the old stories.

Then, he turned and saw in a large mirror the face of a selkie. He looked at his hands, but they were gone; in their place was a pair of flippers. Then the stranger

stepped forward and held out a great knife for the hunter to look at. 'Do you recognise this knife?'

The selkie hunter could no longer look the selkie man in the eye, and he turned his gaze to the floor. 'Yes,' he said, in nothing more than a whisper, 'that is my knife.'

'You have no need to fear us, for we bear you no malice. That selkie that you wounded this morning was my father and you are the only one that can help him. You are healer enough to save my father.'



The hunter was led into another room where a large selkie lay breathing heavily with a gaping wound in his side. The stranger motioned towards a basin, and the selkie hunter washed the wound.

'Push the two sides of the wound together,' said the stranger, and the hunter did as he was instructed. As soon as his hands pushed the wound together the two sides seemed to melt into each other, and the wound was healed. The rejoicing in the hall was great, though the selkie hunter stood in the corner of the room thinking that he would never again see his wife and bairns or his friends.

But the selkie man came over to him and said, 'Thank you for the kind act that you have done. I shall return you to your own home, but first you must make a solemn vow to never injure or kill another selkie. Will you do that?'

'Why, yes,' said the hunter, 'I would gladly do that in order to return to my own wife and bairns.'

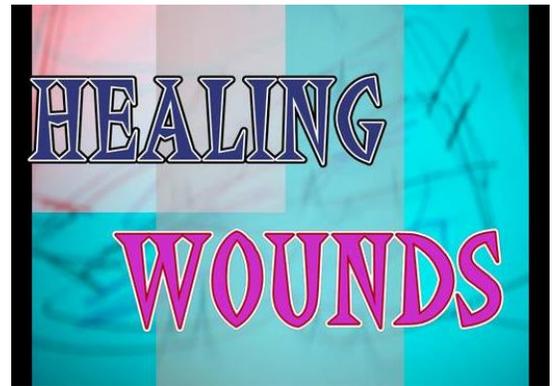
So the hunter made his vow and after that the selkie man led him out of the hall and took him back up through the sea. They broke the surface of the water right beneath the cliff where they had fallen from. As the selkie hunter clambered off the horse by his own door, the selkie man said to him, 'Now remember your vow. You must never injure or kill another selkie for as long as you will live.'

The selkie hunter remembered the vow, though

wondered how he was going to make any money to feed his family. 'Yes,' he said, 'I remember my vow and I'm a man of honour.'

With a smile, the selkie said, 'Here, take this. Never let it be said that we deprived an honest man of his livelihood without paying him any compensation.' He handed the selkie hunter a large bag of gold coins, more than enough to keep him and his family in comfort for the rest of their days.

The selkie hunter was as good as his word and he never injured or killed another selkie for as long as he lived. He would sometimes sit down by the shore and watch the selkies swimming or basking in the sunshine, and he never again laughed at the 'old wives' tales' about the selkie folk who could take off their skins and dance in the moonlight.



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<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandsstories/aselkiestory/selkiestory/index.asp>

### QUESTIONS *for reflection on* RECONCILIATION

- Do you believe that there are such things as irreconcilable differences? Have you ever not wanted to reconcile with someone? What do you understand about that?
- When have you sought reconciliation with someone else, or when someone else has sought reconciliation with you? What made it possible, or impossible?
- Have you ever "reconciled yourself" to something? What were/are the circumstances?
- What does reconciliation do with the hurt/scars/damage done when relationships have broken?
- How does power, or perceived power, play into the process of reconciliation?
- If the other party(ies) are unwilling to work toward reconciliation, what peace/healing are you able to find?
- What does reconciliation require? Fairness? Justice? Truth? Repentance? Understanding?

## INSPIRATIONS *on the theme of* RECONCILIATION

The practice of peace and reconciliation is one of the most vital and artistic of human actions.

~ *Thich Nhat Hanh*

We are all one - or at least we should be - and it is our job, our duty, and our great challenge to fight the voices of division and seek the salve of reconciliation.

~ *Roy Barnes*

Women must be the spokesmen for a new humanity arising out of the reconciliation of spirit and body.

~ *Carol P. Christ*

There should be an honest attempt at the reconciliation of differences before resorting to combat.

~ *Jimmy Carter*

Reconciliation means working together to correct the legacy of past injustice.

~ *Nelson Mandela*

Reconciliation is a part of the healing process, but how can there be healing when the wounds are still being inflicted?

~ *N. K. Jemisin*

Reconciliation is about ensuring that everything we do today is aimed at that high standard of restoring balance in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

~ *Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair, Truth and Reconciliation Commission*

To reconcile is to weave a stronger and more vibrant social fabric, based on the unique and diverse strengths of Canadians and their communities."

~ *Chief Robert Joseph, Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada*

Reconciliation should be accompanied by justice, otherwise it will not last. While we all hope for peace it shouldn't be peace at any cost but peace based on principle, on justice.

~ *Corazon Aquino*

In the aftermath of any war or genocide, healing and reconciliation are ultimate aspirations.

~ *Janine di Giovanni*

The pattern of the prodigal is: rebellion, ruin, repentance, reconciliation, restoration.

~ *Edwin Cole*

The process of reclaiming the self is one of

reconciliation with meaning.

~ *Tariq Ramadan*

We owe the Aboriginal peoples a debt that is four centuries old. It is their turn to become full partners in developing an even greater Canada. And the reconciliation required may be less a matter of legal texts than of attitudes of the heart.

~ *Romeo LeBlanc*

If the world would apologize, I might consider a reconciliation.

~ *Mason Cooley*

Reconciliation requires changes of heart and spirit, as well as social and economic change. It requires symbolic as well as practical action.

~ *Malcolm Fraser*

If there is to be reconciliation, first there must be truth.

~ *Timothy B. Tyson*

Propensities and principles must be reconciled by some means.

~ *Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre*

My gut feeling says he needs a second chance.

Like we all do.

~ *Mary E. Hanks, Winter's Past*

With all the differences and misunderstandings, meeting halfway is the only way to show that both of you are willing to sacrifice a portion of yourself for the benefit of both...

~ *NerD\_Seyer*

A little bit of affection goes a long way toward reconciling one with the world.

~ *Marty Rubin*

Many people today agree that we need to reduce violence in our society. If we are truly serious about this, we must deal with the roots of violence, particularly those that exist within each of us. We need to embrace 'inner disarmament,' reducing our own emotions of suspicion, hatred and hostility toward our brothers and sisters.

~ *Dalai Lama XIV*

Remember, confrontation is about reconciliation and awareness, not judgement or anger.

~ *Dale Partridge*

How can you love those who have stolen from you, assaulted or abused you, or tried to blow you up and completely destroy you? How can you forgive those who have kidnapped, tortured and killed someone you love? Yet this is where reconciliation has to begin.

~ *Andrew White, Father, Forgive*

Without community, there is no liberation...but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.

~ *Audre Lorde*



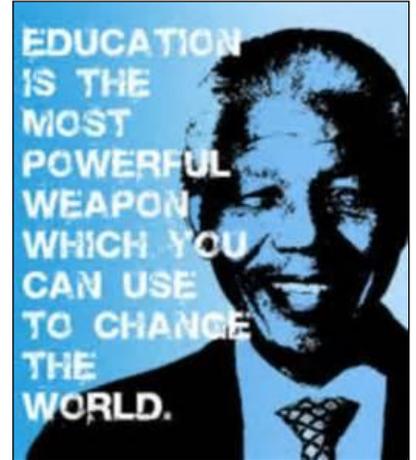
## Practicing RECONCILIATION

### Option A: Where Are the Children?

Visit the exhibit at <http://wherearethechildren.ca/exhibition/> Once you've spent some time with it, quietly reflect on what you've seen and read there. How does it make you feel? What questions do you have? Create a response to your experience, whether written, a drawing, a prayer, a poem.

### Option B: Greater Understanding Lends Itself to the Possibility of Reconciliation: Read a Book

1. Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada*
2. Jill Doerfler, *Those Who Belong: Identity, Family, Blood, and Citizenship Among the White Earth Anishinaabeg*
3. Tom Flanagan, *Beyond the Indian Act: Restoring Aboriginal Property Rights*
4. Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories and An Inconvenient Indian*
5. Arthur Manuel, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*
6. Pamela D. Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*
7. Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*
8. John Ralston Saul, *The Comeback and A Fair Country*
9. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation*
10. Annis May Timpson, *First Nations, First Thoughts: The Impact of Indigenous Thought in Canada*
11. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume One: Summary: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*



### Option C: Kintsugi: Putting it Back Together



"Kintsugi is a pottery technique. When something breaks, like a vase, they glue it back together with melted gold. Instead of making the cracks invisible, they make them beautiful. To celebrate the history of the object. What it's been through. And I was just...thinking of us like that. My heart full of gold veins, instead of cracks." ~ Leah Raeder, *Cam Girl*

Consider a broken personal relationship. Does it matter to you to mend it? Where might you be willing to compromise in order to reconcile?

Then, take a piece of china or pottery (you decide how precious it is to you) and smash it. Put it back together again, using various kinds and colours of glue, paint, and grout. As you do so, consider how where something is mended, it may become more beautiful.

### Option D: Welcoming the Opposite View

Consider this practice as suggested by Franco Santoro. How might you use it in your life?

"Whenever I express my views, thoughts or anything I deeply believe, I will welcome any opposing view or thought. I will listen with caring attention to what the other says, accepting it no matter how different or antagonistic it seems to be. I will also deeply and sincerely thank them.

I will abstain from feeling accused or judged...I have tried all other options, and they have not worked, and this is the only I have left. And for this purpose I am open to be patient, promoting the gestation of this healing process, for I know that all is one."

## Resources on RECONCILIATION

### ON THE WEB

The **Gender Reconciliation International** program fosters new dimensions of transformational healing and reconciliation between women and men.

[www.genderreconciliationinternational.org/](http://www.genderreconciliationinternational.org/)

**Reconciliation Canada** engages Canadians in dialogue and transformative experiences that revitalize the relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

<http://reconciliationcanada.ca/>

Website of the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**: [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca)

Justice Sinclair speaks with the CBC about the report of the TRC: <http://tinyurl.com/g14w2cu>

A groundbreaking **arts partnership** looks to the past & future for new dialogues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada <http://tinyurl.com/h29js55>

The **Sacrament of Reconciliation** explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtbpOERgMvk>

**The Failure of Reconciliation**, Taiaiake Alfred (University of Victoria) <http://tinyurl.com/gwqqpsps>

**Rwanda: From Hatred to Reconciliation** <http://tinyurl.com/zgcgf8x>

**Building Bridges** between left & right, gay & straight, pro-choice & pro-life through dialogue, reconciliation and action. <http://peggygreen.net>

**Fellowship of Reconciliation** - working for peace, justice and nonviolence since 1915. <http://forusa.org/>

**Kairos' Blanket Exercise**. <http://kairosblanketexercise.org/about/>

**Reconciliation in South Africa**, Richard Goldstone <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2682541741>

### Table Grace on RECONCILIATION

As we prepare to eat the meal before us, we remember the many processes in which this food sustains and heals us. And let us also consider how the hidden processes of healing and growth do their silent work within us, and to let the quiet work of reconciliation be renewed among us.

We know that the ultimate issues of life – healing and growth, reconciliation and renewal – require the quiet of understanding. Because we live with mystery, we trust that, just as this food strengthens our bodies, love will steady us and rekindle our spirits, and will not let us go. Amen.

*~ Inspired by George Kimmich Beach*

### MUSIC

*Amen*, Leonard Cohen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsYd08wQGIl>

*Blank Page*, Christina Aguilera

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xD8Ga0Nsu0>

*Hard to Say I'm Sorry*, Chicago

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqq3tW3iACw>

*Japanese Bowl*, Peter Mayer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOAzobTIGr8>

*Not Perfect*, Tim Minchin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg3PberzvXo>

*Prodigal Son*, The Rolling Stones

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKIkpzWV9OY>

*Reconciliation*, Alpha Blondy & Tiken Jah Fakoly

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq81Ofqjb\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq81Ofqjb_M)

*Song of Reconciliation*, Susan Ashton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kkk-JaTcf7M>

*Spanish Harlem*, Laura Nyro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWVb5-LtgRY>

*Sweet Forgiveness*, Bonnie Raitt

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq2RbR-eXVE>

## BOOKS

*Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese

Through his fictional characters, the author traces the decline of a culture and a cultural way. For Saul, taken forcibly from the land and his family when he's sent to residential school, salvation comes for a while through hockey.

*Maybe Tomorrow* by Boori Pryor

A memoir covering the author's journey from the Aboriginal fringe camps of his birth to fame.

*No Future Without Forgiveness* by Desmond Tutu, who offers his reflections on the wisdom he has gained by helping usher South Africa through the reconciliation experience.

*The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* by Simon Wiesenthal

Fifty-three distinguished people respond to the author's questions about the choice between compassion and justice, silence and truth,

*Toward a True Kinship of Faiths: How the World's Religions Can Come Together* by The Dalai Lama, who hopes this book will help the world's religions in understanding and fostering reverence toward each other.

*The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* by John Paul Lederach

Peacebuilding requires conflict professionals to envision their work as a creative act needing "moral imagination."

*Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* by Rupert Ross, a search for the values and visions that give life its significance and that any justice system, Aboriginal or otherwise, must serve and respect.



## MOVIES

*Changing Lanes* (2002:15)

The story of what happens one day in when a lawyer and a businessman share a small automobile accident and their mutual road rage escalates into a feud.

*Dead Man Walking* (1995:15)

A nun, while comforting a convicted killer on death row, empathizes with both the killer and his victim's families.

*Invictus* (2009: 12A)

Nelson Mandela, as the South African President, works to unite the apartheid-torn land by enlisting the national rugby team on a mission to win the Rugby World Cup.

*Irreconcilable Differences* (1984:15)

A precocious little girl sues her selfish, career-driven parents for emancipation, surprising them both.

*Quiz Show* (1994:15)

A young lawyer investigates a potentially fixed game show. The father of a show winner who has caused disgrace to the family, accompanies and supports him at the congressional hearings.

*Reconciliation* (2009)

The provocative story about an estranged father and son struggling to overcome the heartbreaking consequences of their past.

*Reconciliation* (2012)

Three people with vastly separate lives and vantage points share an interconnecting narrative of grief and hope following 9/11. <https://vimeo.com/34647517>

*The Mission* (1986:PG)

Priest Rodrigo, a Jesuit trying to protect a remote tribe, emerges from his climb up the falls to be forgiven and accepted by the very people he had sinned against.

*The Straight Story* (1999:U)

Alvin Straight's slow, arduous journey on his lawn tractor to bring reconciliation with his brother.

*Wee Willie Winkie* (1937)

A princess (Shirley Temple) lives with her grandfather in India where she wins the hearts of everyone by challenging prejudicial assumptions, leading to a negotiated peace between two enemies.

Children's Books on  
RECONCILIATION

*I Am Extremely Absolutely Boiling* by Lauren Child

*Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes

*Now Everybody Really Hates Me* by Ross Chast

*Now I Will Never Leave the Dinner Table*

by Ross Chast

*Once there was a Boy* by David Leffler

*Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell

*Shin-chi's Canoe* by Nicola I. Campbell

*The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt

*The Forgiveness Garden*

by Lauren Thompson & Christy Hale

*The Grand Mosque of Paris* by Karen Gray Ruelle

*The Invisible Princess* by Faith Ringgold

*The Year the Swallows Came Early*

by Kathryn Fitzmaurice

*When I Was Eight* by Christy Jordan-Fenton &

Margaret Pokiak-Fenton



Chalice Lighting on  
RECONCILIATION

May this chalice hold the  
flame of compassion,  
shedding light on the possibility of healing  
between and among people of the earth.

May this flame inspire us  
to walk humbly with one another,  
choosing reconciliation over resentment  
as we strive to live in right relationship.

Let there be the light of reconciliation.

*~ Inspired by Leaf Seligman*

March's theme:

**To Be Determined...**

Our scheduled theme was "brokenness" but it now  
feels too similar to February's theme. Email your ideas  
for themes, or suggestions for resources to share in this  
packet to [uurevjs@gmail.com](mailto:uurevjs@gmail.com)



*The content of this packet is a group effort.  
Service leaders and Covenant Group Facilitators work  
with Rev. Julie to incorporate the theme into our  
programming and services. Thanks to all who helped by  
suggesting resources and providing feedback.  
Your artwork and original writing is also most welcome!  
We subscribe to "Soul Matters" a curriculum from Rev.  
Scott Taylor at the Unitarian Universalist Association.*

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