

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ABORIGINAL NEIGHBOURS

September 2018 to March 2021

Aboriginal Neighbours' activities are of an ad hoc nature, focussed on building lasting relationships with primarily urban First Nations peoples. The term ad hoc refers to responding to needs stated by First Nations. Currently, the most important role of AbN is networking. The secretary provides a much-appreciated clearinghouse for information-sharing among faith communities, First Nations and the community at large, enabling opportunities for those on the email list to attend events involving the reconciliation process and Indigenous issues. Significant partnerships continue with First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services (SCCFS), Esquimalt United Church Justice Team (EUCJT), and BC-Yukon KAIROS.

Working within a MOU with FPCC, AbN's Revitalization of Indigenous Living Languages

(RILL) Project raised enough funding in this reporting period to support six Mentor-Apprentice program (MAP) teams, teaching and learning the Nuučan'ut, Kwak'waka, Diiłidʔaałtx and Hul'q'umi'num' languages. Funding sources include grants from the Anglican Foundation (Catholic Apostolic Universal Church Trust Fund), ongoing support from the Diocesan Vision Fund, and donations from interested individuals and parishes (St. George the Martyr, St. John the Divine, and Christ Church Cathedral). FPCC continuously has more requests for MAP programs than it can support with government funding. RILL is currently seeking funds to continue supporting two MAP teams in 2021-22.

AbN, with Diocesan funding, is also supporting the Cowichan Valley Arts Council in its upcoming Storytelling Show featuring the Hul'q'umi'num' language.

With funding from the Diocesan Vision Fund, AbN supported the SCCFS Xe'Xu'T'uluts Youth Leadership Camp held in Tla-O-Qui-Aht Territory. Another youth initiative supported by AbN and the Diocese is the Coming-of-Age Preparation Program for teens-aged girls, centred on their Indigenous cultural teachings.

Prior to Covid restrictions, AbN provided relationship-building gatherings. Wally Awasis, Cree knowledge keeper, spoke at the Parish of St. Peter & St. Paul; and Patricia Watts (Wuikinuxv FN, Rivers Inlet) spoke at St. George the Martyr Church, Cadboro Bay.

Fundraising Pancake Breakfasts were held for the Lester Joe Family (Cowichan) and to support travel of Tsartlip paddlers to compete in Australia. These were co-sponsored by AbN's Hospitality Team, EUCJT and Rainbow Kitchen. AbN also co-hosted "Lunch and Learn: Food is Culture" at Victoria Native Friendship Centre.

In Oct. 2018, in its partnership with BC-Yukon KAIROS, AbN was represented at the presentation of a petition regarding TRC Call to Action #62.1 to Minister of Education, Rob Fleming and Minister of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation, Scott Fraser, asking that the Government implement age-appropriate curriculum on Residential Schools, Treaties and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada.

With the leadership of the EUCJT, AbN facilitated a Community KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE) with Indigenous and KAIROS partners at the Songhees Wellness Centre. During Covid, KBE has developed a way to host a virtual Blanket Exercise. AbN continues to offer the KBE to church communities.

In Sept. for several years, AbN has assisted Aboriginal Health Liaison at Island Health with its Orange Shirt Day at the Royal Jubilee and Victoria General Hospitals by designing and printing cards for their information packages.

In Nov. 2019, the AbN library and artifacts were transferred from the Parish Hall of St. Peter & St. Paul to Christ Church Cathedral and have been carefully curated by the Librarians there. Until Covid restrictions were in place, the Library was open at a designated time in the week and on Sundays.

The executive members of AbN are looking forward to having discussions regarding its future relationship with the Diocese and with the First Nations on whose territory we live and worship.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth D'Hollander, Treasurer

On behalf of Aboriginal Neighbours Executive:

Maureen Applewhaite, Secretary

Doug Bowen, Hospitality Team Leader

Sarah Kell, RILL Grant Writer.

