

Truth and Reconciliation Work at Knox United, Brandon, Manitoba 2025

In June, we marked the tenth anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, which aim to address the legacy of residential schools and promote reconciliation.

As a faith community, we remain committed to fulfilling our obligations to the TRC recommendations and the Calls to Action.

In March, Rev. Craig Miller was invited by Chief Vince Tacan of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation to share resources from the Brandon Indian Residential School Mobile Learning Centre and provide a presentation to a team from the Indigenous Services Canada office in Winnipeg. The meeting took place in Sioux Valley, and the learning centre was on display from mid-March through the end of April. Knox serves as the Keeper for the BIRS Learning Centre (Call to Action 59).



In January, Knox received an unexpected bequest of \$15,000 from a donation made for the former Central United Church in Brandon. At the April Council meeting, the Outreach Committee recommended using the bequest to support the work of the Brandon Bear Clan and the SHIFT (Supporting and Honouring Indigenous Families Together) program at the Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre. The committee actively partners with both community initiatives. Members noted that the bequest offered an opportunity to embody the teachings of our faith by sharing this gift with the wider community and honouring our commitment to support healing from the impacts of colonization and residential schools. The Council approved the donation, allocating \$ 7,500 for BBC and \$ 7,500 for SHIFT. This donation aligns with Call to Action 61, which calls for supporting and funding projects related to healing, reconciliation, culture and language revitalization, education, and relationship building.

Knox was invited by the Prairie to Pine Region Committee on Ministry Personnel Support to host the gathering for active ministry personnel on May 7. The committee expressed a desire to learn more about the work at the residential school site and to hear from our partners (Call to Action 60) . Rev. Craig collaborated with Eugene Ross (Wipazoka Wakpa Oyate Elder, Keeper of the Lodge), Katherine Nichols (Lead Investigator for the BIRS Cemetery Project), Sam Jackson (Dakota Oyate Pow Wow Dancer/Instructor), and Madelyn and Quentin Robinson to create content for the day, which included spiritual renewal, land-based learning, and



exploration of reconciliation initiatives. The InBetweeners graciously provided coffee and tea breaks, as well as lunch.

In June 2021, the Council provided a letter of support for the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation's application for the Indigenous Agriculture Science Partnerships Program (ISAPP) through Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada (AAFC) (the federal government). As part of the application, Knox committed to raising \$5,000 as a partner on the grant. (Call to Action 61) We fulfilled our obligation in May, and the money will be used for additional signage and a healing garden at the site.

Following a request from the Brandon Friendship Centre in June, Knox was asked to recruit volunteers to work in the food tent at the National Indigenous Peoples' Day event held at the Riverbank Discovery Centre. We provided fourteen volunteers.

Debby Dandy and Rev. Susie McPherson continue to facilitate the Kairos Blanket Exercise and organized the National Indigenous Day of Prayer service at Knox.

At the start of August, the God's Lake research team, led by Clyde Okema, visited the former BIRS site and cemetery grounds for the first time. The mobile learning centre was set up in the auditorium at Knox, where we hosted the team along with elders from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation for lunch. The research team is working with Katherine Nichols and Brandon Photographics to develop and display some of the photos from the BIRS learning centre for an exhibit in God's Lake.

Rev. Craig was invited to speak at this year's 100 Men 100 Drums gathering at the Assiniboine Food Forest in Brandon. Organizer Jason Gobeil explained, "As men, we often sit alone with our emotions, our frustrations, our difficulties and our voices. The gathering was created as a safe space for our men to find a moment of healing, a moment of release, a chance to be vocal and to be supported by brothers of all creeds and colours."



We are currently working with the Canupawakpa Dakota Nation to provide the BIRS learning centre for their Orange Shirt Day celebrations in Virden, Manitoba, on September 26th.

Rev. Craig is serving on the planning team for Truth and Reconciliation Week 2025, to be held in Brandon from September 29 - October 3). Knox's primary responsibility is to organize the display of the Brandon Indian Residential School Mobile Learning Centre at the Riverbank Discovery Centre. We also make it available as requested for the survivor's gathering hosted by Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. Some members from Knox participate as volunteers for activities held during the week, and many more participate in the Orange Shirt Day walk.



Through the work of the Outreach Committee, our community of faith continues to act on the Calls to Action as we seek truth, reconciliation, healing, and justice with our Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit kin.