

December 3, 2019

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
SHINING WATERS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Tuesday, December 3, 2019**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on Tuesday, December 3, 2019 by video conference. The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

Members Present

Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Lois Brown, Tina Conlon, Donna Lang, Alana Martin, Moon-Ja Park, Cameron Watts

Staff: Susie Henderson, Ren Ito, Jody Maltby

Regrets: Eleanor Scarlett

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone. Tina Conlon opened with a reading from Walter Brueggemann's *Celebrating Abundance* and with prayer. She gave an acknowledgement of the land.

The chairperson constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ. There was a time of check-in.

Agenda

The chairperson added a conversation about partnerships to the agenda.

It was agreed by consensus that the agenda be approved, as amended.

Minutes

MOTION by Tina Conlon/Moon Ja Park that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held November 6, 2019 be adopted as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Correspondence

Email from Tina Conlon about extraction industries.

Tina spoke about the importance of this work to people she meets, particularly newcomers and refugees. She spoke of the work of the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network and Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability.

Susie Henderson noted that we have participated in this work at the national level with Christie Neufeldt and through Kairos. She also shared the link for MERE, a hub for Mother Earth and Resource Extraction, Women Defending Land and Water:

<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/mere-hub/index>

If this commission sets this work as a priority there could be a role for us to help engage congregations and build partnerships/relationships.

Jody Maltby, Susie Henderson, and Ren Ito will have conversation about how we can strengthen our relationship with General Council justice staff and possibly invite a national staff person to join a future meeting.

The commission will leave it to individual members to respond to the petition if desired.

Email regarding SJNOR (Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions) requesting the region to formalize a covenantal relationship.

The Executive is asking the commission for a recommendation about whether the region wants to participate in the network. Tina Conlon, Susan Eagle and Ren Ito attended the most recent SJNOR meeting. The commission discussed the request and the overall sense was that we should participate. Comments included:

- It takes us to a place beyond our own region.
- It is a valuable network when we seek to have a bigger voice.
- It helps ensure that we speak with one voice and do not contradict or undermine one another, or repeat one another's work.
- The network only meets twice a year; and so there are limits to what that group can do but it is a place for regions to come together to update one another and see if there is a way to share work.
- It can also be effective when bringing things forward to General Council – it may fail in one region but move forward in another.
- Staffing component has been helpful to facilitate the work.
- SJNOR makes provincial appointments where only one UCC person is requested – like ISARC and the Health Coalition.
- While it is good to take collective action where appropriate, being in SJNOR does not prevent any single region from taking a position.

SJNOR meets in Toronto to have access to General Council staff and sometimes Kairos staff. Our financial support ensures equal participation of all regions because some live farther away.

MOTION by Cam Watts/Moon Ja Park that Shining Waters Regional Council enter into the covenant with other Ontario regions as part of the Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions.

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MOTION

CARRIED

MOTION by Moon Ja/Lois that the Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council approve a budget of up to \$2,000 for 2020 for the Social Justice Network of Ontario Regions.

MOTION

CARRIED

We can have two representatives to the network. Tina Conlon has been our interim representative and is comfortable continuing but she would like others to have the opportunity to participate. The commission agreed to defer a decision on representation to allow people to consider if they would be willing to serve in this way. Tina will continue for now.

Business Arising

- Funding criteria circulated by Donna Lang

Donna provided a starting point for funding criteria after conferring with Deborah Hart who has been involved in approving Mission Support Grants. She explained that points could receive different weight in different circumstances. There could be a threshold number of points needed, i.e. 7/10, so a project does not need to hit every point.

There was agreement that we are developing these criteria to pass to the Grants Review Committee. We want a fair distribution of funds to legacy projects and new initiatives, long-term projects and one-time events, urban and rural projects across the entire geography of the region.

Staff will follow up on United Church priorities and the commission will identify regional priorities after the survey has been completed.

Further conversation was deferred pending a larger regional conversation about funding priorities that is to occur early in the new year.

- Survey Follow up

The survey went to every community of faith, lay representative and ministry personnel. We have received 30 responses so far. We agreed to send out the survey again in early January with a closing date two weeks farther on. If possible, we will not re-send the survey to those who have already responded. We will also consider sending it out a third time, depending on the response.

- Partnerships

Staff will create a list of partnerships the region already has with other faith groups, community groups and coalitions.

Staff Report

Ren Ito provided an update on his work.

Living Into Right Relations Circle—gathering held at Rama United Church, October 19, 2019

- developing relationships with indigenous communities in geographical area of Shining Waters Regional Council
 - o still waiting on outcomes of August's National Spiritual Gathering
- next gathering to be held concurrently with Shining Waters Executive
 - o members of Circle expressed desire to be in relationship with regional leadership
- does Social and Ecological Justice Commission want a relationship with the LIRR Circle?

Teaching Just Faith: Christian Education project—in development with Jeffrey Dale (SWRC)

- developing resources, educational opportunities, etc. in four areas:
 - o sex, gender, and physical health
 - o mental health and wellness
 - o anti-racism and being intercultural
 - o indigenous histories and justice

Facing Queerphobia: Panel discussion on facing anti-LGBTQ+ hate—November 22, 2019

- three panelists: Jenn Hind-Urquhart (Emmanuel UC, Waterloo), Keith Murray (Hillhurst UC, Calgary), Michiko Bown-Kai (East End UC, Toronto / AUSE)
- video will be posted and distributed online

2S/LGBTQ+ Community Day—January 25, 2020

- day-long gathering to build community for 2S/LGBTQ+ people in SWRC
- facilitators, leadership to emerge “from the floor”

Other upcoming projects:

- racism awareness campaign: #SpeakingTruthInLove (early 2020)
- racial justice workshops with regional communities of faith (February 2020)
- teaching free online course: Social Justice, Faith, and Theology (beginning early 2020)

Susie Henderson reported that Brian McIntosh went to the donor appreciation night held by the Anishinaabe Health Centre where we received a lovely blanket with a river design to honour the generous gift of Toronto Conference.

The region is currently updating our website and will be ready to add program pages if people want to think about what could be on social and ecological justice page.

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Kingsway Lambton United Church has started a short, contemporary justice service at 8:30 on a Sunday morning and it has a significant congregation.

Jody Maltby provided an update on staffing. Three permanent full-time positions will be posted in the new year. Staff who are currently completing contracts will be encouraged to apply if interested.

Other Business

Next meeting – we will do a doodle poll in January to find a date for our next meeting, which will be by Zoom and will occur after we have had more responses to the survey. Wednesdays seem to be good for many members. After the survey has closed and we have had the meeting on funding priorities, we will look for a date for an in-person meeting.

The commission offered thanks to Susan Eagle for a well-run meeting.

Closing

The Chairperson closed the meeting with a prayer and the meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.