

July 15, 2020

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the
Social and Ecological Justice Commission
Wednesday, July 15, 2020**

The Social and Ecological Justice Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on July 15, 2020 by video conference. The meeting began at 11:00 a.m.

Members Present

Tina Conlon, Susan Eagle (Chairperson), Alana Martin, Moon-Ja Park, Cameron Watts
Staff: Bri-anne Swan

Regrets: Eleanor Scarlett

Absent: Donna Lang, Lois Brown

Welcome, check in and prayer

The chairperson welcomed everyone, opened with prayer, gave an acknowledgement of the land, and acknowledged our commitment to being a safe place for all people to gather and participate in our Region.

The chairperson constituted the meeting in the name of Jesus Christ.

There was a time of check-in.

Agenda

MOTION by Cameron Watts/Alana Martin that the agenda, be approved as circulated.

MOTION

CARRIED

Minutes

MOTION by Moon-Ja Park/Alana Martin that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shining Waters Social and Ecological Justice Commission held May 27, 2020 be adopted as circulated with the correction of changing the word “radicalized” on page 4 of the minutes to “racialized”.

MOTION

CARRIED

Updates

ISARC letter – Susan Eagle

Thanks to Cameron Watts and Eleanor Scarlett for the edits and additions to the letter. David Leyton-Brown signed the letter and it was sent out to the government and ISARC's partners.

Meeting with Regional Council Executive – Susan Eagle

Executive was updated on recent Commission activities: setting its vision for justice work within the Regional Council, being in touch with Communities of Faith about justice priorities with a survey, issuing statements around Churches reopening amidst the pandemic and the ongoing problems around racism within our midst.

The chairperson was asked to comment on the proposed Intercultural Commission, specifically whether there was capacity within the Social and Ecological Justice Commission for this work.

SJNOR Report – Tina Conlon

This was a short meeting and a follow-up from the previous meeting of May 6th. There was representation from Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council, East Central Ontario Regional Council, Shining Waters Regional Council, Horseshoe Falls Regional Council, Antler River Watershed Regional Council, Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council, Canadian Shield Regional Council, and the General Council Office. A decision was made not to meet in July or August. The next meeting will be in September, with no date yet set.

There was a sharing of reports of justice work from the various Regional Councils. It was noted that some Regional Councils have become involved in issues around mining justice and ecological justice. There seems to be little consistency among the Regional Councils in terms of justice initiatives. The benefits of a group spanning the province is that it gives each Regional Council's justice networks a sense of what is going on outside their boundaries. It is also the body that ISARC reports to.

Survey of faith communities

Cameron Watts, Susan Eagle and Bri-anne Swan are still hoping to get this done over the summer. Emails have started to go out to set up times to speak with justice leaders within the communities of faith who did not return surveys. It is still hoped the additional surveys and conversations will inform the Commission's priorities.

July 15, 2020

Workshop planning

Earlier in the year, the Commission was exploring if they might offer a workshop at the May annual meeting, which needed to be cancelled because of COVID-19.

In October, the Regional Council annual meeting will be held online and for one day. Ninety minutes of the agenda will be devoted to a discussion around racism and anti-racism. However, there is acknowledgement by the Regional Council that 90 minutes is not enough time to responsibly and authentically engage with Regional members around this topic. There is an opportunity to offer a much more in-depth workshop (or series of workshops) either the day before, or in the weeks leading up to the annual meeting.

Bri-anne Swan inquired as to whether one or two members of this Commission would take part in planning these anti-racism offerings, as part of a committee including members of Executive and possibly other commissions. Interest was expressed from this Commission to be part of such a group.

Questions arose around whether the content of the workshops and the ensuing discussion could potentially lead to a change in how the annual meeting moves forward, as well as the structure of the Regional Council. Are we willing to be changed by what we hear?

Potential ideas around topics for a workshop or discussion were:

- How to challenge the very structure of the church
- How to challenge the “default to white” mentality
- How to work with congregations where there is diversity of opinion around anti-racism initiatives

The Commission acknowledged that any undertaking would need to be done extremely well. The church already has a history of causing trauma for racialized members and we cannot contribute to more harm.

Once the annual meeting is finalized and approved by Executive, there will be more clarity about what the ask and parameters for this project are.

Media Contact List

Bri-anne Swan will touch base with Susie Henderson and follow-up.

Staff Report – Bri-anne Swan

Bri-anne shared highlights of her work over the past two months.

- A newsletter has been created for Social and Ecological Justice Commission members and interested members of the Regional Council, focused on justice-related activities with a connection to the United Church
- A video from the Black Clergy Network

- Supporting a United Church presence at a demonstration in Regent Park (Toronto), after a number of nooses were found on construction sites across the city, leading to the first instalment of the “do justice.” video series.
- Statement re: Anti-Black racism from the Region

Upcoming: Bri-anne plans to start a monthly podcast exploring faith and justice within the Regional Council.

Visioning & Racial Justice Discussion

The planned visioning meeting was shifted to focus on the Commission’s internal work relating to anti-racism. There will be a follow up meeting continuing this anti-racism discussion, which will inform the visioning for the Commission. It has been acknowledged that it is important for the Commission to do internal work around anti-racism before engaging the wider Region.

Next Meeting

Doodle polls will be sent to set the next regular meeting, as well as a separate meeting for additional anti-racism discussion and visioning.

Closing

The Chairperson closed the meeting with a prayer and the meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.