

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

**Minutes of a meeting of the  
Intercultural Diversity Commission  
Friday, October 15, 2021**

The Intercultural Diversity Commission of Shining Waters Regional Council met on October 15, 2021 by video conference. The meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Joel Aguirre, Innocent Karuhanga, Amy Lee (Interim Chair), John Joseph Mastandrea (left at the beginning of the meeting for a pastoral emergency), Néstor Medina, Moon Ja Park

Staff: Kim Uyede-Kai

**Opening / Worship**

Amy, Interim Chairperson, led in worship with prayer; scripture. She welcomed everyone to this first Intercultural Diversity Commission meeting and gave thanks to all those that worked over the years and who brought this commission into being.

Her hope for the Intercultural Diversity Commission is that it be a channel of blessing to share the light and love of God for the region and the whole Church. She shared her recording of a blessing song.

**Land acknowledgement and safe space**

Amy acknowledged the traditional lands that we are on and gave thanks to the First Peoples. She lit a candle for healing of brokenness in relationships

**Sharing circle**

Kim Uyede-Kai expressed gratitude for all in the commission circle. To begin to build community, she invited each to share: Who you are, what you are bringing to this circle/this work, and your hopes for the regional council

We are bringing:

- The meaning of our names in our languages and cultures;
- A voice for Filipino people, an advocate for being all in one for Christ, where all people are welcome, pass on the love of God with no discrimination;
- Awareness of who we are, to educate ourselves, learn who we are and who each is first before we can reach out;
- Connection with Emmanuel College, deeper understanding of interculturality since it's at the core of the United Church;
- Long-time involvement with ethnic ministries at all levels, God will hear our voices and brought us here, we need to be patient;
- Buddhist/Christian family, mentored by "pioneer" Asian women leaders, walking two cultures;
- Memberships on Regional Council Executive and Communities of Faith Commission.

At the next meeting, John Joseph can add to this list what he brings.

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### **Intercultural Diversity Commission (IDC)**

Kim Uyede-Kai explained what a regional council commission is responsible for, how it is different from a network or committees of the past. Decisions made by IDC are the decisions made on behalf of the regional council or its Executive. IDC also have global relations through first- and second-generation immigrants.

Moon Ja Park shared from her experiences of “ethnic ministries:” local, presbytery, conference/region, women’s conferences, and national involvement, and the structural need for a commission.

### **Approval of agenda**

**MOTION** by Moon Ja Park/Innocent Karuhanga that the agenda be approved as circulated.  
**MOTION** **CARRIED**

### **Relationships with Executive, Commissions, committees, networks**

#### **a. Shining Waters Regional Council Executive**

The Intercultural Diversity Commission (IDC) reports its decisions to the Executive. IDC could invite conversation or questions at an Executive meeting but decisions are considered decisions of the regional council, i.e. decisions are non-debatable. There is a process to appeal a decision.

#### **b. Regional Council Commissions**

The four commissions of Shining Waters Regional Council have equal responsibility to the Executive and Regional Council but different responsibilities: Communities of Faith Commission, Pastoral Relations Commission, Social and Ecological Justice Commission. Committees with specific responsibilities but without decision-making authority of the Executive and Regional Council: Equity Committee, Living into Right Relations Circle. The Equity Committee was set up before the Social and Ecological Justice or the Intercultural Diversity Commissions were formed and will now take different forms with staff coordination.

#### **c. Shining Waters Regional Council Committees, Networks**

The Pastoral Relations Commission produced a substantial Equity Goal Research Project Report with several recommendations, some of which address inequities experienced by Asian, Black, Indigenous, and other ministry personnel who are not White.

The Western Intercultural Ministries Network of the Western regional councils have occasional programs and gatherings which Shining Waters is invited to.

#### **d. Interim Chair 2021-2022:**

Amy Lee, as former chair of the Intercultural Diversity Circle, was asked to serve as Interim Chair of the Intercultural Diversity Commission for one year to get the work going. After one year the commission can elect its own Chair from among commission members.

#### **e. Minute Taking and Lead Staff Support**

After this meeting, Rachael Howes will be taking minutes. Meetings will be recorded for minute taking purposes only. Kim Uyede-Kai will serve as lead staff support.

f. **Meetings**

Consensus model of decision-making will be considered as much as possible.

g. **Future Membership Nominations**

Membership can be 6-12 members. At least one or more of those vacancies will be for Indigenous persons whose voice needs to be here. Priority will be given to those whose voices are missing and needed for this work and who are in relationship with their communities. Terms are 3 years plus one potential renewable term, for a possible total of 6 years.

All new commissions have a 2-year review and evaluation. Intercultural Diversity Commission will be reviewed in 2 years and can request to become a permanent commission.

h. **Budget**

Once approved at the regional meeting, this commission will have a budget, as other commissions do. Moon Ja Park shared that this is the first time ever we have our own budget to fund our own work.

i. **Quorum**

Quorum is 50% plus 1. With IDC currently having six members, IDC quorum will be 4.

The meeting took an all-purpose break.

**Review of Intercultural Diversity Commission Proposal**

- a. What excites you? What challenges you?
  - b. Who is IDC's primary "audience" in this first year?
- "we who have been racialized..." Even when it is difficult: Talk to our own people, treat each other better, we can talk to each other in our own language, e.g. getting our community to get vaccinated, getting information and education out to our community, helping to bring sense of belonging,
  - Beginning of a naming of a reality is exciting, of the human aspect of that reality (often spoken in abstract terms but now given community human content) but spoken in challenging, provocative, threatening but also challenged by use of certain language: ethnic, minorities, = gaze of dominant. Defensive on our part. This language needs to be interrogated and challenged. Where is the dominant culture in this? Conversation has to shift gears in orientation. *We* establish where we want to be.
  - Accept who we are, our status as marginalized. We won't be living in the margins any more, in White domination, not just wanting to be heard, to be a wallflower or decoration, but partners, equal. Claim who we are out of the margin, we have something to offer. Our work will be in that space, as God's people, like anyone else.
  - We are resources to SWRC Executive. Distribution has never equitable. Asians are majority in 6 continents but not recognized in "BIPOC" label. Should be BIPAPOC. We need to educate among us. Early education for intercultural context still missing. Good resources needed to be created for congregations, not just adults but especially early age education.

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- Resisting labels, titles. How to change the conversation; how we refer to ourselves. Turn that page and define for ourselves how we refer to ourselves. The better we understand where we are and accept what is, what our rights are, where the problem is.

### **Priorities for IDC's First Year**

- Language, how we name ourselves, how we "turn the page," know who we are
- What is intercultural?
- Resources to educate, like Affirming who came before us. Intercultural is not an "event" for congregations that can be done with so they can move on.
- Double prong approach: 1) rethinking what we want to call ourselves; define orientation, path we want to talk, theology needed for our communities without referring back to dominant group, grounded in the lives of real people
- And 2) help our brothers and sisters understand why it is necessary to become an intercultural church; theological and
- Amy referred back to the proposal so that the previous work doesn't get lost.

### **What Resources Do We Need to Gather for the First Year?**

Depends on what priorities are. The regional council website needs to be a fuller resource. A resource list is already being drafted. Kim asked each person to share what they have found helpful so it can go on the website, "recommended by the commission."

### **How to be in touch with former Intercultural Diversity Circle members?**

The group agreed to change their name to Intercultural Diversity Network (IDN) to avoid confusion with the Commission. The network needs to be encouraged and IDC needs to continue to connect to make sure our work stays grounded in grassroots contexts. The network will meet for fellowship, relationship, gatherings (with food when physical gatherings are possible. They are meeting about once a month on Zoom. Amy is helping them form and will report back to the commission. They are planning a big in person event with food in May 2022. Moon Ja cautioned that the White Church confuses its understanding of intercultural diversity and limits it to food.

### **Next meeting –**

- IDC will meet the third Monday on the month
- Next meeting: Monday, November 15, 6:00-8:00 pm
- Agenda –
  - i. How we will set priorities
  - ii. Naming what we mean by intercultural and delimit what we don't mean
  - iii. Learning each other's cultural, spiritual heritages/legacies/histories in Shining Waters? (how do we name ourselves, been named by others = language, terminology)
  - iv. Look at GC41? Becoming an Intercultural Church proposal 2006
- Volunteer to lead opening worship prayer – Innocent Karuhanga
- Land acknowledgement – Moon Ja Park

**Closing:** Lord's prayer said in each person's language, and Amy Lee declared the meeting adjourned.