

“CELEBRATING NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY”

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First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto
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N.B. – These sermons are made available with a request: that the reader appreciate that, ideally, a sermon is an oral/aural experience that takes place in the context of worship – supported and reinforced by readings, contemplative music, rousing hymns, silence, and prayer – and that it is but one part of an extended conversation that occurs over time between a minister and a covenanted congregation.

Six years ago in August my family moved to Toronto. At a neighbourhood welcoming party I vividly remember a conversation I had with one of my new neighbours.

We were discussing some of the differences between life in the States and in Canada, and the issue of racism came up.

There was no way at that time that I could know of the racial tensions that would erupt in my home state of Missouri, in the community of Ferguson, Missouri to be exact, just a few years later.

There was no way of knowing then of the shootings that would place in the Bible study gathering in South Carolina just this past week.

What I also didn't know back then, as a newcomer to Canada, was what my new neighbour would go on to speak about... the racial injustices that occurred at the hands of the government and churches to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

“Never,” she said, “let Canadians tell you that our history contains no incidence of racism. It's part of our story too.”

It was only then that I began to learn about the mistreatment of Aboriginal people in Canada, and how it wasn't dissimilar to the treatment native people received in the U.S.

Fast forward now to the current day....literally to the current day of June 21st.

Today, is a day of numerous celebrations. It's Pride weekend, Father's Day, and Summer Solstice. A preacher never had so many worthy topics, each offering rich fodder for the soul.

And yet the focus of our gathering today soon became abundantly clear. While we would keep those other celebrations near and dear, this sacred gathering would be a celebration of National Aboriginal Day.

Now is the time to speak the truth about injustice to the Aboriginal culture, now is the time for understanding and stepping on the road to reconciliation.

And so it was through that lens that I envisioned this gathering, and in doing so I was struck as I read over our often-recited covenant – the closest thing that we have to a creed, that which we recite every week, including just minutes ago.

As I looked with fresh eyes at our covenantal words, the power of those words burned from the page, demanding that we apply their power in our healing.

If we claim Love to be our doctrine.
Then the quest for truth and reconciliation must be our sacrament.

If service is our prayer,
Let it be not just a passive prayer of the heart-
remaining only on our lips,
but a proactive one of our hands and feet.

If we are to dwell together in peace,
amongst the myriad of our differences,
then we must genuinely seek knowledge and
understanding of each other.

This is what it means to serve Life, the Spirit of Life,
So that, in the end all souls on that ship bearing us all
shall truly grow into harmony with the divine,
including the divine that lives within each of us.

You don't have to identify specifically as a Unitarian Universalist to embody the meaning of our covenant. All who work for peace and truth and reform do.

We are fortunate today to have one such person in our midst, and now I'd like to introduce her, our guest speaker, author, child welfare expert, and Aboriginal activist Landy Anderson.

Landy is a former Foster Care Supervisor with over 30 years of experience in child welfare.

Landy's Aboriginal husband, John, has been a great support in sharing his experience with her as a child who survived Canada's Sixties Scoop – and was the driving force behind their decision to become foster parents in the early 90's– where they fostered for 12 years and cared for over 100 teenagers!

Landy used her experience as a foster parent, child protection worker and supervisor to write a book *The Foster Parent Survival Guide: How to Navigate the Child Welfare Matrix*. To learn more about Landy visit her [web site](#).

Currently, Landy runs training across Canada on child welfare issues and Aboriginal topics, and is enrolled at York University in the Master of Education – Focusing on Urban Aboriginal Education program. She also teaches in the Child and Youth Worker Program at Durham College.

Landy lives in Oshawa with her 2 Pugs, her husband and their grown children. And she continues to preserve relationships with her former foster children with some connections lasting over 20 years.

And now I invite you to welcome Landy Anderson to the pulpit...