

April 2, 2014



Prairies North Statement Presented at Truth and Reconciliation Meetings in Edmonton

Don and Jean Dale (United Church, Calgary), Rosanne Thede (Evangelical Lutheran Church, Edmonton) and Karen Peterson (Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lethbridge) joined KAIROS National Board member, Louisa Bruinsma (Christian Reformed Church of North American, Edmonton) in presenting a Statement of Reconciliation to the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Commission meetings held in Edmonton from March 27 – 30, 2014.

It is estimated that about 1500 people were present at the main hall of the Shaw Conference Centre when the presentation was made. When KAIROS supporters in the audience were asked to stand to make their presence known, an unscripted “Wow!” from Louisa impressed the group with the number of folks who not only showed up at the TRC hearings, but who identified themselves with KAIROS.



Following the presentation of the Statement, a quilt/blanket symbol was placed ceremoniously into the Bentwood Box. The quilt blanket was designed by Evelyn Martin (Edmonton) and sewn by Irene VanderKloet (Edmonton). This symbol was selected to tie in with the Blanket Exercise which KAIROS has developed and done hundreds of times as an educational tool to show how land was taken from indigenous people over the centuries. The northern lights in the design reflect the northern lights in the KAIROS logo.

Statement Script

My name is Louisa Bruinsma, and I stand here on behalf of the Prairies North region of KAIROS Canada. We recognize that we stand here today on Treaty 6 land. And we also recognize that we stand before the Creator of this beautiful country. We greet the elders, commissioners and the courageous survivors of residential schools.



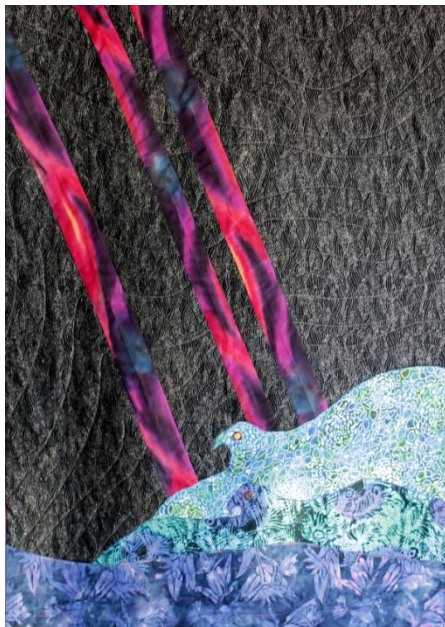
KAIROS is a Canadian ecumenical justice organization. We have people here representing 11 different denominations and organizations. They hail as far away as St. John's Newfoundland to



Victoria, BC. Our Mission is simple: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. We strive for right relationships with the Earth and all its peoples.

At this point I would like to invite all KAIROS supporters in the audience to stand up to show solidarity for KAIROS involvement with indigenous rights, not just in Canada, but in the world.

We are here to say that we are very sorry for this shameful page in the history of our country. We are here to say that we share in that legacy. And it is a shame deepened by the fact that your horrific treatment was often carried out in the name of Christianity. We confess that we have not lived up to the Christian call to do justice.



We have chosen a quilt blanket as our symbol to place in the Bentwood Box. Blankets symbolize parts of aboriginal history. And blankets also play a huge role in an educational exercise KAIROS conducts, called The Blanket Exercise. The Exercise explores the devastating effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples and the land. Participants stand on blankets that represent the land, Turtle Island, before white settlers came. The script announces edicts and treaties. Each reduces the size of land for Indigenous peoples. Some blankets, intentionally infected with diseases like smallpox, reduce the numbers of people standing on the blankets. And at another point in the script, children are led off the blankets when forced to leave their homes to attend residential schools. At the end of the exercise, few blankets and few people remain on them, graphically illustrating how Indigenous peoples have been separated from their lands

and communities.

Two quilters in our community, Evelyn Martin and Irene VanderKloet, have designed this new blanket, a symbol of a restored relationship of trust and warmth. The eagle, the stars and the northern lights symbolize comfort. It shows that the Creator was always there with and for you, then and now. The quilt incorporates cloths of different sizes, vibrancy, shapes and colours. It is our hope that our nation, through this difficult process of reconciliation, can be restored into one whole and vibrant community, respecting all its parts.



This hope was also expressed in a prayer written by church and aboriginal leaders in 2008, in preparation for the TRC hearings:

Remembering the Children Prayer

God of our Ancestors,
who holds the spirits of our grandmothers and grandfathers
and the spirits of our grandchildren,
Remembering the Children,
we now pledge ourselves to speak the Truth,
and with our hearts and our souls
to act upon the Truth we have heard,
of the injustices lived,
of the sufferings inflicted,
of the tears cried,
of the misguided intentions imposed,
and of the power of prejudice and racism
which were allowed to smother the sounds and laughter of
the forgotten children.
Great Creator God
who desires that all creation live in harmony and peace,
Remembering the Children
we dare to dream of a Path of Reconciliation
where apology from the heart leads to healing of the heart
and the chance of restoring the circle,
where justice walks with all,
where respect leads to true partnership,
where the power to change comes from each heart.
Hear our prayer of hope,
and guide this country of Canada
on a new and different path. Amen



Now I invite others from the KAIROS' Prairies North Region to join us to present the symbol for inclusion in the Bentwood box.

- *Louisa Bruinsma, KAIROS national Board member (for KAIROS Prairies North Region)*