

## **Notes from ICC Open Meeting – 28 January 2016**

### **Present:**

ICC Members – Magdalena Tornyai, (near Merritt) BC; Ruby Peterson, West Bank, BC; Mintie Grienke, Winnipeg, MB; Mary Lukes, Winnipeg, BC; Fisher Lavell, Beausejour, MB; Catherine Chambers, Antigonish, NS.

ICC Executive Committee Members – Jonas Breuhan, Victoria, BC; Bill Thomas, Winnipeg, MB; Deva Little Mustache Gordon; Moose Factory, ON; Jamie Warren, Hamilton, ON; Margie Cain, Ottawa, ON, Andrea Currie, Port Hood, NS.

The ICC Executive was delighted to welcome six of our members from coast to coast to coast who called in to participate in our Open Meeting. We held a virtual Sharing Circle, with each person on the call taking a few minutes to tell us about themselves, where they are working, and what type of work they are doing.

### **Ruby Peterson**

Ruby, who is originally from Namgis First Nation on the west coast of Vancouver Island, on Kwakwa'kawakw territory, is now living in the interior of BC, near Kelowna. She has been developing an Indigenous approach to counselling for many years, and is a graduate of the Masters in Counselling in Aboriginal Communities at the University of Victoria. She is currently establishing a private practice with the vision of opening a Family Trauma Healing Centre, which will be based on traditional teachings, natural law, and connection to the land.

### **Deva Little Mustache Gordon**

Deva is also a graduate of the Masters in Counselling in Aboriginal Communities at the University of Victoria, and was a classmate of Ruby's, so they had a wonderful moment of reconnecting after four years of not having seen each other! Deva is originally from Piikani First Nation in southern Alberta, now living in Moose Factory First Nation, on an island in James Bay off the northern coast of Ontario, which is her husband's home community. She is employed by the band as a Child and Youth Counsellor and works primarily in the school in the community. She is in the process of becoming a registered Play Therapist, and will be incorporating this into her practice which already involves land-based healing and learning.

### **Magdalena Tornyai**

Magdalena is originally from Budapest, Hungary, and came to Canada in 1996. She has worked in the past with the Gwich'in people and the Carrier-Sekani Family Services. Ten years ago, she was embraced by the people of Fort Nelson First Nation, and was invited by them to provide services in their

community. Magdalena has become part of their community, working with them ever since. She has developed an approach to healing from intergenerational trauma that has been presented to the community's Chief and Council and she is excited about the ongoing development of that program.

### **Jamie Warren**

Jamie is originally from Moose Cree First Nation but now calls Stoney Creek, Ontario, home. She works as a counsellor at Niagara College in Welland and Niagara-on-the-Lake, where she provides services to Indigenous students, providing personal and cultural support. Jamie also works with students with disabilities, and is learning a lot about this area, especially about the human rights issues related to this part of her work.

### **Mary Lukes**

Mary lives and works in Winnipeg, in the public school system. About 50% of the students she works with are Indigenous, the other 50% of European descent. They all have some form of disability that leads them to require support. Mary works in 8 schools within the city. One thing she is working on right now is to build better options for these students once they graduate, in terms of post-secondary education, trades training, and employment readiness.

### **Mintie Grienke**

Mintie is working in a newly-established private practice, which includes working with a number of EAP, Employee Assistance Programs. Formerly, she was an instructor in an Applied Counselling Program at the Red River College. Before that, she taught adults in First Nations communities in Manitoba. She is currently focusing on getting more connected with Indigenous communities in her area.

### **Fisher Lavell**

Fisher is a white person with a mixed blood background, originally from Swan River, where she was raised Métis. Her childhood memories are of house parties, with fiddles, uncles who were hunters and trappers, and lived on the land. She went to university on a scholarship and got her B.Ed., and then later on, an MA in Educational Psychology. She worked as a counsellor in Hollow Water First Nation, an Ojibway community. Her son married into the community and she has two grandchildren who are registered band members there. Now she works as a counsellor in a middle/elementary school but will be retiring soon, and is planning to go into private practice in her home community of Swan River.

### **Margie Cain**

Margie is living in Ottawa, where last week, she volunteered at the Connexux Conference. She was able to hear part of a presentation by former President of the Aboriginal Circle Chapter, Roger John (the ICC used to be called the ACC). She was struck by his powerful and effective way of communicating to his

audience about the program he and colleague Ann Marshall were there to talk about, the Masters in Counselling in Aboriginal Communities at the University of Victoria. She had a chance to speak with Roger briefly, and update him about the activities of our Circle, and he expressed an interest in being involved again. The closing keynote speakers at the conference were Wab Kinew and Justice Murray Sinclair. Along with her attendance at the Assembly of First Nations Winter Celebration in December, along with CCPA Indigenous Director, Bill Thomas, and Andrea Currie, President of the ICC, as well as other CCPA staffers, Margie feels that she has been able to connect with many Indigenous peoples and teachings in the last couple of months. This is important to her as part of her ongoing work with our Circle, and it is also a personal priority because she has two sons and a granddaughter and as of this spring, she will have two grandchildren who are First Nations, members of the Nisga'a Nation.

### **Bill Thomas**

Bill is from Peguis First Nation in Manitoba, currently living in Winnipeg and working as a counselling therapist for a number of First Nations communities in Manitoba. He is a Past President of the ICC and currently the Indigenous Director on the national Board of CCPA. He considers it an honour and a privilege to work with his colleagues in our Circle, seeing it continue to develop and grow, and is excited about the future. Bill also serves on the Governance Committee and the Risk Management Committee of the CCPA Board. As Indigenous Director, he has initiated a poster campaign at the grass roots level, to reach out to potential Indigenous mental health practitioners who may wish to join CCPA. He is also working on an initiative with the CCPA Board to establish criteria for accrediting Indigenous CEC's (Continuing Education Credits) which would count toward a CCPA member becoming a Certified Canadian Counsellor (CCC). This would mean that Indigenous teachings would count towards ongoing professional development for CCPA members, an important step in according Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching and learning, equal respect alongside Western knowledge.

### **Catherine Chambers**

Catherine is a trauma therapist working at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre in Antigonish, NS. As a member of settler society, she has worked with Indigenous women who have experienced violence in her work in this field. She identified a need to build a better understanding of the experiences of Indigenous women who have experienced violence, and their needs, so is now doing a PhD in Feminist and Gender Studies, exploring the question of how to work with Indigenous women as an ally. Her research involves interviewing Indigenous helpers to being to understand the best way to offer support and services to Indigenous women.

### **Jonas Breuhan**

Jonas is currently a student in the MA in Counselling in Aboriginal Communities at the University of Victoria (the program of which Ruby and Deva are alumna, and which Roger John presented on at the Connexus Conference that Margie attended). He is doing his practicum placement with Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health Services, which is located in Esquimalt and involved a lot of travel as they

serve four First Nations communities. He has been glad to hear from graduates of his program, speaking so positively of their experiences with it.

### **Andrea Currie**

Andrea is a member of the Historic Métis Nation of Manitoba, having grown up in Winnipeg. She is also a 60's Scoop Survivor. Leaving the white family grew up in at a young age, she settled in Nova Scotia. After reconnecting with her birthfamily and culture, she had the opportunity to work in a Mi'kmaq community. She has been the Clinical Therapist in We'koqma'q First Nation for the past 12 years. Like Magdalena, she has been embraced by the community and has become a part of it. As well as working with individuals, couples, and families, Andrea does group work, with Residential School Survivors, community members diagnosed with mental illness, and most recently, descendants of survivors. She chairs a committee that is organizing the first healing gathering for descendans in the Atlantic region, which will be held in May, with Wab Kinew as the keynote speaker. She also has a Mindfulness group that meets regularly on the reserve. She is part of a traditional women's drum group that is going to create a musical collaboration with a local feminist choir for an evening on reconciliation that will occur during International Women's Week in early March. She is inspired to see so many initiatives happening to respond to the Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Andrea informed everyone on the call about positions on the Executive Committee of the Indigenous Circle Chapter that will be open for nomination and election (or acclamation) at our upcoming Annual General Meeting in Montreal on April 1<sup>st</sup> (during the CCPA conference). Bill stated that it is clear that there is much wisdom and experience among those of us participating in this teleconference, and that the current Executive members really appreciate the gifts of every member and encourage each one to consider serving on the Executive. Margie, Jamie, Deva, and Jonas each shared about their experiences on the Executive and their comments included: "We build on work done by those who occupied these positions before us and it's good not to have to start from scratch.", "There are opportunities to get involved that are very interesting and lead to more learning, you get out of it what you put into it.", "There's a real feeling of community on this Executive, and since a lot of us work in isolation, it's good to know we are not alone." Andrea mentioned that it is not necessary to be present in person at the AGM to put one's name forward; there will be teleconferencing facilities to enable all ICC members to participate in the AGM from wherever they are in Canada.

Here are the positions that we are seeking nominations for, and will be electing or acclaiming ICC members to fill at our AGM on April 1<sup>st</sup>, all are for a two-year-term:

President	Member-At-Large
Secretary	Member-At-Large
Treasurer	(President-Elect, if we amend our Constitution to create this)
Website Liason	

Wela'lin, Miigwech, Thank-you to all who participated in this inspiring call!