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**Diocese of Toronto**  
Anglican Church of Canada

## Social Justice and Advocacy Indigenous Peoples Month Edition - June 2020

**In honour of Indigenous Peoples Month, this Special Edition of the Social Justice & Advocacy Update is a message from the Rev. Leigh Kern, Indigenous Ministries Coordinator and Reconciliation Animator for the Diocese of Toronto. It also includes links to resources she has prepared for use in our Diocese.**

Peace be with you.

Happy Indigenous Peoples Month! In the Anishnawbe traditions of this territory, this month is called the *Ode'miin Giizis*, the Strawberry Moon.

Beginning when I was sixteen years old, I would take the GO Bus from the corner of Bayview and Wellington, down highway 404, into the heart of downtown Toronto, for the annual Strawberry Ceremony. The Strawberry Ceremony is held by Wanda Whitebird, an Elder in the Urban Indigenous community, to honour and mourn the women, girls, Trans and Two-Spirit community members who are missing or murdered. June also marks the one-year anniversary of the release of Reclaiming Power and Place, the final report on the crisis of genocide and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit peoples. In 2021 we will be launching a participatory group study of Reclaiming Power and Place, which you and your parish will be invited to participate in.

*Ode* means heart in Anishnawbemowin; *Ode'miin* means the heart berry. *Ode'miin* are used to feast and honour those who have tragically lost their lives, because it symbolizes love. According to Thirteen Grandmother Moon Teachings by Arlene Barry, this moon is a sacred time for the medicine of love. Arlene Barry writes: "The sixth moon of Creation is Strawberry Moon. The medicine of the strawberry is reconciliation. It was during this moon cycle that communities usually held their annual feasts, welcoming everyone home, regardless of their differences over the past year, letting go of judgment and/or self-righteousness. The strawberry is the first berry to ripen; it is thought to be a good medicine for the heart and the teeth."

National Indigenous Peoples Month, or the *Ode'miin Giizis* (the Strawberry Moon) is

a time for us all to open our hearts to the nourishment of Indigenous wisdom, which calls for all life to be honoured as sacred. To help you and your community enter into the spirit of the National Indigenous Day of Prayer on June 21st, I have prepared two documents which you can find by clicking the links below or by visiting the [Diocesan website](#). The first is a document containing three potential [litanies](#) for use in your community and the second contains a [resource list](#) of further engagement opportunities. This resource list features the following categories: Learn, Pray, Worship with others, Act, and Redistribute wealth. Each of these categories provides multiple opportunities for education, action and celebration. From podcasts by Inuit rappers to a link to an online Powwow, there is something for everyone!

As your Diocesan Indigenous Ministries Coordinator and Reconciliation Animator, I have been working hard with my colleagues the Reverend Evan Smith and Sandra Campbell at Toronto Urban Native Ministry, supporting the survival necessities of our Indigenous Peoples in our downtown community. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the staff of TUNM have been in emergency response mode. We have been serving 200 meals a day with our partners at Church of the Holy Trinity, where our offices are located and our ministry is based. We have been supporting the basic needs of the homeless, advocating for access to shelter and healthcare for the vulnerable, organizing mobile COVID-19 testing for the homeless, and providing spiritual care to those in crisis, grief, sickness, and struggle. Our ongoing programs, such as the Neechee Sharing Circle and weekly worship have continued and can be viewed on our TUNM [Facebook page](#). Please follow us there or on our [website](#) to stay connected to our ministry during Indigenous Peoples Month, and every moon to come. Thank you for utilizing our resources this *Ode'miin Giizis*. My prayers are with you and your community.

In gratitude,  
The Reverend Leigh Kern

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For more information about social justice activities across the diocese, to be added to the distribution list for this newsletter, or to share information on events, please contact me at the email address or phone numbers listed below. If you would like to receive more frequent updates on our activities, consider liking our [Facebook page](#).

In faithful witness,  
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