

news
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westhill



Summer 2023

Message From Mike, WHU Board Chair

Much has transpired in the last few months at West Hill. We have continued with our monthly board meetings and our standing and special committees have also been very active. At the June board meeting much information was shared and several key reports will be highlighted in this article. Additional details will be found in the summaries provided by the committees, especially the Action Plan Team (APT) and Ministry and Personnel. It is inspiring and uplifting to be part of a team of leaders who are skilled, knowledgeable and energetic.

The APT report was presented at the board meeting by Jean Skillman, Chair of the APT, and Deb Ellis, our Action Plan Coordinator. The coordinator position had been declared a paid position due to the skill set and the time needed to implement the recommendations that were identified after several congregational meetings and a detailed report submitted by Joe Manafó of Listenology. Nine priorities had been identified and several of the main initiatives already have been started. One of the first areas to be addressed was the Primary Gatherings with the goal of combining the people gathering on Sunday mornings at 62 Orchard Park with those participating remotely via Zoom technology. Due to the work of Glenn Cockwell, we were able to set up a presentation area with microphones and cameras positioned to capture the speakers, the vocalists and the music component provided by Scott. In addition, another camera is focused on those attending in person. Although we have two separate populations, we have been able to allow both groups to hear, see and interact with each other. We are delighted that our remote population extends from coast to coast in North America and also includes Scotland, England, Africa and beyond.

Relating to the Action Plan, the board authorized contracting with Joe Manafó to engage with us again to assess our progress with the plan and to convene a preliminary meeting with our leaders and then conduct two or more congregational sessions to update our plans, timelines, outcomes and the specific roles for those taking the lead in the key areas.

Our Celebrating Team lead by John McKechnie has a full complement of members and continues to be active in modifying the Sunday Gathering program with major input from Reverend gretta. It is intriguing to have our welcome reader or moderator in house or 5 time zones away across the Atlantic Ocean. We have grown to be a global community. Another group will be working on staffing profiles and identifying roles with clarity. The Action Plan Committee continues to examine the personnel and technology that we will need in the future. A priority on that list will be a Marketing and Communication Chair, hopefully from our WHUC community, and our plan will include the use of consultants to ensure we are getting the maximum impact and value for our message and programs. At the June Board meeting we identified a qualified tech consultant, and Glenn Cockwell (our unofficial tech lead) and John McKechnie obtained board approval to a 3 phase proposal with an expected expense of around \$3000 to be organized by the tech consultant.

We received a report from our Finance Chair, Walter Shouldice, and Treasurer, Joe Hatlett, that proposed a budget with a deficit. It will be necessary to share this information and encourage our members and supporters to consider increasing their givings. The donors and potential donors will be asked to consider signing up for the Pre-Authorized Remit (PAR) program that directs their bank to make regular electronic financial transfers to West Hill, so there will be no need for envelopes, cheques and postage stamps. There will be a campaign also directed to those members of the West Hill United remote and global community who live outside Canada to find convenient ways to donate to the church. Unfortunately, those who live outside Canada would not be eligible for tax credits. The Finance Committee will also organize an approach to the United Church to explore our eligibility for funding support for our programs and new expenses related to the Action Plan.

The West Hill community faces the reality that gretta will not be with us forever and her retirement needs to be planned and prepared for. We are fortunate that her health improved to the degree that she was able to return to her ministry after a 26-month absence. gretta has not announced a retirement date, but she is required to give at least 90-days

notice. There is a detailed protocol prescribed by the UCC that a congregation must follow when a minister retires. Well before a search committee for a new minister is struck, it will be necessary to create a congregational profile and a description of the kind of minister we seek. This process will receive direction and support from the Shining Waters Regional Council (UCC) staff. The next step would be the guidelines and a call for the Selection Planning Committee. This process sounds wordy and complicated, though substantial direction and support can be expected from the Region. Mike, as Board Chair, will start and oversee this process.

Miscellaneous other matters:

- We have had some concerns with interfering noise from the basement groups during our Sunday gatherings. We have a lease agreement with the Boys and Girls Club to have usable space for our Sunday gatherings and other activities periodically during the afternoons. Mike and Annie will connect with the BGCES to address these issues.
- The BCGES will have their AGM on Wednesday July 13 at 7 pm on Zoom (the link is available on their website). The building has many activities during the week and we celebrate the great work done by the BGC. They welcome volunteers for their programs.
- The board does not meet routinely in July and August, however the Executive Committee will handle any nonurgent matters.
- The next board meeting will be on Tuesday, September 12 @ 5:30 PM.
- Your concerns and questions are welcome and you may connect through Annie at *manager@westhill.net* or have Annie direct messages to gretta or Mike.
- Deb Ellis has decided to step away from her role of Action Plan Coordinator as of June 30. We are most appreciative of her leadership in the early phases of the action plan and know that she will continue to share her ideas and skills with us.



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Action Plan Report ~ June 2023

Hi everyone! I'm happy for this opportunity to fill you in on what the Action Plan Team (APT) and I have been doing over the last few months! As you will recall, the Action Plan had identified nine Priorities, three of which were deemed by the board to be at a "Level One" (highest) priority; those were, "Primary Gatherings" (ensuring our Sunday gatherings meet the needs of a truly hybrid community in every way), "Identity" (sharing West Hill and our message with the world via re-branding, marketing etc.), and "Staffing Profiles" (identifying and hiring for WH's ministerial leadership needs moving into the future).

We are moving ahead in exciting ways in all three of these Priority areas (and some others as well). The full history of all the steps that have happened are in the APT Board Reports, but below you'll find a summary of the progress to date.

Primary Gatherings

The Primary Gathering Committee produced a Report in Fall 2022 with suggestions for implementation regarding the desired experience of those in the hall and on Zoom. In January, the APT committee led a Sunday gathering dedicated to sharing the results of that report and received further input from the congregation regarding the Sunday morning experience. The next step is to make those suggestions a reality, with some expert assistance.

Technology for Hybrid Services:

West Hill has made amazing progress in delivering a unique, truly hybrid (not just streaming) experience for our members and attendees, largely due to the tireless work of Glenn Cockwell and his team. He is now looking for expert assistance in taking our gatherings to the next level. Several possible vendors were identified and interviewed, two of whom were then asked to present to the Celebrating Committee. Although both were deemed very qualified to do the work, the committee chose Aidan Ware as being the best 'fit' for our community. Aidan has many years of experience in this line of work, and comes recommended by our own Rick Miller (for whom he does all his set and tech work).

Aidan is proposing a flexible, paid-hourly arrangement at \$50/hour. There are three phases to the project:

Consultation: Meet with stakeholders (e.g., current staff and volunteers), attend services in person and on Zoom, work with Glenn to produce director's notes.

Research and Planning: Research various solutions, propose staffing models, quote and source equipment, etc.

Implementation: Assist suppliers in installation, create documentation, train staff, provide suggestions for improvement.

The expected range of cost to West Hill is \$2300 to \$3000 for all three phases.

Aidan was able to attend one of our recent services to meet with Glenn and the team, and by all accounts the collaboration is off to a great start! We expect the preliminary meetings with stakeholders to begin via Zoom over the summer.

We are also in the early stages of assessing various meeting platforms (competitors to Zoom) that may offer increased opportunities for interconnection and conversation between those on the screen and those in the room, information capture and database building, ease of donating, etc. Any changes in this regard will only be made if the user experience is as uncomplicated as Zoom has been for us, and will include a trial phase for our community to test our experience of any new platform.

The "Primary Gatherings" aspect of the Action Plan is being moved to the purview of the Celebrating Committee

When gretta returned in early 2023, she asked John McKechnie to take on the revival and leadership of the Celebrating Committee, the mandate of which includes all things related to our Sunday morning (Primary Gatherings), including all aspects of the tech.

Therefore, John has requested that the aspects of the Action Plan that relate to Primary Gatherings (including the tech) be removed from West Hill's Action Plan to officially reside within the purview of the Celebrating Committee. APT is supportive of John's request. The Celebrating Committee will bring the motion before the Board in September.

Identity/Marketing

This Priority was identified as important to West Hill's future – to get our signal out so that those around the world who might be interested in what we are offering can find West Hill and easily become connected to our community. After interviewing several vendors, APT chose Katch Media (who came recommended by Dennis Augustine, former WH Board Member for Communication and Marketing) as the branding and marketing company of choice.

The work proposed is in three stages, the first of which we have begun. The second and third stages will be assessed for their desirability with the completion of each previous stage.

Stage one is comprised of several initial meetings with the staff and volunteers of West Hill to provide Katch with a sense of West Hill's history, values, mission and goals, out of which they will produce branding options for our consideration.

Stage One: \$4000 one-time fee

- **Brand Discovery** - research - past, current evolution, goals, defining 'customer' - collaborative process
- **Brand Book** - logo, colours, fonts, look and feel
- **Asset Development** - full rebuild of our website, custom Zoom backgrounds, slides, brochures

Staffing Profiles

The third Priority identified as being of "Level One importance" was Staffing Profiles for ministerial leadership for West Hill.

As a result of the work that West Hill's congregation did with Joe Manafò/Listenology, the Action Plan voted on by the board included a recommendation for West Hill to assess our ministerial leadership requirements. Listenology suggested, particularly since West Hill is committed to a hybrid community, that there might be some wisdom in stepping out of a traditional model of one full-time United Church Minister. While there were some suggestions offered, it was clear that there was further work that would need to be done by the board if WH were to decide to pursue a novel arrangement, e.g., to identify what our needs are, who might be best poised to offer those skills, and what the constellation of roles and hours might look like.

Beginning a process of identifying the leadership required by West Hill to step into our future is critical to our ongoing success as a community. The board voted to move ahead with a 2-step process with Listenology's assistance:

Step 1: Given our changing leadership circumstances, an initial two-hour facilitated session to sort and identify what has changed since this process began and the potential impact of these changes on West Hill's staff/team redesign.

Investment: \$2000 + HST (includes 50% charity discount)

Step 2: DESIGN LEADERSHIP PROFILES

Nature & Scope: A two-hour Mind Map Session with the Committee/Board to develop new staff job profiles, including objectives, responsibilities, core competencies, and qualifications.

Deliverable: A staff/church profile package to be used internally (accountability and performance reviews) and externally (applicant search).

Strategic Initiative Addressed: Refreshed Leadership

Investment: \$4,000 + HST (includes 50% charity discount)

This work will begin immediately (as our volunteers' availability allows over the summer).

Other

There are many other small items, but I want to bring two, in particular, to your attention:

1. We need to identify whether we have in-house West Hill folks willing and able to volunteer to research and write grant proposals. If we do not, WH will need to research, interview, and hire one or two professional grant-writers (who would work with the support of West Hill's finance team and APT) to procure funding for various initiatives via the UCC and outside grants from all levels of government, foundations and other sources.
2. In the interest of getting more feedback for the leadership and encouraging more regular communication between the congregation and the board, we have created two Google Feedback Forms, one specific to our Sunday Gatherings (Minister and Celebrating Team to receive the feedback and respond if contact information is given), and the second for any other general feedback to the Board (Admin to collate and bring to board meetings; response will come from the board member whose portfolio is impacted, or Board Chair). The links to these feedback forms will be in each weekly e-Blast, as well as available on our website.


Resignation

I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to assist West Hill in this part of the implementation of our Action Plan and have deeply appreciated all of your support! I want to say special thanks to the WH Board, to Annie, to our M&P volunteers (especially Florence and Ann), and to my fellow APT team members (Florence, Mike, Doug, formerly Anita, and Jean) for their unfailing encouragement and support. I have deeply enjoyed the work of the position and am pleased with the progress made over these past few months.

With regret, I am unable to continue in this role, and submitted my 30 days' notice to M&P on May 31, 2023; my last day will be June 30th. I want to assure you all that I am well, my family is well, all is well in my world, and I wish for West Hill only the very best moving forward.

gretta has brought to our attention that a significant portion of the APT's job is under the minister's purview. Those involved (M&P, gretta, Jean) are meeting to clarify which aspects of the APT role remain outside of the minister's purview; APT will then decide whether to hire for that work, or have it done by committees and volunteers.

Submitted with love,
Deb



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First Nations Study Group

POCAHONTAS, FACT OR FICTION?

One of the most common depictions of the most famous Indigenous woman is based on lies!

The false narratives about Pocahontas were established hundreds of years ago by John Smith himself and the falsehood has been embellished and perpetuated ever since. Over 10 films have been made about Pocahontas and all have participated in furthering the harmful “Indian Princess” stereotype of Indigenous women being more sexually available and less worthy than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

This directly impacts on the real world, including the fact that Indigenous Women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or go missing than any other demographic group, and the fact that four out of five Indigenous Women will experience violence in their lifetime. MUSKRAT magazine in its June 2022 issue unveils the real story of Pocahontas:

MISSING MATOAKA: THE TRUE STORY OF POCAHONTAS

by Rebeka Tabobondung

(excerpted from: Muskrat Magazine.com)



Pocahontas/Matoaka

We believe that Indigenous stories must be told through the lens and voices of Indigenous people who bring a necessary truth to centuries of misrepresentation and destructive colonial whitewashing.

Pocahontas was also known in her Powhatan Tribe as Matoaka (born about 1596). She was only 10 years old when she met John Smith and their story together was far from a love story; in fact, it was the opposite. *Missing Matoaka* is a powerful new project created by a team of Indigenous creators who collaborated to produce an alternative audio track for *Pocahontas*, replacing its falsely ‘sweet’ narrative of a romance between a stereotypical ‘Indian Princess’ and a European explorer with the far darker true story of Matoaka, one of the first documented missing and murdered First Nations women in North America.

According to *Missing Matoaka* screenwriter, Lauren DeLeary (Chippewas of the Thames), “The life of Matoaka is a chilling reality of the literal horror of invasion, enslavement, rape and murder. It is unfathomable that it can be funneled down so far from reality that it was made into a children’s movie, perpetuating lies and the fetishization of

Indigenous women. It has taken over 400 years to tell this story correctly. Now more than ever it is time for Indigenous voices to be heard.”

A one hour and 20-minute audio track has been painstakingly cut and assembled to match up with the on-screen action from a film made about *Pocahontas*. “Missing Matoaka” was developed by a team including Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee-Cree writers and created using Indigenous voices and instruments. The audio track is told through the powerful, brutally honest, sharp-witted and sometimes humorous voice of Pocahontas herself as she smashes and deconstructs the colonial fairy tale; a lie we know all too well. Voiced by Quinn Roffey-Antoine, a victim rights advocate at Aboriginal Legal Services in Toronto, Quinn makes Pocahontas’s experiences and expressions relatable as she holds up a mirror to the exploitative, sexist colonial culture of the past that sadly extends into the present.

The project’s Creative Director, Derek Blais is a member of Oneida Nation of the Thames. Blais has deep and painful knowledge of the atrocities committed against Indigenous people and communities. His grandmother attended Residential School, while his mother was taken away as an infant in The Sixties Scoop.

Missing Matoaka is intended to set the record straight on several harmful misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding the story of Pocahontas/Matoaka:

- She was only 10 years old when she first encountered John Smith. Unlike the movie depiction, she didn't abandon her people. Instead, the European invaders kidnapped Matoaka and held her hostage;
- She was sexually assaulted and forced to marry one of her captors as a condition of her release, but would never be truly free again;
- She was taken from her homelands and paraded around Europe as an example of successful colonization. She died from disease/poisoning fleeing England when she was just 21 years old.

Go to <https://www.missingmatoaka.ca/> and play the alternative audio track over a common movie about Pocahontas to learn the real story.

A portion of the Executive Summary of the Final Report of the MMIWG also tells us:

Understanding the many shapes violence against Inuit, Métis, and First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people requires an intersectional approach. Intersectionality recognizes that a person's experience will be different than another's based on their particular interplay of race, ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, and ability, as well as how these intersections encourage systems of oppression and, ultimately, target Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people. For Indigenous Peoples in particular, using an intersectional approach requires understanding of how a history of colonization has shaped their experiences today.

In their testimonies, Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people argued that oppression against them is primarily based on colonialism, racism, and gender, with other factors, such as education, income, and ability, sometimes coming into play.

In particular, families and survivors consistently referred to four general ways that their experiences were rooted in colonialism across First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, as well as from the perspective of 2SLGBTQIA people. These four pathways that maintain colonial violence are:

- historical, multigenerational and intergenerational trauma;
- social and economic marginalization;
- maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; and
- ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people

For further information, see the Final Report on MMIWG at mmiwg-ffada.ca

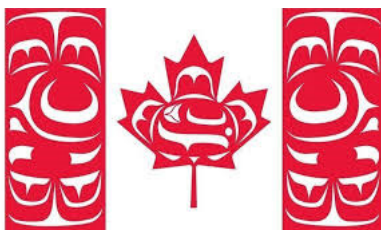


John Smith (1580-1631)

submitted by Ruth Gill

Editor's Note:

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Outreach News

THANK YOU!

Thanks to you, \$388 was raised and donated to Second Harvest to help support food banks.

West Hill United has donated \$1000 towards the future Indigenous House being built at the University of Toronto Scarborough. It is scheduled to open in Spring 2024. The name West Hill United Church will be recognized on a specially selected piece of Indigenous art mounted at Indigenous House.

August Backpack Campaign

Every August, the Outreach Committee leads a campaign to raise funds to support children in our local shelter system who are going back to school. Last year, WHU donated 35 backpacks filled with school and snack items for the children.

Let's respond again this year! Please send a cheque made out to West Hill United Church with "backpack campaign" on the memo line, or send an e-transfer to finance@westhill.net (if you add in a security question, please make the answer "Orchard"). Those visiting the church in person are welcome to bring their donation of school supplies that can be added to the backpacks.



The Crafty Crew continues its quest through the summer....

The Crafty Crew and friends are continuing to knit or crochet or hook Twiddlemuffs for donation to long-term care homes in Scarborough. With an order of over 100, there is lots to keep everyone busy! If you'd like to help, please contact the office!



**Outreach Team Members:
Gill Cockwell, June Dickson, Ruth Gill, Donna Lockhart,
Vilma Ramcharan, Barb Russell, Ingrid Shouldice**

submitted by Barb Russell on behalf of the Outreach Committee

Colloquy ~ Fall 2023

West Hill members and friends have had an opportunity to experience Colloquy online from October 2022 to June 2023. Themes have included Habits, Faith, Gifts, Loyalty, and Hope. Some people have enjoyed it enough to become “regular” attendees while others have come only once and found it to be not to their liking. And that’s O.K.! Colloquy isn’t for everyone, but for those of us who enjoy being invited to consider a topic we haven’t given much thought to before, to reflect on it and then to share our thoughts about it, Colloquy offers a unique opportunity.

Starting in September 2023 and running through November, I am offering a twice-a-month, 6-session Colloquy requiring your registration and commitment to attend every meeting (unless, of course, an emergency arises). We will meet on Wednesdays with a choice of either the 2 PM or 7 PM sessions. I will, of course, be flexible regarding whether you can attend the afternoon or evening on any particular date.

The Fall Colloquy sessions will take place on Zoom on Wednesdays at 2 PM and 7 PM on the following dates:

September 13 & 27

October 11 & 25

November 8 & 22

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have at ellendinerman7@gmail.com



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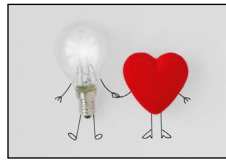
Please Join Us For Our Weekly Service and Other Special Gatherings

Sunday Morning Gathering/Perspective(s) ~ 10:30 AM (in-person & Zoom)



Tuesday Morning Labyrinth Walk ~ 10:30 AM followed by refreshments in the church.

Tuesday Afternoon Crafty Crew ~ Will resume in September



**Wednesday Afternoon or Evening Colloquy Sessions
~ 2 PM & 7 PM on Zoom
September 13 & 27, October 11 & 25, November 8 & 22**

Thursday Morning Coffee ~ 10 to 11 AM (on Zoom)



West Hill United Board of 2023
Board Chair: Mike Lawrie
Ministry and Personnel Chair: Vacant
Communications and Marketing Chair: Vacant
Education and Growth: Donna Hall
Friendship and Hospitality: Barb Russell
Community Care: Babette Oliviera
Celebrating the Spirit: John McKechnie
Finance Chair: Walter Shouldice
Secretary: Vacant

Members at Large: Jean Skillman, Florence Soknacki
Regional Representatives: Annemarie Leepel and Louise Lawrie
Trustees: Glenn Cockwell (Chair), Jim Hyland, Frank Kilroy, gretta vosper
Minister: gretta vosper

West Hill United
A warm place to find yourself

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