

news
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westhill



Winter 2023

Message From Mike, WHU Board Chair

In the yearly church cycle, we have a pattern of activities that we follow each year. Part of this recurring cycle is the preparation for the Annual Congregational Meeting (ACM), which will take place on Sunday February 26 using our current hybrid model to accommodate those in person at 62 Orchard Park as well as our wider local and global community via Zoom.

The preparation for the ACM will include reports from our board committee chairs, our minister and staff. All board members, group leaders, and facilitators from the 2022 team are asked to prepare a snapshot of the year in review and submit the report to Annie by Tuesday, January 24th for inclusion in the Annual Report. At the ACM we will thank those who have served on committees as well as various other volunteer tasks. A special thank-you will go to those who have served several years and are leaving their positions. Our nominating committee will endeavour to fill the vacant spots. If you are interested in serving on the board or one of its committees, please let myself or Annie know and we will discuss the opportunities with you. If you are tapped on the shoulder and asked to serve in some capacity, please consider doing so. In our hybrid existence, you don't need to live locally to accept a position, leadership or otherwise.

There will be one more board meeting, on February 14, before the ACM. Another important yearly obligation is to have a budget approved by the congregation. This usually happens at the ACM. With regret, the board received John McKechnie's resignation from the Finance Chair position in October. Special thanks to Walt Shouldice who took over as Finance Chair and worked with Joe Hatlett, our new Treasurer, to prepare a budget.

The Planning Guidance Team (PGT) under the leadership of Jean Skillman has organized and provided oversight as teams worked on the first two sections of the Action Plan outlined by Joe Manafa of Listenology Inc. The Primary Gathering Team has wrapped up their work, creating a report for consideration by the board and sharing their thoughts and recommendations with the congregation. The Primary Gathering Report is included in this newsletter for your review.

The Identity Team continues to meet as they hone recommendations around clarifying West Hill's unique signal and outline steps to align this message across all access points as we broadcast to the congregation, local and global communities, partners and people seeking a place where how you live is more important than what you believe.

The board offers thanks to everyone who has generously offered their time to gather, examine, discuss, critique, vision, and suggest solutions as they worked on the Action Plan Committees.

At the opening of the New Year, Rev. Cindy Bourgeois completed one full year as West Hill's Supply Minister. She has led and inspired us, and played a key role as facilitator for the subcommittees who worked together on the Listenology Action Plan. Unfortunately, in mid-January, Cindy needed to begin a medical leave of absence; her care and the determination of a return date rest with her medical support team.

The West Hill Board, having notified Cindy of gretta's return, remains committed to working with all parties involved as we fulfill our contract and legal obligations to her. We thank Cindy for her time, care and expertise as Supply Minister for West Hill throughout her time with us.

In early January, we learned that gretta had been approved to return to her role as minister for West Hill United. We celebrate her wellness and look forward with love and light to welcoming her back to the community on February 6th, as agreed to by her medical support team and Canada Life who administer the Long Term Disability plans. gretta's return to ministry will mean a progressive increase in hours worked starting with 10 hours per week and advancing to full-time by April. A committee with input from Dale Hildebrand, the Region's Pastoral Relations Minister, is working with gretta to settle the details of this gradual return to her role at West Hill United.

It has been over 2 years that gretta has been away from her role at West Hill, and it will indeed be a happy day when she returns. Since she will be starting with reduced hours, it will take some time for her to get back into the life of the community. It is hoped that she will do at least one perspective in February, and take part in the ACM. In early February, gretta will celebrate 26 years as our Minister and I'm sure we will find a suitable way to mark that milestone.

May love abound.

Respectfully submitted
Mike Lawrie, Board Chair

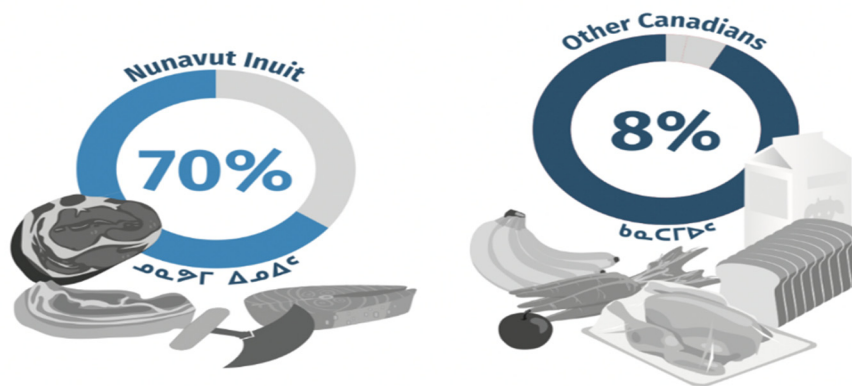
First Nations Study Group

FOOD INSECURITY IN CANADA

In April of 2022, the International Monetary Fund ranked Canada as being the 24th wealthiest nation out of 192 nations worldwide, and yet *Indigenous Watchdog* tells us:



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2017-2018; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018.



January 12, 2023 - Kivalliq Wildlife Board secures \$800,000 to study food insecurity, climate change.

The federal government has given \$800,000 to the Kivalliq Wildlife Board to study the effects of climate change on local food sources, like caribou. (Photo by David Kakuktinniq)



Current Reality

Food insecurity has reached crisis levels in all four Inuit regions. In one Inuit region, 70% of Inuit adults were found to be living in food insecure households. This is six times higher than the Canadian national average and represents the highest documented food insecurity prevalence rate for any Indigenous population residing in a developed country.

Food insecurity is a serious public health concern because of its close ties to a person's well-being. Not having enough nutritious food can have negative impacts on physical and mental health. Studies show links between food insecurity and higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, dental issues and depression. Obesity is also linked to malnutrition.

Nunavut has one of the highest birth rates with some of the youngest mothers in Canada. Food insecurity has detrimental impacts on pregnant women and their babies. Malnutrition during pregnancy can result in poor birth outcomes and long-term negative health effects for both mother and child. Children's cognitive, academic and psychosocial development are harmed by food insecurity. For Inuit, the impacts of food insecurity also extend to cultural well-being because of the centrality of country foods to culture, community and identity.

Food Insecurity in Canada. Inuit Tapariit Kanatami.

First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study

Built on collaborative research with 92 First Nations across the country – 7,000 participants over 10 years – the FNFNES highlights that traditional foods remain foundational to First Nations' health and well-being, and that the quality of traditional food is superior to store bought food. However, due to environmental degradation, socioeconomic, systemic and regulatory barriers, many First Nations face three to five times the rate of food insecurity than the Canadian population overall.

NationTalk: Nunatsiaq News – The Kivalliq Wildlife Board has secured \$870,340 over three years to study the impact of climate change on access to food. The funding was announced at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal on Dec. 9th, 2022.

The wildlife board has developed a community-based monitoring program to explore links between the climate and various local sources of food, according to a news release from the federal government.

The program will include areas of concern identified by people who live in Rankin Inlet.

The wildlife board has previously received funding from the federal government to support this work. Last year, it got \$459,615 through Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and \$199,813 from 2019 to 2022 from Indigenous Services Canada.

The new funding announced in December will be applied toward the second phase of the project, which will involve using elders' and hunters' knowledge paired with scientific approaches to study how climate change is affecting local food chains.

The scope will range from microscopic marine organisms to changes in availability, quality and diet of country foods, such as Arctic char, ringed seal, bearded seal, beluga whales and polar bear. "The development of research projects that are run by Inuit is a big step in monitoring the effects of climate change in ways that Inuit see and feel it," said board chairperson Stanley Adjuk in the release. "The Kivalliq Wildlife Board is proud to lead projects that will monitor these effects so that our observations can be integrated into our plans in the future."

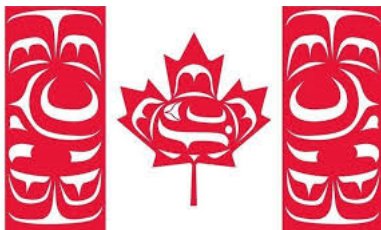
Northern Affairs Minister Daniel Vandal said the money will help to support those who maintain traditional knowledge as well as researchers. "The vitality of northern and Arctic communities, as well as the Inuit way of life, is in jeopardy because of climate change and its devastating impacts on precious ecosystems," he said in the release.

Canada has ranked between 6th and 12th on the Human Rights Development Index while First Nations fall between 63rd and 78th. There has been no change since 1981. *Indigenous Watchdog*

submitted by Ruth Gill

Editor's Note:

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Outreach News

The Outreach Committee would like to send a big thank-you to the community for the generous support of our Holiday Gift Card Campaign! Final details of the campaign are still pending. Please note that grocery gift cards are also welcome throughout the year at our agencies and shelters.

Looking forward to getting through these cold winter months, the Outreach Committee encourages everyone to support their local food banks. Those coming to our Sunday gatherings are encouraged to bring nonperishable items for the local food bank.

Soup's On Luncheon

The Soup's On Luncheon supports Second Harvest Food Rescue with a monetary donation. Second Harvest supports one of our local food banks and is the largest food rescue service in Canada. By rescuing food from restaurants, food stores, etc., reusable food not only fills a great need in the community, but is kept out of the landfills. Please plan to attend our luncheon on Sunday April 16 after Sunday Service, and bring your appetites!



Tina

Tina continues to wait (I don't know how patiently!) for her chance to come to Canada. The two luncheons that were held on October 16 and December 4, hosted by the Crafty Crew, as well as a generous personal donation, brought in \$675 towards supporting Tina. The total sent to her was \$500 (\$200 in October, \$200 in December and \$100 for Christmas.). Tina will need \$200 more in early February, which we can almost cover. Thank you for supporting Tina!

Barb and Ingrid

If you are interested in joining the Outreach Committee, please email the office...we'd love to have you!

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



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IN THE SPIRIT

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REMINDER — YOGA CLASSES (SENIORS DISCOUNT). We still offer special seniors classes (yoga in chairs and for those with mobility issues) Mondays at 10:15-11:15 a.m. and Thursdays 9:00-10:00 a.m. (\$15/class includes tea/coffee & cookies). (Highland Creek Plaza, 376 Old Kingston Road)

We have many more options for all ages. Please check out our website for our class schedule, rates and more information (647-352-4879): www.inthespirtityoga.com, email letsconnect@inthespirtityoga.com

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Report of the Primary Gathering Team

Background

The congregation of West Hill has made it abundantly clear, through its Action Plan, that we are deeply committed to following a Hybrid model for our Sunday Gatherings. The Action Plan strongly states that Primary Gatherings must be *“intentionally and equally designed for both in-person and online participants”*. Through the design of the service and the technological resources available to us, these hybrid gatherings must be experienced as equally as possible for both the in-person and online congregations. Let us never view ourselves as “insiders” versus “outsiders”.

The Primary Gathering team has been assigned the responsibility of examining this Hybrid model, to make suggestion as to how we want this model to look and feel, and to maximize its effectiveness in bringing together the two equally important components of West Hill’s congregation.

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2. Mandates for the Primary Gathering Team
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1. Ideals for West Hill United Church

As the Primary Gathering Team worked to redefine West Hill’s role after Covid, it also simultaneously sought to honour the historic place of West Hill within the landscape of the United Church of Canada, and the importance of its ground-breaking leadership in the world-wide progressive movement.

We rely on our VisionWorks document to articulate West Hill’s core values. It inspires, affirms, and guides us as individuals in community and forever reminds us that we are grounded in life; guided by love and growing in wisdom.

We envision West Hill as a place that:

- a. is non-exclusive and welcomes everyone regardless of beliefs or background
- b. welcomes all ages (including a children’s zone when needed)
- c. is a non-judgmental, non-threatening, safe space in which to gather
- d. provides a sense of belonging, a place of warm friendship and unconditional love
- e. provides loving and caring support when needed
- f. encourages continual learning and discovery with no boundaries as to the source, seeking truth wherever it leads us
- g. embraces our interconnectedness which extends far beyond the physical bounds of our church building.
- h. is easy to find and access, both online and in-person

2. Mandates for the Primary Gathering Team

Our Mandates for the Primary Gathering Team come from West Hill’s Action Plan that requires our Sunday Primary Gatherings to be ***“intentionally and equally designed for both in-person and online participants”***.

For a successful hybrid model, we must never forget that we are one unified congregation. We need to examine the quality of (1) our interconnections; (2) our welcoming procedures; and (3) the structure of our Sunday gatherings to nurture a feeling of belonging for both the in-house people and the online people of West Hill. If we feel that we belong, then the work of love will get done!

The hybrid services should provide as equal an experience as is technologically possible for the entire online and in-house congregations. If the hybrid model is to be successful, we can’t view ourselves as “insiders” versus “outsiders”.

On any given Sunday some people will attend our gathering at 62 Orchard Park Drive. But an even larger, more scattered group will find their way to West Hill from all over the world via modern Internet technology. For West Hill to provide a meaningful sense of unity and belonging for both those groups we will need to look intensely at the three different aspects of our mandate as described in sections 3, 4, and 5 below.

3. Connecting the In-house and Online People

a. General Guidelines

- i. The technology must maximize the online experience while not getting in the way of those present in person.
- ii. Presentations need to be provided to both in-person and online persons, so that each group has a similar experience
- iii. Visuals and lyrics on screen must be visible to those in-house as well as those on Zoom; the sound quality must be good for both
- iv. A welcomer is needed not only at the entrance to the hall but also one on the screen as online participants ‘enter’ the gathering
- v. We need to remind everyone that the tech needs of the in-house congregation are **not** identical to those of the online congregation. The images sent to the online people are generally simpler because they do not always have access to the same quality of equipment. Just try to read the lyrics of a song on the screen of a cell phone!

b. For the In-house Congregation

i. Three Screens are Proposed:

- A large screen that **always** shows the faces of the online people. This will remind us that we are not an isolated community but are also interconnected with something far larger.
- A second screen to show song lyrics, announcements, and slides. We don’t need to display the worship leader on this screen because the in-house people can see the local speaker directly.

- A smaller third screen can be added beside first screen to display the image of an online speaker (like speaker mode in Zoom). This might also enable realistic local-virtual conversations to happen.
- ii. Coffee and conversation after the service with online and in-person attendees using TVs/tablets/phones etc. - breakout rooms with in-person and online attendees
 - iii. In-person participants are encouraged to gather in conversation following the service - away from the main hall as it is being dismantled. The coffee gathering needs comfortable seating away from the clatter of the chairs being stacked etc. Love the idea to roll- in and out the furniture and equipment to make putting away easy and neat. This would include the coffee cart and coffee tables.
 - iv. Be mindful of the location of the screen, speakers, singer and music director and piano as well as the technology centre. Bringing all of the talents to the front and centre and the techies to the rear would put the attention where it needs to be. Consider elevating presentations to the stage on special occasions
- c. **For the Scattered (Online) Flock**
- i. A “Virtual Lounge” could be created on Zoom where online participants can gather on screen 15 minutes prior to the service commencement (10:15 – 10:30) in the same manner that in-person participants do: greeting each other with virtual hugs.
 - ii. Taking this concept further... at the front of the gathering hall, a **high quality, wide angle camera** (and microphone) should be made available that directly faces the in-house congregation and provides a clear continuous picture of the in-house persons for the online people to see. This camera will provide a close-up of the person sharing during sharing time.
 - iii. This same camera will capture the in-house congregation during the gathering and will become one of the zoom images (squares) that can be seen by (and possibly interacting with) the online persons. It needs to be a separate image from the image of the worship leader, so that both images are available on line when the perspective is being delivered.
 - iv. During the sharing time, it’s important that the camera show the attendees in person. Currently we show only a far away side view. Online people feel disconnected from in-house people.
 - v. The Zoom feed to the online congregation should be **identical to what we are providing them now**. It enables them to switch back and forth between gallery mode and speaker mode, but also lets them see the worship leader, song lyrics slide announcements, and even an image of the people in the West Hill building.

As indicated in an earlier section this is **NOT** the same as the feed that would be provided to the In-house folks.

- vi. When singing songs in the building the screen should show just the lyrics, for online person we would like Babette and the Lyrics. *[Doug's comment: for many this creates a problem when using a small screen, like a cell phone. The lyrics become almost impossible to read].*
- vii. One of our team suggested that the online person should be able to **choose** whether to see Babette, if lyrics are too small. *[Doug's comment: There is no way to do this on Zoom]*

4. Welcoming Everyone in Every Space

In the hybrid model there are people in a physical space (church) and people online (Zoom) and it's important to welcome them all. It is easy for the online people to become just spectators watching what is happening in the church building. So it just as important to be welcoming to them as it is in the local building.

a. For the In-house Congregation

- i. It is important to have welcomers in the building at the door, the entrance to the hall, or both. These welcomers often recognize the congregants by name (nametags help) and contribute to building community.
- ii. If we can find or develop the technology, folks might also be able to come early and participate in the online welcoming before the gathering begins.
- iii. Special events: At least one of our team proposed that we create a coffee house atmosphere in the main hall. A coffee trolley could be set up in the hall with small tables near groupings of chairs creating a relaxed, un-rushed, welcoming environment.
- iv. In-person participants are encouraged to gather in conversation following the service - away from the main hall as it is being dismantled. The coffee gathering needs comfortable seating away from the clatter of the chairs being stacked etc. Love the idea to roll in and out the furniture and equipment to make putting away easy and neat. This would include the coffee cart and coffee tables.
- v. There is a possibility (technology willing) for coffee and conversation after the service with online and in-person attendees using TVs/tablets/phones etc. - breakout rooms with in-person and online attendees
- vi. We need to be mindful of the location of the screen, speakers, singer and music director and piano as well as the technology centre. Bringing all of the talents to the front and centre and the techies to the rear would put the attention where it needs to be. Consider elevating presentations to the stage on special occasions *[Note: some of this has already started – but it is an ongoing process]*

- b. **For the Far-flung Flock (Online)**
 - i. A **dedicated online welcomer and greeter** is needed to welcome people by **name and location** as they join the service on Zoom.
 - ii. Let's open the Zoom meeting **15 minutes** before the service starts and encourage people to join early so that they can be welcomed and talk with each other (what Anne calls a "**Zoom gathering virtual Lounge**").
 - iii. Have **breakout rooms** open till at least **12:30 p.m.** If the in-house setup is being torn down, the **host function** can be transferred to an on-line person.

5. Rethinking the Sunday Gathering

The importance of the interconnections and entanglement of the in-house and online components of our congregation cannot be overemphasized. Nevertheless, we must take care to not let the accumulated technology seriously destroy the ambience of a meaningful church gathering. So let us take care that the various elements of the local gathering still provide meaning for the in-person attendees.

a. Music

- i. Music is very important to our services... ensure good camera views of Scott and Babette. (Additional camera?) The acoustics have been better lately.
- ii. In future additions to the E Blast, why not also include the lyrics of the songs we will be singing? We believe that Scott is willing to share the songs he or Gretta have written. (But that should be confirmed by others independently)
- iii. Doug wonders if the musical notation for these tunes could be provided as part of an E blast (or an attachment) for those of us who are more musically inclined. Doug would even volunteer to do it for the Sunday songs (if this idea were to be adopted).
- iv. The alternative to the previous suggestion might be to have a "congregational hymnbook" which could be virtual and online, modified or added to as needed. Again Doug would be glad to help with that.
- v. Ensure that the timing of the lyrics for songs are displayed in time with the music. This is a priority for the tech crew.

b. Liturgy

- i. Support our minister with a group or standing committee (celebrations committee?) to help with themes, topics, guest speakers, collect ideas from the congregation, seek personal stories from the congregation for sharing.
- ii. Continued sharing of readings and poetry associated with the message through our E-blasts.

6. Into the Deeper Waters

Nothing deep really, just a series of miscellaneous comments that couldn't seem to find their way into previous sections.

- a. Are there things we need to change in the structure of the gathering to improve connections between people on zoom and people in person?
- b. Do we need another time to connect within the gathering, similar to the sharing time (e.g Passing of the peace)?
- c. Accessibility
 - i. Closed Captioning?
 - ii. ASL Interpreter?

Conclusion

For many people around the world, West Hill has become a light in the darkness as they stumble through their faith journey, often rejecting the church they were raised in. West Hill has been guided by leaders with integrity who are living the values that have been carefully presented in VisionWorks and who truly believe that *“What you do is more important than what you believe”*.

There are many who have tried to deflect our course back into the traditional fold of the United Church, and many others eager to destroy West Hill. But we walk this difficult path not because it is easy, but because we feel it is right. The survival of the church in an increasingly secular world may depend on the kind of adventure that West Hill and a few other progressive churches have embarked upon.

Strangely enough the Covid tragedy has given us new tools to bring our message of life, love and wisdom to a world that is hungry to find deeper meaning in an environment where people are no longer listening to the church.

We would like to close with these final words of VisionWorks:

“As we strive to live in these ways as individuals in community, we often soar and often stumble; yet in joy and sorrow, in certainty and doubt, we travel together in a spirit of love. “



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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)



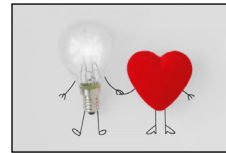
Tuesday Morning Labyrinth Walk ~ 10:30 AM (in-person in the WHU parking lot)

Tuesday Afternoon Crafty Crew ~ 1 PM (in-person at WHU)



Tuesday Afternoon Wellness Group ~ 2 to 3 PM (on Zoom)

**Wednesday & Thursday Colloquy (on Zoom)
March 15 at 2 pm & 7 PM**



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

West Hill United Board of 2022

Board Chair: Mike Lawrie

Property Chair: Gary Megson

Ministry and Personnel Chair: Anita DesRosiers (**Term ending Feb 26, 2023**)

Communication and Marketing Chair: Vacant

Education and Growth: Vacant

Friendship and Hospitality: Barb Russell

Community Care: Babette Oliviera

Celebrating the Spirit: Vacant

Finance Chair: Walter Shouldice

Treasurer: Joe Hatlett

Secretary: Vacant

Members at Large: Jean Skillman, Donna Hall,

Peter Thomas (**Term ending Feb 26, 2023**), Florence Soknacki

Regional Representatives: Annemarie Leepel and Louise Lawrie

Trustees: Glenn Cockwell (Chair), Jim Hyland, Frank Kilroy, gretta vosper

Supply Minister: Cindy Bourgeois

Minister: gretta vosper

West Hill United
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