

Sardis Community Church Draft Reconciliation Statement #6

Sardis Community Church is a group of people that meets regularly to nurture its spiritual life and to encourage its members to follow the example of Christ in everyday life.

Many of us have not followed Christ's example in relating to the members of the Aboriginal community around us. There are barriers that keep us apart. We want to identify the barriers and do what we can to remove them. We hope this process will lead to improved relationships and better understanding of our Aboriginal neighbours.

First, we publicly acknowledge the events of the past that have contributed to the current difficult challenges faced by Aboriginal people around us. We regret any part that we or our ancestors had in unjust treatment of the first inhabitants of the land we now live in together. Specifically, we acknowledge that:

1. Promises made by newcomers (our ancestors or their government representatives) regarding land ownership and use were often broken or misunderstood. These broken promises have in many ways directly benefited us today. Even though treaty negotiations with governments are ongoing, we acknowledge that any land or monetary compensation agreed upon will not completely address the barriers that remain.
2. Natural resources were harvested and sold for profit without adequate consultation and without consideration of the people who originally depended on these resources for their livelihood. We know these issues are complicated and controversial, and we do not intend to intervene in the political processes under way to address them, however it is our desire to better understand the issues and advocate for peaceful and fair resolutions.
3. Sto:lo culture and language were disrespected and suppressed by newcomers to this land in an effort to force assimilation into European culture, which the newcomers considered superior and dominant. We intend to take steps to learn more about the cultural traditions of our Aboriginal neighbours and to learn from them.
4. Forced attendance of Aboriginal children at residential schools contributed to the disruption of families and communities. The physical and/or sexual abuse suffered by children at some of these institutions resulted in a gross misrepresentation of the way Christ taught his followers to live. We empathize with those who were harmed by these institutions. We hope that the recent government and church apology statements regarding this issue will be the start of a healing path for many. We would like to explore ways in which we can be part of the healing process.

Second, we intend to improve the way we relate to our Aboriginal neighbours. We will follow Christ's example by:

1. Listening to the concerns of the Aboriginal people and responding in healing and just ways.
2. Living for others and being generous with our time, resources and talents.
3. Speaking out against the abuse of power wherever it is found.
4. Providing an example of reconciliation, forgiveness and a new way of living.
5. Building relationships with our Aboriginal neighbours that are based on mutual respect and the desire to learn from one another.
6. Seeking forgiveness for any wrongs done by us through neglect or deliberate acts.

We recognize that the statements above may sound lofty and idealistic. However, we intend to discuss them with our Aboriginal neighbours and to agree on projects and activities that we can do together to bring these words to life.

*****Editor's note: The statement below will only be added when the entire document has met with the approval of the SCC Leadership Team and is approved at a membership meeting.***

The leadership team and members of Sardis Community Church have thoroughly discussed the statement above and it was approved at a membership meeting on (date ?). We invite response from our Aboriginal neighbours. It is our desire that these words on paper come to life with real actions and attitudes that lead to a more promising future of living together in harmony and dignity.