

REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON ECOLOGY

For many of us, summertime on PEI is a time of rest and relaxation interspersed with hosting visitors and family members who live off-Island. After many months of Covid restrictions it was a time to be “family” again, gathered around the table.

For the Working Group, we also took advantage of pausing for a while to sit and enjoy the sun, sights and smells of summer. Between entertaining out of Province visitors and dealing with a variety of personal health issues it has been a “busy” time. We are thankful we had met in the spring and mapped out our Working Group action for the fall.

PEI WATER: A GIFT IN NEED OF PROTECTION

During the last few years Ixthus CLC has used Pope Francis' “Laudato Si” as our prayer material. In it the Pope states in no uncertain terms where our planet is heading in this world climate crises. He reminds us of the extent to which our human behaviors have contributed to global warming, to the destruction of ecosystems, and to the interruption of the balance of nature. Since it is our “common home” we are all connected on this planet and the ones who suffer most by our careless ways are the poor and the oppressed. As well as how we treat each other, he reminds us of what we have done to the environment; the oceans, the forests, the animals, and the air around us. He calls all Christians to “an 'ecological conversion' whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.''

Our prayer and reflections led us to look at our own province and the issues affecting our environment locally. Two areas of great concern to us on PEI at this time are the groundwater issue and the land issue which are very much connected to each other.

Since our groundwater is the only supply of drinking water we have, it must be protected not only for ourselves but for future generations. Islanders have been asking the government to pass a Water Act since 2002 when the government of the day passed a moratorium on the digging of high-capacity wells. These wells were seemingly necessary for many reasons but mainly because of the increasing amount of water needed to keep our many golf courses beautiful, to supply water to the cruise ships in Summer, and especially for agricultural irrigation for the increasing acreages of potatoes grown here. Since 2014 pressure has been on succeeding governments, especially from the agricultural industry, to lift this moratorium. As our groundwater is a finite resource for us, Islanders did not want the moratorium to be lifted, at least until there were regulations in place to limit the number of high-capacity wells which could be dug on PEI. As pressure to lift the moratorium

increased, many groups and individuals across the Island presented submissions and letters of concern to government regarding regulations to be considered in developing the Water Act.

Concerned Islanders, including Ixthus CLC, continued to present submissions to government asking them to uphold the moratorium on high-capacity wells. These submissions provided input into the development of the Water Act itself and the regulations which could accompany it, in order to keep our water table consistent and safe for all to use. However, the new Water Act regulations incorporates very few of the recommendations from an all-party standing committee. Our Environment minister stated " I am willing to work with the committee but I'M going to make the decisions".

During these years, in order to circumvent the moratorium, corporations and groups were digging multiple holding ponds instead of high-capacity wells, in order to store water for future use as in times of drought. Whether water is being extracted by several smaller pumps to fill a holding pond or is drawn by a larger pump for high-capacity wells, the volume of water being extracted is at least equivalent in each case. That would not alleviate the concerns we have over the decreasing amounts of water in wells, river beds and watersheds.

Our present government finally proclaimed the Water Act in February, 2021 and it was enacted on June 16,2021. Although they did not lift the moratorium on high-capacity wells, they are allowing five more of these wells to be dug for scientific research and study purposes. To date there are no restrictions on the digging of holding ponds and those that are presently dug will be grandfathered in.

This is an issue which has many Islanders concerned so it is one we will continue to watch in the upcoming months. Water is a public trust and a common good. The question persists: Is our government more responsive to the power of industry or to the voices of its people?

Submitted by CLC Ixthus, PEI

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CIRCLE OF ELDERS REPORT



Our first meeting after the summer break was on September 7th. Elaine Regan-Nightingale provided our agenda and facilitated our meeting. We experienced a sense of being 'at a cross road' and a deep desire to 'expand the circle.' With the generosity of Sue and Ralph Ranbow (Rockies/BC Region), and Beth and Graydon Nicolas (Atlantic Region), along with the support of our guide Lois Campbell, we moved through 3 rounds after starting with a welcome to Sue, Ralph, Beth and Graydon, an initial check-in, a land acknowledgement, opening prayer, and scripture reading.

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The gift of our meeting was a number of discerned next steps for the Circle of Elders. They are: a. *Support discernment to expand the COE, b. Support action for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30th, c. Continue to pray, reflect, reach out, connect, listen humbly.*

We continue to feel energy for, and drawn to, climate change, reconciliation, engaging young
people. The spirit at the heart of our time together filled the COE with gratitude, hope
and joy.

In the weeks after our meeting, our four guests to prayed and discerned whether they were called to join the Circle of Elders. Following prayer, thorough discernment with her community and supported by the Circle of Elders, Susan Rambow has accepted our invitation for membership on the Circle of Elders. Susan's generous discerned response is not only a matter of deep joy for the Circle of Elders but also a sign of the spirit inviting and engaging Christian Life Community in Christ's mission.

We have forwarded Susan's name for General Council's confirmation.

As well, the Circle of Elders, working with Prairie Region will
support a Truth and Reconciliation reflection hour on September 30th at 7 PM CDT. This Reflection hour is open to all CLC members. Using prayer and reflection material composed by Fr. Bert Folio SJ, this gathering provides a time to pray and be together in the midst of these difficult and painful times. Additional Truth and Reconciliation Resources will be provided.

Submitted by Ruth Chipman for the Circle of Elders (Mary Balfe, Elaine Regan-Nightingale, Sue Ranbow, Lois Zachariah)