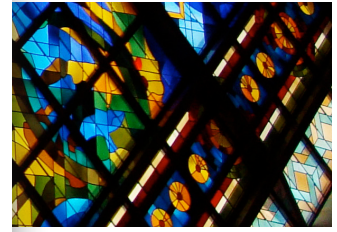




# 40 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT on Anti-Racism



## Our Movements for Justice Are Linked

DAY 20

Mitchell Anderson



### Learning

Mitchell Anderson

Last year I noticed someone regularly going to the gym the same time as me. He wore a hat with the former logo of the Cleveland baseball team. This logo was an offensive and stereotypical depiction of an Indigenous man, and the name for the Cleveland team was also offensive, as team names in other sports have been. As a Dene man, I have rejoiced as the Edmonton CFL team, the Washington NFL team, the Cleveland baseball team, and more have stopped using names and practices that are offensive to Indigenous nations. These decisions were the fruit of decades of dialogue and pressure, but a real catalyst event occurred in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd and a renewed attention to questions of racial justice for Black communities. While that work continues, I still celebrate as an Indigenous person and a sports fan that we have set aside some of these team names and logos.

Last summer in a Facebook group for sharing *dēnesutiné* language and culture the question was posed about how we might express that Black lives matter in Dene. One of the suggestions was *dēnē zené daghéna hádoril?i*—literally “we want Black people to live.” To express this as Indigenous people in our own languages is important because it recognizes that Indigenous justice and reconciliation can only take place in ways that ensure that Black lives matter. Our movements for justice are linked. And sadly sometimes we see them as being in conflict, as if in church or society gains for Indigenous peoples can only come at the expense of Black peoples or the other way around. With this mindset of scarcity we end up seeing ourselves in competition with one another.

Scripture tells again and again of God’s intention to heal our ethnic divisions and tensions. In writing to the church

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in Ephesus the writer emphasized a point throughout scripture that Jesus Christ is our peace, and through his blood on the cross he reconciles divided peoples into one (Eph. 2:11-18). The Spirit moved powerfully to compel the early church to welcome people regardless of ethnic background (Acts 10:44-48), including an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). God has purchased with the blood of Christ for Godself people from every tribe and tongue and nation and people (Rev. 5:9); God promises to make a house of prayer for all peoples (Isa. 56:7) ending former hostilities and divisions. I believe that movements for reconciliation and justice for Indigenous nations should include and support our

belief that Black lives matter, and so particularly on National Indigenous Peoples' Day as I celebrate our work for justice I will say thank you to the movement of Black lives for raising all kinds of concerns of racial justice. And I will say proudly in the language of my people that *dēnē zené daghéna hádoril?i*, we want Black people to live.



## Faith Reflection

Adele Halliday

This [prayer](#), called “Braiding Reconciliation,” was originally written to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Church Apology to Former Students of United Church Indian Residential Schools, and to their families and communities. The prayer reminds us of struggle, reconciliation, relationships, and that “our history as people is like a braid; we are wrapped together.”

You are invited to pray this prayer, and also to create your own prayer that honours struggle, reconciliation, and relationship.



## Children's Activity

Adele Halliday

Invite children to think of times when they have worked cooperatively with other children. Ask questions such as:

- What did they do to work together?
- How did they work with each other?
- What was the result?
- How did they feel when they worked cooperatively?

Share with the children that there are times when people and groups work together cooperatively—including when realities are unfair for different racial groups. When people work together cooperatively to change laws and actions, we can support each other as we work for justice. This is not a competition to make sure that one group or community improves when others still live with inequality. Instead, the cooperative work for racial justice is work so that all peoples will be equal. Our movements for justice are linked.

Consider adding this activity to your discussion.

1. Gather some long thin strips of fabric (or paper, if you do not have easy access to fabric).
2. Ask the children to write their justice concerns on the fabric or paper. You may choose to prompt them with some ideas, and/or to help them write what they brainstorm. Single words, such as “racism,” “poverty,” or “reconciliation” would work well.
3. Invite the children to braid the fabric (or paper) together into a braid. Share with them that all of these movements for justice are linked together, and we can continue to work cooperatively around them.

Alternatively, if they have used paper strips, invite two children to pull the ends of one strip of paper, before they start braiding them together. It will likely tear easily! Then, after they've braided the strips, the same children can be invited pull the ends and see if the paper tears. Hopefully it won't, or it will be harder to tear. Share with them that when we work cooperatively together, the result is much stronger.



## Group Commitment

Adele Halliday

Learn more about the connections between Indigenous justice and reconciliation and anti-Black racism, and the ways in which these movements for justice are linked. Exploration could include the ways in which these histories are intertwined, as well as contemporary struggles for justice and equity.

These articles may offer some additional insights:

- [Indigenous Peoples Echo Black Lives Matter’s Call for Justice](#)
- [Black Lives Matter Movement Has Parallels with Indigenous Injustice](#)
- [Indigenous and Black Communities Have a Shared Past of Injustice](#)

- [To Breathe Together: Co-Conspirators for Decolonial Futures](#)

What might you commit to do in response to your reading and reflections?



## Advocacy

Adele Halliday

Artist and activist Lilla Watson is Murri, an Indigenous Australian from territory now called Queensland and north-western New South Wales in Australia. Watson has been credited with the quote shown below, but she has shared that she is not the sole creator of this phrase; rather, it was created as part of a collective.

- Reflecting on movements for justice, what do you think that advocacy for liberation might mean?
- How might your continued advocacy involve working together, and not “helping” another?
- In what ways might anti-racism advocacy efforts follow the lead of Indigenous and racialized people—who are those most affected and have the best understanding?
- What is one tangible advocacy act that you might do?

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Continue to reflect on acts of advocacy you might engage in to be in solidarity with movements for Indigenous justice and reconciliation that also ensure Black lives matter. How might you continue to advocate and work towards liberation and solidarity?



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