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Dried fruit on a shelf at the South Porcupine Food Bank. One indigenous woman who selected the fruit indicated to volunteers that she plans to use it to make bannock, a traditional Indigenous bread.  
MCC Photo/Peter Davis

## Indigenous Neighbours

FALL 2019

### Increasing Access to Food in the North

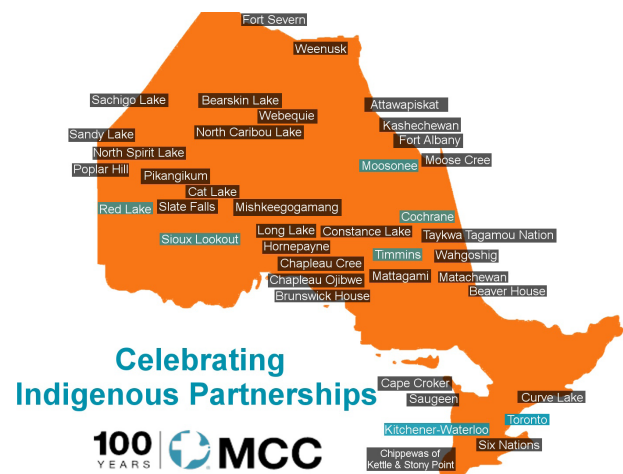
In Ontario's north, food is very expensive. According to a 2016 study by Food Secure Canada, the average cost of groceries for a family of four in Attawapiskat was \$1,909 per month, while in Southern Ontario it was an average of \$861.80 per month. A recent 10-year study found that more than 50% of all First Nations people are food insecure (FNFNES: First Nations Food, Nutrition, and Environment Study).



In the Treaty Nine area in Ontario, where MCC works with a number of First Nations, 50-60% of people are food insecure.

Thank you for your support in providing healthy food for northern communities through the Niagara Christian Gleaners. With your help, MCC piloted a shipment of 80 boxes of dried vegetables and 40 boxes of dried fruit to Timmins. These donations were then distributed to nine organizations that support access to food in Northeastern Ontario: South Porcupine Food Bank, Timmins Food Bank, Lord's Kitchen,

Cochrane Food Bank, Hearst Food Bank, Kapuskasing Food Bank, Kirkland Lake Food Bank, Smooth Rock Falls, and Iroquois Falls. These food banks are strong partners that share large donations to ensure the region is well supplied with healthy and nutritious food. More than half of Indigenous people from remote First Nations communities have migrated to urban centres for employment, post-secondary education, clean water and affordable food. The map below shows the communities that will benefit from this shipment.



**Celebrating  
Indigenous Partnerships**

100 YEARS MCC

**Thank you for supporting access to nutritious food for communities in Northern Ontario!**



*The girls in the Loreto Peace Club face unique challenges in Rumbek, South Sudan, but your support helps them remain strong.*

MCC photo/Candacia Greeman

# MCC PEACE: SOUTH SUDAN

FALL 2019 UPDATE FOR THE MEETING HOUSE

## Project: Loreto Peace Club at Loreto Girls' Secondary School

Extreme violence and uncertainty surround their community, so the peace club and the school act as a haven for young girls and provide them with tools to face overwhelming challenges. Thank you for helping change the lives of girls in South Sudan!

A poor road network and insecurity have contributed to an increase in prices for necessary items as transportation of these goods has become risky and expensive. The community is also affected by climate change, which has led to unpredictable weather patterns and delayed rains. The rains were expected in May this year but did not come until July. Seeds planted by the community prior to anticipated rains were completely lost.

This led to increased food insecurity as families depleted their food reserves. These factors have contributed to stress on families in Rumbek as the cost of family upkeep soars, and families have had to spend considerably more in order to have basic supplies. These challenges have created an increase of irritability and aggressive behaviour within the student population, particularly for young children in primary school.

This economic strain on families has also contributed to family violence and in some cases has led to forced marriages for financial gain in the form of a bride price. Forced marriages of girls under the age of 18 are a big social challenge in the community and for the school. Young girls are withdrawn from school and forced into arranged marriages by their close family members – usually uncles and fathers.

This practice equates the value of a girl to the amount of dowry that will be received from their suitors. Currently, there are six young girls studying at the Loreto Girls' Secondary School

(which is a boarding school) who are facing forced marriage. Due to their situations, the girls are unable to stay at their homes or join their families during the school holidays because they are likely to be given away in exchange for a bride price. At the secondary school, the girls have accommodation, security and an opportunity to pursue their education. In addition to this, counselors help these girls process these difficult experiences.

This state of food insecurity is likely to lead to a continuation of the protracted crisis, displacements, cattle raiding and inter-communal conflict.

In response to the food crisis, MCC supports a school feeding program at Loreto Primary School, serving two meals per day at the school.

## Project Progress:

- There are currently 30 girls in the secondary school peace club. This club oversees a variety of special events, including an annual peace concert and a peace day celebration. Both were successful events this year.
- 136 student teachers went through training on trauma resilience, including the use of art to help young students express themselves through drawings and paintings. They also were trained on the concept of "peaceful play", including the "ABCDE" of problem solving. This process entails Asking what the problem is, Brainstorming solutions, Choosing the best solutions, Doing it and Evaluating if the solution worked.
- One of the highlights of this project is the Nyankai (big sister/little sister weekends), which take place once per

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quarter. The peace club members (big sisters) host grade 7 and 8 students (little sisters) from the Loreto Primary School. The most recent weekend event included doing art and making peace messages. Participants enjoyed cookies prepared by the peace club members and discussed and shared experiences. The girls shared personal stories during the listening circles (a trauma healing tool facilitated by the big sisters), which enabled the little sisters to share their feelings and emotions and describe the challenges they face at home and in daily life.

- The big sisters served as advisors and offered their little sisters support and encouragement. This activity also

one month to provide individual and group counselling sessions as needed. In this past year she has provided individual counselling sessions for 26 students and group counselling for 31 students.

**Because of your generosity, these girls are experiencing less violence and their participation in peace work keeps the girls in school.**



*A student, 19, at Loreto Girls' Secondary School in Rumbek, South Sudan and a participant in the school's peace club. (MCC Photo/Candacia Greeman)*

provided an opportunity to talk about academics and how to balance studies with domestic chores at home. The girls discussed the importance of peace and encouraged one another to be agents of peace and reconciliation in their daily lives.

- During the academic year, a trained counsellor who is a former Loreto School teacher, well-acquainted with the challenges facing the girls, visited the school for





*“It boosted my confidence to be an active bystander. I learned skills and tricks to step out and ‘defend’ targets.”*

–Training Active Bystanders participant

TAB Trainers  
MCC Photo/Ken Ogasawara

# Restorative Justice

FALL 2019

## Highlights

- 29 Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) core members were supported through 183 Circle meetings and a total of 606 volunteer hours in Kitchener, Hamilton and Toronto.
- 42 individuals were supported to participate in a faith community of their choice after release from prison.
- 9 incarcerated individuals at the Grand Valley Institution, Main Unit, produced 26 blankets for MCC Material Resources.
- 8 incarcerated individuals at the Grand Valley Institution, Minimum Security Unit, produced 350 handmade items that generated \$3,100 in sales for MCC.
- 145 individuals received training in peacebuilding.

## Faith Community Reintegration Program – “God wanted me to meet you.”

MCC Faith Community Reintegration Program Associate, Carol, meets regularly with individuals on federal parole leaving institutions. Over a coffee at Tim Hortons, Carol listened to Lisa as she shared her story of desperation. As a heroin addict, serving a life sentence since she was young, Lisa had found herself in the cycle of parole, anxiety, drugs and being sent back to prison. She felt she had no other option but to take her own life. Carol listened and never pushed, and gradually a relationship of trust developed. They talked about Lisa getting a job, but she was worried about the stigma of being found out for who she was.

Lisa now is employed and earns income for her sewing skills.

She is on her way to recovery and getting married. We know Lisa is a good person who got very lost within herself. Many participants, like Lisa, come to the program with no faith, yet they feel compelled to tell staff members like Carol that “God wanted me to meet you.” \*Lisa = pseudonym

## Training Active Bystanders

During the second weekend of September, 72 individuals trained to be Active Bystanders. This three-hour workshop teaches participants how to intervene when witnessing abusive, isolating or stigmatizing behaviour. We teach pro-social behaviour, making people more aware of why they hesitate to intervene and encourage them to care for others by taking action in the future.

Comments from Participants:

- “It was great to have time to reflect on bystandership and how even a little action produces change.”
- “Gave language to what I already do, and ways of thinking about what I could do better.”
- “The training was useful in identifying a framework for engaging in conversations individuals often avoid. It also provided an opportunity to recognize that we exist in spaces of change. What role will I have in that change?”

**Thank you for supporting MCC  
Ontario’s Restorative Justice  
Program. Your gifts are building safer  
communities in Ontario.**



*Your generosity  
is helping train  
church leaders...  
in peacebuilding  
methods, including  
trauma healing and  
reconciliation.*

MCC photo/Rose Shenk

## MCC PEACE: ETHIOPIA

FALL 2019 UPDATE FOR THE MEETING HOUSE

### **Project: Engaging and empowering leaders in peacebuilding**

MCC has partnered with Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), one of the largest Mennonite conferences in the world, since 1976. Your generosity is helping train church leaders, including women's ministry leaders, youth leaders, deacons and Sunday school teachers in peacebuilding methods, including trauma healing and reconciliation. This teaching impacts congregations, college campuses and communities by helping leaders mitigate conflicts, especially before they erupt into acts of violence. Above, Tsahai Debebe (left), Hamsale Anulu and Zenebewich Oshawa participate in peace leadership training in June 2019. The women are part of the women's ministry leadership group in the MKC, and these peacebuilding

trainings have given them tools to reduce conflict in their personal lives, churches and families.

Pictured in the lower left are members of the "Banana" group as they get ready to have a small group discussion during a training session for children's Sunday school teachers from MKC held in June 2019. One larger group was subdivided into three groups—Mango, Banana and Avocado.

Together, MCC and MKC have developed a comprehensive peace-themed Sunday school curriculum for three different ages of children. The curriculum was written in 2013 by Krista Allen, a participant in MCC's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program and is currently finishing a trial phase. MKC hopes to publish and distribute the curriculum widely in the next several years. Currently, 4,800 children are receiving this peace-themed Sunday school curriculum.



*With MCC's help, the MKC has developed a comprehensive peace-themed Sunday school curriculum for three different ages of children. (MCC Photo/Candacia Greeman)*

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**Thank you for helping make this  
important work possible!**



*Participants at an interfaith workshop in Abeche, Chad, hosted by Ethics, Peace and Justice (EPJ), an MCC partner for peace initiatives for over 20 years.*

MCC photo/Mark Tymm

## MCC PEACE: CHAD

FALL 2019 UPDATE FOR THE MEETING HOUSE

### Project: Interfaith Peace Education for Religious Leaders

This peace project brings together leaders (clergy, youth, women and others) of the Islamic, Catholic and Evangelical faith communities to foster cooperation, learn peacebuilding skills and promote a culture of peace. Tensions between the faith communities often threaten peaceful coexistence.

During a three-year project cycle (2018-2021), EPJ plans to do peace education with students, public authorities, community leaders (including clergy and women) and Chadian returnees from Central African Republic. In the past reporting period, they conducted peace trainings for 174 religious leaders and youth (74 Muslims, 60 Evangelical Christians and 40 Catholic Christians).

### Story:

Oum Hadjer is a growing city on the main highway between Abeche and N'Djamena, which connects Chad with Sudan. It has historic Muslim roots, and most Christians there have migrated in the last decade. Differences between languages, and cultural and religious practices create tension in this city.

During an EPJ youth training in Oum Hadjer, a young Christian named Nadeyo Philemon stood and publicly committed himself to be a Christian advocate for Muslims, contradicting those in his community who would group all Muslims together. Upon hearing this, several Muslim youths stood and said they will likewise commit to working against stereotyping and generalizing towards Christians. Participants pointed out that this was the first time they have received any sort of peacebuilding training in Oum Hadjer, and they requested that EPJ return to train community leaders and others.

**Thank you for helping usher in peace in communities throughout the continent of Africa.**