On June 13, 2023, Kelly Laurila shared her wisdom on the theme: All Our Relations. Kelly is an Indigenous Sáami and Irish woman, settler, Sundancer, songcarrier, social worker, academic scholar, and lecturer who was born on the original territory of the Anishinaabe and Cree peoples in Northern Ontario known as Treaty 6. Having learned much in her relationships with Indigenous peoples she sees the connectedness of all of life and in all her relations. Kelly’s understanding informs who she is as a person and her academic and community work pertaining to reconciliation and social justice. She believes that living in peace with all our relations should guide our life’s journey.

Kelly spoke about wholeness and interconnectedness of beings. She discussed that all our relations ethic include kindness, honesty, sharing and strength. Human beings should be regarded in their wholeness - journeying, moving, learning and interacting with their environments according to their principles and gifts of spirit and vision; emotions and relations; learning and cognition, and physicality and action. Kelly honors the elders’ teachings that every human being has the right to be who they are meant to be. We have the right to feel good about who we are. We were given everything that we would need, every means of body, mind, and soul. We have the responsibility to find that beauty in the life that the creator gave us.

To honor creator’s gifts of life is to honor all of our relationships. All creation stories come from a place of love and kindness. If we understand that we are created with kindness, we will have a sense of accountability where our actions will not do harm and enact violence unto others.

In the circle of life, she says, nothing is in the outside. Kelly encourages a reflexive practice where instead of asking how people and things affect us, we should consider asking how do we think others are impacted by us – our ways of being? How do we enter spaces of engagement with humility, mindful of our identities and social locations?

People who are connected see each other as human beings and help fulfill each other’s needs. When we live with all our relations, life supports inclusion, diversity and belonging.