



Residential Schools Update

The United Church of Canada



L'Église Unie du Canada

"The United Church of Canada is committed to working to create a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples that starts in confession for past wrongs and, it is the church's hope, ends in the shared joy of walking together in a healed and renewed creation."
The United Church of Canada Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (November 1993)

January 2010

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has established its new head offices at 1500-360 Main Street in Winnipeg, Manitoba. While the offices are being set up and the Secretariat is being staffed, the Commissioners are busy travelling across the country meeting individually and collectively with Canadians to promote the truth-telling, healing, and reconciliation process.

Tom McMahon has been named the Executive Director of the Commission and he recently announced the appointment of four Directors:

- Lisa Meeches, Events Planning and Artistic Programming
- James Bardach, Strategic Planning, Communications, Community Liaison
- Dr. John Milloy, Research, Historical Records, and Report Preparation
- Ry Moran, Statement Gathering and National Research Centre

The Commissioners have also been holding meetings with the parties to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement to discuss the collection of records and archival material that is to be made available to the Commission for research and for the new national research centre.

The Commission has announced that the first national TRC event will be held in Winnipeg from June 15–19, 2010, at the Forks. The event will include storytelling, ceremony, music, and the arts. Besides former students of residential schools, this public event will include representatives of the government and the churches.

A "Witnessing the Future" event to re-launch the Commission was held at Rideau Hall on October 15, 2009, and included the Governor General. The event can be viewed at: www.trc-cvr.ca/media/html.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has just published the Winter 2010 edition of its newsletter. It can be downloaded from the TRC website at <http://www.trc-cvr.ca/newsletter.html> (English) and http://www.trc-cvr.ca/newsletter_f.html (French).

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Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Workshop in St. Paul, Alberta

A planning committee composed of members from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation Indian Residential School office, Blue Quills First Nations College (formerly a residential school) in St. Paul, Tribal Chief Ventures, and Métis Settlement General Council hosted the 2nd Annual TRC Information Workshop, followed by a Memorial Feast and Round Dance in honour of deceased former students on January 8, 2010. Representatives from the seven hosting First Nations, Métis Settlements, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Town of St. Paul, Health Canada, the Oblates of Grandin Province, the St. Paul Catholic Diocese, the Presbyterian Church, and the United Church were all introduced in the spirit of reconciliation and inclusiveness.



About 70 people listened intently to the three TRC Commissioners, Murray Sinclair, Marie Wilson, and Willie Littlechild, as they provided information on the “sacred task” they have undertaken. Justice Sinclair pointed to the great need for reconciliation between former residential school students and their families, ancestors, and children; as well as between former students and the government and churches; and, with their faith. He said that even if there had been no abusers in the schools, the system still undermined the students’ ability to function fully as human beings.

Staffer Cecile Fausak shares information about the Red Deer and Edmonton Industrial Schools, and the local “Living into Right Relations” initiatives with workshop participants.

“Equipping Ambassadors of Reconciliation” Kick-off Workshop

How do we prepare for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)? In particular, how should survivors, their families, and the general public prepare for it? These were some of the questions asked as more than 100 people from Anglican, Presbyterian, and United churches met to train as Ambassadors of Reconciliation at the YMCA Conference Centre in Geneva Park, Ontario, on November 19-21, 2009.

They were keen to learn what they could do to give leadership in their home communities on the history and impact of Indian residential schools. One Aboriginal participant described it as “a first rate conference that opened the door to a historical dialogue designed to contribute to the healing of residential school survivors and their families.”

There is a growing awareness that a key priority and specific challenge is to create spaces where those who attended residential schools and their families can share their stories in a safe and respectful way. For too long, there has been a conspiracy of silence, and no place for the whole truth to be spoken. Many felt it was time to end the silence and have conversations which lead to

reconciliation and right relationships. This is no easy task. Participating in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise opened the way.

After such a long period of silence and denial, there was a feeling of relief and a sense of hope that now new and dramatically better relations could occur. There was a realization that we could face the truth together, no matter how difficult, and experience healing with a potential for reconciliation. These are courageous expectations; but not beyond the realm of possibility.

Examples of recent collaboration came from the Kawartha/Peterborough TRC Group, Toronto Council Fire, North/South Partnership, and the Legacy of Hope. There was cautious optimism. Many were hopeful that if we respond to the opportunities present in the upcoming Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the longer term goals of justice and reconciliation could be accomplished. Three or four more training sessions are planned for British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. However, these will be delayed until after the first TRC national event in Winnipeg in June.

Living into Right Relations

The Living into Right Relations initiative of the United Church is midway through its second year since an inaugural gathering in Pinawa, Manitoba. An ongoing national Task Group offers support to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and “home groups” across Canada, who together seek to enter into dialogue within a commitment to explore ways to live collectively and justly.

Funding support was recently approved for a number of local events to take place by mid-2010. These events include Alberta & Northwest Conference’s third gathering to launch United Church/First Nations Right Relations leadership teams—this time for the regions of Calgary, Coronation, and South Alberta presbyteries; three Justice and Reconciliation gatherings to be hosted by Saskatchewan Conference in Fort Qu’Appelle; and an emerging partnership between All Native Circle Conference and Manitoba-Northwestern Ontario Conference. Support was also given to a Bay of Quinte conference in August, which will seek to educate congregations on the experience and impacts of Indian residential schools and to a two-day consultation with Aboriginal leaders on Aboriginal concerns within Maritime Conference.

In mid-January, the national Right Relations Task Group was hosted for four days on Six Nations territory in Ohsweken, Ontario, where participants spent time on group-building and reflecting on models of right relations. They also heard from Six Nations representatives, United Church members, and elders on issues of importance to that community.

The Task Group is exploring how to use the video footage shot at Pinawa as an educational resource and has commissioned that a proposal be developed on a professional DVD and study guide resource. The proposal will come to the April gathering of the Task Group.

Workshops to Enhance Native Ministries Response to the RS Legacy

A second round of leadership development workshops, “Responding to the Residential School Legacy as a Community” began with Saskatchewan Native ministries in September 2009 at Calling Lakes Centre, Fort Qu’Appelle. Now two planning teams, including Anglican Church members, for Manitoba and for Ontario/Quebec are planning events. Clergy and lay leaders in Keewatin Presbytery can mark April 11–13 as the tentative dates. Those in Great Lakes

Waterways Presbytery and Native congregations in Ontario/Quebec are invited for May 16–18. Locations are yet to be announced. Both workshops will include further work on recognizing and identifying the signs of post traumatic stress from the residential schools experience, and vicarious trauma. Time will also be spent learning about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Recommended Children's Storybooks in UCRD

Shi-shi-etko, about a little girl who "gathers her memories of home" before going to residential school, and *Shin-chi's Canoe*, about She-shi-etko's little brother and his year at residential school, are gentle ways to introduce elementary school children to the history of Indian residential schools.



The author is Nicola Campbell, an Interior Salish and Métis person (her grandfather and mother attended residential schools). Kim La Fave does the wonderful illustrations. *Shin-chi's Canoe* was a finalist for the Governor General's literary award. Order both books from UCRD www.united-church.ca/sales/ucrd.



Parliament of the World's Religions

Alvin Dixon, Chair of the Residential School Steering Committee, and staffer James Scott participated in two workshops at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne, Australia, in December. The Parliament is the world's largest global interreligious event. It is held every five years in a different city bringing together people from around the world, including spiritual, religious, civic, academic, political, and grassroots leaders. The overall theme was, "Make a World of Difference: Hearing each other, Healing the Earth."

Alvin and Jamie presented, along with three Americans, on the theme, "Returning to Right Relations between Christians and Indigenous Peoples in North America: A Powerful Source of Learning." The session was well received and well attended. They also participated in a workshop led by an ecumenical team from Edmonton on the theme, "Edmonton's Experience of Reconciliation with Indigenous People."

Alvin experienced the Parliament as both a major life-filling event as well as a huge disappointment. He was sorry to see so few Aborigines from the "bush" and felt that local organizers, with the help of local and federal Australian churches and governments, could have done more to bring them to the conference. The experience and contact with other faith groups was very enlightening and was a great reminder that others who share and express different faiths are equally prevalent throughout our shrinking world.

Extending Ecumenical Conversation

Jennifer Henry of KAIROS: Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Karen Hamilton of the Canadian Council of Churches, Aileen Van Ginkle of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Mike Hoogterp of the Christian Reformed Church in North America met with the Ecumenical Working Group on Residential Schools in November. The goal was to share the approaches of different churches in living out apologies, in advocacy, and in educating their members and the public about the legacy of residential schools.

It was noted that the Canadian Council of Theological Education will be holding a conference, May 3–5, 2010, in Winnipeg on the theme “Doing Theology in a Fair Country.” Keynote speakers will be John Ralston Saul, author of *A Fair Country*, and Terry LeBlanc of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies in Edmonton. It was agreed that efforts should be made to collaborate and co-ordinate our educational initiatives to enhance participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and living into right relations.

A Healing Fund Project to Celebrate – We Are

We Are, a film produced by Seneca Crowe, carries a message of hope for the present and the future here in Canada. Seneca, a 14-year-old girl from Stoney Reserve, and her friend, schoolmate Avery Rudnisky of Polish and Danish descent, attended the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation events on May 26, 2009, at Ross Shepherd High School in Edmonton. Deeply impacted, they decided to make a video about healing and reconciliation between cultures from their perspectives.

The process started with Seneca’s mother, Charlene Bearhead, submitting an application to the Healing Fund of The United Church of Canada. Over the summer, the girls worked with Charlene to develop a plan and screenplay for their film. They were quick to recognize that within their own figure skating club and their extended families they were surrounded by a richness of different cultures, so they invited some of these friends and relatives to make the film with them.

Once the girls established their young friends’ interest in the project, Charlene spoke with the Japanese-Canadian, German, Chinese, and Stoney/Cree parents to involve the families. During the project all the young people learned more about their own cultures and the cultures of their “co-stars.” Internet research, talking circles, and visits to the Nikkei Interpretive Centre in New Denver, B.C., the former sites of the Castle Mountain Ukrainian Internment Camp, and the Edmonton Residential School (now Poundmaker’s Lodge Treatment Centre) as well as CFB Wainwright, all in Alberta, were the bases of the young people’s learning. They travelled to film and learned as they filmed.

By the fall, producing and editing the film was in full swing with technical support from home school facilitator Angus Hossack and Greg Miller of Bearpaw Media. Distribution began in January 2010. You may watch the film at www.ndhr.ca and in two parts on www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYn1nl6Qtpc. The United Church is making further plans for its use.

Unique Returning to Spirit Program Held

The Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre hosted a Returning to Spirit (RTS) workshop for First Nations clergy and students on November 16–20, 2009. All 11 participants worked with The United Church of Canada. Perhaps next time it will be ecumenical!

The workshop was presented by both the First Nations team of trainers and the church team of trainers. This was the first time the teams presented together. This unique event came about after much discussion as to whether First Nation church workers should attend the workshop for First Nations people (Part 1), or the workshop for church/non-Aboriginal people (Part 2). By the end of the event, participants were able to say who they felt they needed

to reconcile with. All identified that they needed to reconcile both with the church and their own people.



*Front row (left to right):
Frank Evans, Gigi Jacobs (RTS), Donald Little, Bernice Saulteaux, Lisa Raven (RTS trainer), Dennis Chartrand (RTS trainer)*

*Middle row (left to right):
Tarianne DeYonker (RTS), Adeline Samson-Harvey, Agnes Spence, Phyllis Gibson, Maria Joyea, Gloria Cook*

*Back row (left to right):
Olive Halpin (RTS), Sue Evans, Susan Everton (RTS), Jacques LaFrance (RTS), Lawrence Moore, Robyn Hall (RTS), Peggy Monague, Francois Paradis (RTS)*

The eleven are looking forward to completing Reconciliation Workshop (Part 3), which is scheduled for June 26–30, 2010, in Winnipeg. This will be the opportunity to come together with church/non-Aboriginal people to hold the third circle of conversation for reconciliation.

The United Church helped to sponsor the workshop and financially assist the participants through its Justice and Reconciliation Fund. The Residential Schools Steering Committee will review its policy of support for those attending the Returning to Spirit program at its February meeting.

Schedule of Future Workshops

For the schedule of upcoming RTS workshops and contact information, please see http://returningtospirit.org/pdfs_10/schedule_10.pdf

Contact Us

Questions, concerns, or comments? We'd like to hear from you!

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*This update is available on the United Church website:
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April 2010

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The following developments have taken place with respect to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) since January 2010:

- ❖ The TRC opened its new offices at Suite 1500, 360 Main Street, in Winnipeg on April 8 with a reception involving survivors, local and regional government officials, leaders of Aboriginal organizations, and church representatives. A small office will also be retained in Ottawa.
- ❖ Since November, all parties to the Agreement have been actively working to resolve legal and procedural issues to enable the collection of materials from the government and churches by the Commission as soon as possible. On April 7, the Chair of the Commission offered a letter of apology to the churches for comments made by Director of Research, John Milloy, alleging that the churches were being uncooperative in the document collection process. The letter indicated that the Commissioners do not share the views put forward by Mr. Milloy in an interview given to the Trent University news magazine, *Arthur*, on March 22. Mr. Milloy also apologized for his comments.
- ❖ The Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners addressed the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on April 27, 2010. They proposed to host an international roundtable on truth commissions within the next two years. More information is found on the TRC website at www.trc-cvr.ca.
- ❖ The United Church is working together with ecumenical partners to develop a liturgical resource for congregational worship on June 13, which is the Sunday before the first national TRC event is held. Stan McKay and Ted Dodd have agreed to represent us in this task.
- ❖ The TRC Commissioners are intending that people with a wide variety of experiences and perspectives will find a place and have a voice at its events. This includes former students, their family and community members, former staff and teachers of the schools, school administrators, church and government policy and decision-makers, and members of the Canadian public.
- ❖ The Commissioners continue to hold regular "all-party" meetings with the signatories to the Settlement Agreement to provide progress reports and to seek their input.

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- ❖ The next national event will be in Inuvik in June 2011. A schedule of all seven national events is expected to be released shortly.
- ❖ Criteria and a protocol for community events are being developed by the Commission and will be released shortly. We anticipate that they will be widely circulated so that communities have guidelines in planning their own local events.

Planning for the First National TRC Event

- ❖ The first national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be held at the Forks in Winnipeg from June 16–19. The Residential School Steering Committee is meeting in Winnipeg on June 14–15 to enable its members to attend the TRC event. The Moderator and General Secretary will also attend the event.
- ❖ The four-day event will be multi-dimensional in an attempt to reflect on the residential school experience from a variety of perspectives and a range of media. Over 20 tents will be used to provide venues for truth-telling circles, statement gathering, artistic and cultural expression, historical research and photo displays, interfaith and apology programs, survivor respite, children's space, and entertainment.
- ❖ A local United Church planning committee has been created with members from the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario and the All Native Circle Conference. They are developing strategies to inform congregations about the role and importance of the TRC, to encourage United Church folk to attend, and to recruit volunteers.
- ❖ An ecumenical, church-sponsored reception for former students and their families will follow the opening ceremonies on the first day.
- ❖ Our national archivist, Nichole Vonk, is working with Diane Haglund, the regional archivist, to develop a photo display related to the three schools the United Church ran in Manitoba (Norway House, Brandon, and Portage la Prairie).

Funding for over 120 Healing Projects Ended

There was no extension of funding granted to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) in the March federal budget. This meant that as of April 1, 2010, the funding for most of the 134 projects supported by the AHF came to an end. Only about a dozen projects will continue for the next year or so.

The reaction was swift and intense. There was a brief "sit-in" in the Minister's office in Ottawa by Native protesters. A petition was distributed across the country. There were several press conferences featuring National Chief Shawn Atleo, who urged the government to extend funding for the next three years. Members of Parliament, survivor organizations, and church representatives also spoke in support. Niki Ashton, M.P. for Churchill, Manitoba, called for an emergency debate in the House of Commons. A special session occurred on Tuesday evening, March 30, from 6:30 p.m. until midnight. More than 25 Members of Parliament from all political parties participated in the debate with most arguing for a continuation of the work of the Foundation. Even the Minister of Indian Affairs, Chuck Strahl, has had "nothing but good things to say about the Aboriginal Healing Foundation...it has done good work."

Charlene Belleau of the Residential Schools Unit at the Assembly of First Nations found it appalling that after the Apology by the Prime Minister in 2008 and the offer of help to survivors and their families, the government stopped that support "in mid-stream of the settlement process." With the thousands

who will be participating in, and affected by, Truth and Reconciliation Commission events over the next five years, the community support and healing work of the projects will be sorely missed.

In spite of these pleas, the government to date has not given additional life to the AHF. However, there have been several reports that the government is reconsidering its decision. United Church members are encouraged to write letters of support for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to the Prime Minister.

Publications Continue

As it winds down over the next two years, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation will publish research findings on many aspects of the legacy of residential schools. All their publications are available at www.ahf.ca/publications and are free. On March 31, 2010, a new publication was released which explores the impacts of the Common Experience Payment on recipients.

“In-Kinds” Funds Allocated

At a recent meeting, the United Church Healing and Reconciliation Service Evaluation Committee made several allocation decisions with respect to the funds it must disburse under the terms of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The Committee is made up of members from the United Church Residential School Steering Committee and from the Assembly of First Nations and the federal government. The Committee has \$1,000,000 to disperse under criteria outlined in the Agreement.

The Committee granted \$150,000 over the next three years, in partnership with B.C. Conference, to enable a mobile counsellor to assist in the healing journey of survivors and their families in four isolated Aboriginal communities on the west coast. As well, funds were set aside to assist with the travel costs of survivors in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario who wish to attend the first national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be held in Winnipeg this coming June. The Committee is continuing to look at ways to support projects that assist in the recovery of Aboriginal language and culture.

“Project of Heart” – Commemoration and Education

Ottawa teacher, Sylvia Smith, has instigated a creative way to “educate non-indigenous Canadians about what actually happened at Indian Residential Schools in hopes there could be some kind of reconciliation, or some kind of dialogue could be started to begin the healing journey.” Her “Project of Heart” is attempting to decorate 50,000 tiles to represent the estimated number of children who died through illness or other causes in the school system. So far, 2,500 postage-sized tiles have been decorated by groups and individuals across Canada, and another 4,300 tiles have been distributed to be completed. When all the tiles are collected, they will be dedicated to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Schools (staff and students), church groups, and youth and activist groups have all partnered in this artistic learning project.

You can learn more about the project or order an Indian Residential Schools Commemoration Project kit at <http://projectofheart.ca>. Each kit costs \$50 and contains a DVD, books, a map of residential schools in Canada, and blank wooden tiles that participants can decorate as they like.

National Day of Healing and Reconciliation moved to June 11

June 11 rather than May 26 is now Canada's National Day of Healing and Reconciliation (NDHR). This is a movement of people committed to growing together within families, within communities, and across Canada toward healing and reconciliation. It is communities reaching out to people who are harmed by racism and helping to build bridges between cultures.

NDHR will ensure that promotional items to facilitate your day's activities are sent out on time for all activities that occur between May 26 and June 21. Promotional items for the 2010 NDHR include: buttons, bandages, and seed cards. They have also provided the Bearpaw Media produced "Identity" DVD, which may help initiate interesting conversations! All items and shipping are free! Please allow 3–5 weeks for shipping. The number of items is limited to ensure that all groups who are interested receive at least some NDHR swag to share and enjoy. ORDER ONLINE at <http://ndhr.ca/wordpress/?cat=14>

Living into Right Relations

The national Living into Right Relations Task Group met in April. The Task Group reviewed a proposal to develop an educational resource using, in part, video footage from the Pinawa event of May 2008. In order to gain further clarity about what type of resource, if any, might be of use to Home Groups, the Task Group decided to invite two members from each of the Conference home groups (one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal) to its fall meeting to consult with them about what resources/processes are needed. The consultation will occur in Winnipeg in November 2010.

The Task Group also began to develop a longer term work plan which will be reviewed at the fall meeting. Since the co-chairperson, Maggie McLeod, has become a General Council staff member as of January 2010, the Task Group initiated a process to identify an Aboriginal woman to chair with Russell Daye.

Workshops to Enhance Native Ministries Response to the RS Legacy

Fifty-five people attended the second follow-up leadership development workshop, "Responding to the Residential School Legacy as a Community" at the Wilderness Edge Conference Centre in Pinawa, Manitoba. There was much affirmation for the opportunity for Anglican and United Church Native leaders in ministry to learn, heal, and share together.

A presentation from Dr. Glen McCabe of the University of Manitoba explored the nature of trauma: "deep and disturbing emotional reaction to an experience" often due to being a victim of violence unexpectedly. The Wellness Model with the three pillars of striving for optimal functioning, a developmental perspective, and empowerment was contrasted with the medical model based on illness and symptom reduction. Dr. McCabe applied this to the Aboriginal mental health context. Participants identified a great need for more training in order to deal with trauma in their communities, and with survivors beginning to break the silence and cycle of violence and addictions.

Jennifer Woods from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Clarence Nepinak from the regional office of Resolution Health Support Workers, and John Morriveau of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Survivors' Advisory Committee explained the mandate of the TRC, the support available to survivors and their

families, and preliminary plans for the first national event in Winnipeg this June. Regional groups of participants then discussed what steps they might take at home to prepare for and participate in the TRC. It was shared that Norway House is hoping to have a TRC event this summer.

Thank You to Manitoba Hearing Representatives

The Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario gathered a dozen people together on April 29 to thank them and give them an opportunity to share their experiences as listeners and apology-givers at the adjudicated hearings of abuse claims made by former residential school students. Their committed and caring presence is an extremely important ministry of the United Church in response to the residential school legacy. These folk have been called upon more than in any other Conference, having attended some 135 hearings in Manitoba over the past five years. So many hearings are held in Winnipeg that a special centre was opened recently to accommodate them, rather than going to hotel rooms, lawyer's offices, etc.



Pictured left to right:

Seated: Adel Compton, Linda Arklie (Conference office coordinator); 2nd Row: Elsie Douglas, Peter Douglas, Cecile Fausak, John Badertscher; 3rd Row: Nancy Sanders, Bill Gillis, Sandra Hayes-Gardiner, Bruce Fauschou, Wayne Larstone

On May 26–27, lawyers for former students making claims under the Independent Assessment Process have an opportunity to learn more about the process in Vancouver. David Iverson, the Protestant churches' representative on the National IAP Oversight Committee, will be attending to explain the church's role at hearings, with the hopes that this may result in a return to higher rates of church participation in this restorative justice approach.

A Healing Fund Project to Celebrate – Kispiox Survivors at Camp

The Kispiox Rediscovery Culture Camp for survivors of residential schools, held August 4–7, 2009 on the traditional territory of the Gitksan in B.C. was a success story of healing and moving on. Talking circles are a safe place to express all kinds of feelings; talking is an important way not only to communicate, but also to release hurt, share joy, listen to one other, and

become strong, caring members of society. Healing for the Gitksan also came from rediscovering their cultural traditions of sharing and caring through carrying out seasonal activities that involved the whole person: mind, body, and spirit. The syndrome that some survivors live with can include mistrust, fear of trying something new, and disbelief that someone really cares how they are. Some live with challenges of poor health, recovering from or still using drugs or alcohol, and some kind of family dysfunction. Being together in the traditional territory brought trust and a bonding of hope.

The survivors held a ceremony to honour those survivors who have died. Candles were lit, and people were named. Remembering became emotional, and prayers were offered. Each time a story is shared, some healing takes place. This was felt as participants shared funny stories and laughed at themselves. The stories are funnier in their language than in English—a strong motivation to retain the language. Tears and laughter were shared in their short time together. On the last day the survivors paddled down the Kispiox River in rafts, drumming and singing the Gitksan song, and arriving to a grand welcoming from the community of feasting and sharing stories of the experience.

Support for “Returning to Spirit” Program Renewed

The Residential Schools Steering Committee at its March meeting renewed its policy of support for up to 10 Aboriginal and 10 non-Aboriginal people wishing to attend any part of the Returning to Spirit programs in 2010. The financial support covers the accommodation, meals, and fees charged by the hosting centre. Participants are asked to send a copy of their registration form directly to irs@united-church.ca.

Schedule of Future Workshops

For the schedule of upcoming RTS workshops and contact information, please see <http://returningtospirit.org> or contact Sue Everton at Winnipeg@returningtospirit.org.

Contact Us

Questions, concerns, or comments? We'd like to hear from you!

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July 2010

First National Truth and Reconciliation Commission Event

There can be no simple "summing up" of the first national Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) event, which took place in Winnipeg from June 16–19. For many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the event was a success. For others it was not.

Held at the Forks, a traditional gathering place at the confluence of three rivers, the event offered various opportunities for sharing and learning about experiences of the Indian residential school system and its continuing impact. Key venues were the Commissioners' Sharing Circles, and the Gathering, Learning, and Interfaith Tents. There were also daily pipe ceremonies and drum calls, two major concerts, private individual statement gathering, an authors' session, a schedule of films, an all-day Academic Conference, an international group examining Truth and Reconciliation Commissions from around the world, youth programs, federal government services information, and a powwow—with Governor General Michaëlle Jean speaking before the Grand Entry on the final day. In addition there were exhibits, health supports, and arts and crafts, as well as those all-important spontaneous conversations.



Daily morning ceremonies were held at the Oodena Circle
Left to right: Chief Commissioner Murray Sinclair at the mike; Rev. Allan Sinclair (in blue shirt) with Toronto Urban Native Ministry and General Council Executive delivered a Psalm of the Woodlands, and blessing.

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An estimated 40,000 people participated in the four-day event, half that number on opening day alone; nearly 2000 were former residential school students. Two hundred and seventy-five individual statements were recorded, and 150 people participated in the Commissioners' Sharing Circles. Throughout the following *Update* pages, you will read comments from various United Church Aboriginal participants.

Moderator Mardi Tindal's blogs of June 12, 17, 18, and 25 describe moments of challenge and moments of grace. <http://wondercafe.ca/blogs/moderator-mardi-tindal>

Video coverage of the opening day can be found at <http://en.video.canoe.tv/video/news/canada/1896809958/truth-and-reconciliation-commission/96645055001>.

CBC Radio and TV News were also sources of many good programs: go to www.cbc.ca and search for "Truth and Reconciliation Commission Winnipeg June 2010."

For Ann Thomas Callahan, a survivor and former Residential Schools Steering Committee member, the best part was meeting with classmates of the Birtle school to tell stories, but she didn't want to tell her own story again to the TRC. At the Academic Conference, after hearing Presbyterian minister the Rev. Peter Bush deliver a paper on "The Gillespie Sisters and the File Hills Residential School," Ann spoke of her mother's happy relationship with Kate Gillespie (later Mrs. Motherwell). Ann found it enlightening to hear the daughter of former students explain how she had been impacted by her parents' behaviour and attitudes shaped by the residential school.

Appreciation for Local Volunteers

The TRC national planning team included United Church representatives James Scott, Evelyn Broadfoot, and Karen Tjaden. There was an ecumenical planning team for the Interfaith Tent including local United Church reps, Joan Jarvis and Rick Hebert, and a joint Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario and All Native Circle Conference planning committee. It is to their credit that the Interfaith Tent program and church participation was strong and well received. Over 60 United Church volunteers helped out, largely in the Interfaith, Learning, and Listening Tents.

Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and United Church support provided \$80,000 to assist in transporting and accommodating survivors at the event, and to provide lunch for 1200 survivors at the opening ceremonies. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs coordinated much of the effort to bring people from distant First Nations communities. Thanks go to Greyhound Buslines, Perimeter, and Northwest Ontario Airlines for their donations of tickets; and to local universities, colleges, and hotels for rooms.

Residential Schools Steering Committee Attends

Before the national event got underway, the Residential Schools Steering Committee met for two days. It was a pleasure to have dinner with Commissioner Wilson, and to learn about the work of the Legacy of Hope Foundation from Trina Bolam, Acting Executive Director. Go to www.legacyofhope.ca for their educational DVD resources. Many of the members also attended a public forum taped for CBC Radio One *The Sunday Edition* aired June 20, 2010, with Michael Enright and a panel of guests addressing the topic: "Canada and the Aboriginal People...Can we Finally Get it Right?" <http://www.cbc.ca/thesundayedition/2010/06/june-20-2010.html>.

The Committee was invited to the Ninth Annual "Keeping the Fires Burning" 2010 Honouring Ceremony. The Ka Ni Kanichik Inc. honoured nine grandmothers and women's teachings to protect our sacred gift of water. These wonderful women from around Manitoba were presented with red capes featuring a turtle on the back.

All Committee members were registered as Survivors or Volunteers at the TRC event. Each member had received a paper leaf impregnated with seeds as a symbol of the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation campaign. Marie Dickens felt that many seeds of hope and trust were planted during the TRC event, and that they will bloom as a national force for healing. She said there was a *"wondrous feeling of connectedness. At Alberni IRS, we always felt like the only ones; here we know that many were going through the same trials and tribulations. At the ceremonies, I could almost hear the drums beating all the way from back home [in Prince Rupert, B.C]."*

Three weeks later, Geraldine Robertson, a former student of Mount Elgin IRS and the Mohawk Institute in Ontario, was still feeling overwhelmed by the pain and anger heard in so many stories, told in person or through film and song. She was not aware of any healing lodges or healers available to "smudge her down," and is wondering what follow-up there will be for survivors who returned to isolated communities.

Bill Jamieson's (of Beausoleil First Nation) lasting impression from the national event is *"how important language, a traditional belief system, as well as culture are to a people. The identity of a people, thus a Nation, is identifiable by the language spoken, common beliefs, and shared values and history, which ultimately have a bearing on how they live. You take away these root factors of a particular group, you are basically left without an identity. I can only imagine what the residential school system did to so many young people when their identity was taken away. It was apparent in Winnipeg that so few use their language. So many English-speaking First Nation citizens seemed drawn to traditional ceremonies as if in response to a calling, almost like a pilgrimage, a search for their identity through a return to these core elements of language, lifestyle, and traditional practices."*

In the Commissioners' Sharing Circles

The three Commissioners invited about 20 people to share their experiences of the residential school system from various perspectives such as students, children of students, teacher, pilot, and church official. This Sharing Circle (broadcast as "Will the Truth Bring Reconciliation?" July 7, 2010 www.cbc.ca/revisionquest) used the Prime Minister's apology in 2008 as its starting point. Jamie Scott, United Church General Council Officer for Residential Schools, was the only face of the church in the circle, and his contribution can be heard in full on this program. His words are also featured in the Moderator's blog (June 18: "Bearing witness face to face").

Circles were also convened especially for Men, for Women, for Families, and on the last day for Youth with Governor General Michaëlle Jean sitting in as honorary witness.

The Learning Tent

General Council Archivist Nichole Vonk was a host in the tent filled with historical displays and photo albums on each school in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. They were prepared by the TRC, the churches, or as student projects. Photos from the United Church schools at Portage la Prairie, Norway House, and Brandon were available for viewing and copying. Many former students have no pictures of themselves as youngsters. The volunteers were so busy filling requests for copies of pictures that they couldn't keep track of them. See the Moderator's blog on June 25 for Nichole's perspective inside the Learning Tent.

The Interfaith Tent

The highlight for Alvin Dixon, Chair of the Residential Schools Steering Committee, was the action and participation in the Interfaith Tent. Dialogues and ways of living out apologies were the central aspects of the Interfaith Tent program. There were five themes explored first by a panel, and then in an hour of comments from the audience:

- Native Traditional Spiritualities in Conversation with Christianity
- Paths to Reconciliation from Various Faith Traditions (rained out)
- We Are All Treaty People and the Spirituality of Covenant
- Signs of Reconciliation and Reflecting on Our Experiences
- Leaders Listening Time – Feedback to the churches – Where do we go from here?

An all First Nations panel of people exploring what gifts and challenges are present in practising both Traditional and Christian spirituality.

Left to right around the table: the Rev. Margaret Mullin (Presbyterian), Panel Moderator George Monroe (standing), Sister Eva Solomon, Anglican Bishop Mark McDonald, and Ko'ona Cochrane (United Church, Acting Executive Director of Rupertsland Wechetowin).



The Rev. Allan Sinclair said that in his discussions with some of the survivors, they felt that there was *“too much Midewiwin (Medicine Society) and not enough Christian teachings. There may have been a reason for it because of the residential school era taking away the spirituality of Aboriginals.”*

Each of the four denominations involved in operating residential schools had two one-hour time slots to present ways in which they were living out their apologies. About 1000 people visited the Interfaith Tent over the four days.



United Church representatives spoke of the apologies, the establishment of the Aboriginal Ministries Circle and Council, leadership development workshops, The Healing Fund, and advocacy on Aboriginal justice issues.

Left to right seated: Elaine Jacobs, Marie Dickens, Geraldine Robertson, Evelyn Broadfoot, Alvin Dixon at the mike, Ray Jones (behind Alvin), and Maggie McLeod.

Staff Changes at the TRC

At the beginning of July, Director of Research, John Milloy, resigned from his position to focus more fully on writing and research. He will assume the role of Special Advisor on Research to the Commissioners. Paulette Regan is Interim Director of Research.

Tom McMahon has moved from Executive Director to General Counsel for the Commission focusing on the research centre. Kimberly Murray, who was Special Advisor of Statement Gathering and Regional Liaisons, is the new Executive Director.

The application deadline for Regional Liaison positions was July 5. Interviews begin in August. Seven Regional Liaisons will help communities organize their own TRC events.

Plan Your Own Community-Based TRC Event

Under its mandate, the TRC is to encourage the organization of, and participation in, community events. The Settlement Agreement reads:

It is intended that the community events will be designed by communities and respond to the needs of the former students, their families, and those affected by the IRS legacy including the special needs of those communities where Indian Residential Schools were located.

The community events are for the purpose of:

- a) acknowledging the capacity of communities to develop reconciliation practices;
- b) developing collective community narratives about the impact of the IRS system on former students, families, and communities;
- c) involving church, former school employees, and government officials in the reconciliation process, if requested by communities;
- d) creating a record or statement of community narratives, including artwork — poetry, writing, painting, sculpting — that include truths, insights, and recommendations, for use in historical research, national events, and for inclusion in the research centre;
- e) educating the public and fostering better relationships with local communities;
- f) allowing for the participation of high level government and church officials, if requested by communities;
- g) respecting the goal of witnessing in accordance with Aboriginal principles.

Although funding is limited, communities may apply for \$15,000 from the Commission to assist them in holding an event. The TRC Community Event Criteria Guide is at:

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/TRC_Comm_Events%20Guide_en_p12.pdf Watch for a community event on south Vancouver Island Dec. 3-5, 2010.

Database of Residential School Photos is UP!

Archival photographs relating to 14 residential schools operated by the United Church between 1849 and 1969 can now be viewed at: www.thechildrenremembered.ca. Click on the desired school. If you can identify anyone, please take the opportunity there to do so. If you have archives material to donate, contact Nichole Vonk 1-800-268-3781.

Children's Spirits Set Free in Red Deer

On June 30, the Moderator and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners attended a very special ceremony in Alberta to honour over 325 children who attended the Red Deer Industrial School. It was a first in terms of a church working with several First Nations to recognize a nearly forgotten, unmarked residential school cemetery. Read more www.united-church.ca/communications/news/general/100729.

Update on "Living into Right Relations" Groups

A number of Living into Right Relations Home Groups across the country are currently engaged in dialogue around the legacy of the residential school system and the TRC process. At the time of the TRC event in Winnipeg, solidarity vigils were held in the Greater Toronto Area. Metropolitan United Church observed the opening of the event on June 16 with ceremony, story-telling, and an outline of the TRC process. A similar observance to mark the final day took place June 19 at Étienne-Brûlé Park along the Humber River in Toronto following an Aboriginal Day run/walk.

The *Opening Minds / Opening Hearts Conference* held on June 5 at Curve Lake United Church on Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario sought to engage area congregations in dialogue about the residential schools experience. Over 100 people gathered to listen to a panel of residential school survivors share their experiences.

To support such dialogue around the residential schools legacy, the national Right Relations Task Group has commissioned a Right Relations resource library to be sent to each of the 13 Conference-based Home Groups.

Returning to Spirit – Upcoming Workshops

For information about specific registration contacts and locations, e-mail: rts@aboriginalcircleofeducators.ca or call toll free 1-877-772-1991.

Part 1: Aboriginal workshop

Aug. 23-27, 2010 Fort Qu'Appelle, SK
Sept. 13-17, 2010 Hollow Water, MB
Sept. 27-Oct. 1, 2010 Prince George, BC
Oct. 24-28, 2010 Saskatoon, SK
Nov. 24-28, 2010 Yellowknife, NWT

Part 2: Church and Non-Aboriginal

Aug. 23-27, 2010 Winnipeg, MB
Sept. 20-24, 2010 Saskatoon, SK
Oct. 18-22, 2010 Prince George, BC
Nov. 10-14, 2010 Yellowknife, NWT
Jan. 3-7, 2011 Prince George, BC

Part 3: Reconciliation

Jan. 27-Feb. 2, 2011 Yellowknife, NWT
March 24-30, 2011 Prince George, BC

Funding is available for the registration fee, accommodation, and meals for up to 10 Aboriginal and 10 non-Aboriginal people in 2010. You can apply by sending a copy of your registration form directly to jvscott@united-church.ca, prior to the workshop.

Contact Us

Questions, concerns, or comments? We'd like to hear from you!

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*This update is available on the United Church website:
www.united-church.ca/communications/newsletters/residentialschools
Published quarterly by the Residential Schools Steering Committee.*



Residential Schools Update

The United Church of Canada



L'Église Unie du Canada

"The United Church of Canada is committed to working to create a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples that starts in confession for past wrongs and, it is the church's hope, ends in the shared joy of walking together in a healed and renewed creation."

*The United Church of Canada Brief to the Royal Commission
on Aboriginal Peoples (November 1993)*

October 2010

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) All-Parties Meeting

The Commissioners met on October 15 with representatives from the parties that signed the Settlement Agreement. James Scott and David MacDonald were present on behalf of The United Church of Canada (UCC). The new Executive Director Kim Murray and Eugene Arcand representing the Survivors Advisory Committee gave reports. Paulette Regan has been appointed permanently to replace John Milloy as the Director of Research.

Ms. Murray reported that soon there will be small sub-offices in Yellowknife and Vancouver in addition to the existing TRC offices in Winnipeg and Ottawa. Offers are being made to fill three of the Regional Liaison positions while a second round of interviews is being held for the others. A call for research proposals has elicited about 100 applications. Commemoration guidelines have been approved, and the first funds will be released after April 1, 2011. The TRC is close to issuing a call for proposals to companies to engage in the required document collection. The next national event will be held in Inuvik, likely beginning June 28, 2011 and concluding on Canada Day. An advance planning group was on site as the all-parties meeting was being held. Much creativity will be required to engage as many people as possible where there are few hotel rooms available and transportation costs are high. The third national event will be hosted in Halifax, November 2011.

Mr. Arcand indicated that problems surrounding the Common Experience Payment (CEP) and the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) continue to threaten the willingness and ability of survivors to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation process.

Take a Look at Residential School Photos

Archival photographs relating to 14 residential schools operated by the United Church between 1849 and 1969 can be viewed at: www.thechildrenremembered.ca. Click on a selected school, then individual photos. If you can identify anyone, please take the opportunity to do so. If you have archives material to donate, contact Nichole Vonk 1-800-268-3781.

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TRC at Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples

On September 28, 2010, the three Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners appeared before the Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, as did Elizabeth Ford, Director for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami; Clement Chartier, President, Métis National Council; and Charlene Belleau, Manager, Residential Schools Unit, Assembly of First Nations. The Senate Committee was examining “progress on commitments by the government since the apology to students of residential schools.”

Justice Murray Sinclair drew attention to two stories in the TRC’s written report—one story was that of teacher Florence Kaefer and the late former student Edward Gamblin of Norway House. Sinclair underlined that the fundamental flaw in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples was that of racism resulting in the teaching that the Aboriginal person was inferior to the non-Aboriginal person. He added that reconciliation has to look at this flaw, but suggested that survivors are more concerned with reconciliation in their families and communities. He noted that the Settlement Agreement relies on a restorative justice model/definition of reconciliation. The TRC can only begin the conversation in a good way, and wants to establish what the goal of reconciliation is. To read the text of Sinclair’s statement go to www.trc.ca and click Media Room; to view a video of the Winnipeg National Event, see www.trc.ca.

Acting Senate Committee Chair Larry Campbell responded that “when I looked at the map you have provided, I had no idea [of the scope of the concerns].” Commissioner Littlechild was quick to respond to this and pointed to the huge question, “What do we do with this ‘I had no idea,’ which is the response of the majority of Canadians?”

Elizabeth Ford asked that the TRC be given extended financial support. She focused on the deconstruction of the colonial education system and reconstruction of an Inuit education system, saying that it needed a “national stimulus plan.” Statements such as the recent Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy exhibit a glaring gap when it comes to education of the Inuit.

Charlene Belleau drew attention to the many issues concerning CEP and IAP that are preventing former students from moving forward. She said there was still a significant lack of knowledge concerning the IRSSA and the various processes. She added that there is a void left by the cuts to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which Health Canada is not filling. The supports and unique skill sets needed to cope with “student-to-student” abuse are sadly lacking. She said restoration of language and culture, including the necessary funding, is essential to reconciliation. She also stressed that education is the key to “turning the page on this dark chapter in history.”

TRC Public Education Event in Vancouver

The Indian Residential School Survivor Society and the Squamish Nation are co-hosting a “Public Education Initiative” titled “Looking Forward,” on the Truth and Reconciliation process. It will be on October 26 at the Joe Mathias Recreation Center at 100 Capilano Road in North Vancouver, B.C, with the opening ceremony at 8:30 am and closing at 4:30 pm.

This will be a one-day event especially for the non-Indigenous public to inform and encourage them to participate in upcoming truth and reconciliation events. The three TRC commissioners, Aboriginal leaders, residential school survivors, and church and government leaders will all make presentations explaining how significant these events will be.

It is anticipated that between 200 and 300 will attend this gathering. For further information and to R.S.V.P., contact brenttom@irsss.ca or (604) 925-4464 or toll free: 1-800-721-0066 at the Indian Residential School Survivors Society.

TRC Community Event in Victoria, December 3–5

An ecumenical group is planning a three-day Truth and Reconciliation Community event at First People's House on the University of Victoria campus (December 3–5, 2010). Aboriginal Neighbours, a network of members of the Anglican Diocese of BC (Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands), the Victoria Presbytery of the UCC, and the Vancouver Island Society of Religious Friends (Quakers), is planning the event in conjunction with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Funding has been obtained from all the parties involved.

Chief Robert Joseph asked Aboriginal Neighbours in 2009 to facilitate the event, believing that true healing can only take place from telling and hearing the stories of survivors and subsequent generations, and that divisions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities will only recede by getting to know one another. Chief Joseph hopes that this event can provide a model for other community events in aid of truth and reconciliation.

For more information, contact Lynne Crawshaw lynnecranshaw@yahoo.ca, Chair of the event planning team, or Don Bright dmbright@shaw.ca, Communications Coordinator.

More IAP Claims than in Past Years

The United Church has now received over 1700 abuse claims under the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) started in September 2007, and the predecessor Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process begun in 2004. This is less than 10 percent of the total number of claims received by the Adjudication Secretariat (see www.iap-pei.ca/nwz-stat-eng.asp for overall statistics). Since the beginning of 2010, the UCC has received over 300 IAP applications at a rate of over 40 per month. There has been a large increase in the number of claims related to the Morley Indian Residential School in Alberta. However, the rate of hearings to which church representatives are welcomed continues to decline—down to only one or two per month.

Over 20 percent of the applications contain allegations of sexual and/or physical abuse perpetrated by fellow students at the residential school. Although they were young offenders at the time, the policy is that if those former students are still alive, they are contacted and told about the allegations made against them. They have a choice as to whether they will provide their own statement and attend a hearing. The majority of those contacted do not respond. The extent of broken relationships in communities due to student-to-student abuse is a special and unique concern and difficult to address. Former students can contact Resolution Health Support and Cultural Workers and accredited counsellors through Health Canada in their region. The crisis line: 1-866-925-4419 is always available.

Special Hearing Centres have been established in Vancouver and Winnipeg to handle the large volume of hearings in those cities. The United Church is pleased that the IAP Secretariat requested our apology plaques in English, French, and some of the Native languages to hang on the walls of the Hearing Centres.

Sisters in Spirit Vigils across Canada

All across Canada, vigils, walks, and sharing circles were held on October 4 to honour the lives of missing Aboriginal women. The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is a national tragedy. The statistics are shocking—over 580 women have been lost since 1970, more than half of that number since 2000. While the government of Canada announced \$10 million worth of funds to address this issue in the March 2010 budget, families and communities are still waiting for justice. Sisters in Spirit (SIS), a program of Native Women's Association in Canada, and Amnesty International are both advocates for the movement. In only four years, the number of SIS vigils has grown from 11 in 2006 to an impressive 72 vigils in 2009, and more in 2010.



Peggy Monague, Healing Fund Coordinator responsible for promoting Sisters in Spirit within the United Church, attends the Toronto vigil.

Building Bridges: Treaty Days at Fort Qu'Appelle *an edited submission by Sue Bland*

It's 6:20 a.m. A small group of us has hiked to the top of the hills above Calling Lakes Centre for a sunrise walk. We look north and see Standing Buffalo Indian Reserve at the far end of Echo Lake. The valley hills opposite are bathed in the pink glow of the rising sun, and toward the south, we see the tall teepee of the Treaty Governance Centre. As far as the eye can see, we are in Treaty 4 Territory. Stan McKay and his partner Dot are accompanying us; they offer tobacco to each of us that we might offer our thanks to the Creator for this new day, and the sun on the horizon.

Treaty 4 Territory covers much of Southern Saskatchewan and dips into both Manitoba and Alberta. Each year, members of the 35 signatory First Nations return to Reserve #77 (the Treaty 4 Grounds) around September 15 for a week-long celebration that includes meetings, educational events, ceremonies, a parade, and a powwow. "Treaty people" return to this place to give thanks to the Creator for the gift of this land we share and to revisit the original "spirit and intent" of the treaties that bind our peoples together.

For several years, Calling Lakes Centre has offered a program in conjunction with Treaty 4. Students and their teachers, government employees who have been to "cultural awareness workshops" but feel that something is missing, and people wishing to learn more about the First Nations are among those who attend "Building Bridges: Treaty Days." The weekend serves up a rich prairie stew: circles with introductory information about the treaties, the opportunity to meet and talk with a variety of First Nations people of all ages, the intimacy of a sharing circle, the sights and sounds of a powwow, the taste of bannock on a stick, the feel of friends around a campfire, and the silent concentration of a group of people using willow, moose sinew, shells, feathers, and beads to fashion their own dream catchers—all of this in the midst of the beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley in early fall.



"Bridge Builders" included, back row: Dot McKay, second from the left, and Stan McKay, fourth from the left

"Building Bridges" touches hearts as well as minds. Participants leave with a deeper understanding that settlers are also "treaty people" with new knowledge about the many ways treaty promises have been broken, and about the many gifts First Nations people continue to share.

New Co-Chair for "Living into Right Relations" Task Group

A new Aboriginal co-chair, Kathryn Fournier, has been appointed to the national Right Relations Task Group, sharing duties with Russell Daye. Kathryn is from Montreal & Ottawa Conference, which held a "Seeing Right Relations" event in Montreal on the Labour Day weekend. Kathryn has been involved with UCC initiatives in support of Aboriginal people since the initiation of The Healing Fund. The national Right Relations Task Group will host a consultation with two representatives (one Aboriginal/one non-Aboriginal) from each of the 13 Right Relations Home Groups to help guide the Task Group's support of Home Groups. This national gathering will take place in Winnipeg, November 18–21. The Task Group will continue meeting into November 22.

Supporting Indigenous Rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent

The United Church of Canada (UCC) continues to support the Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) in Ontario concerning the recently-passed Far North Act. NAN encompasses James Bay Treaty 9 territory and Ontario's portion of Treaty 5, an area of 210,000 square miles in the northern fifth of Ontario. Ontario unilaterally announced in 2009 it would permanently protect up to 225,000 sq. km. of boreal forest in NAN First Nation territory and introduced Bill 191 (the Far North Act). NAN First Nations argue that they were not adequately consulted and accommodated on Bill 191. NAN asserts that the Far North Act fails to honour their inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights, fails to recognize their jurisdiction over their lands, and gives a provincial minister veto power over decisions they make on their lands. Since 2009, NAN has asked for support—both political and spiritual—from churches and Ontario residents to withdraw Bill 191. On September 15, 2010, vigils were held by several UCC groups, who prayed for the land and guidance from the Creator.

As the United Church supports the Aboriginal right to free, prior and informed consent—as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—and the principle of honouring treaties, NAN's calls for support have been circulated to church members and networks. Manitou Conference and the General Secretary sent letters of concern to the Premier and Minister of Natural Resources.

On September 15 and 16, a rally in support of NAN's opposition to Bill 191 was held in Toronto. Members of the United Church Women's executive also attended committee hearings on Bill 191 at that time. A September 23 vote (46 to 26) moved the bill into

law. The leadership of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation has stated that the Nation will not recognize this legislation in their homelands. The Premier’s office has acknowledged receipt of the General Secretary’s letter of concern, while the UCC is consulting with the leadership of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation to explore ways the church can continue to stand in solidarity with NAN to protect their Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

Beat the Drum to Endorse UN Indigenous Rights Declaration

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives is inviting churches and communities across Canada to drum together on December 5 in solidarity with Indigenous peoples for Canada’s endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and for climate justice. More info on the “Beat the Drum” event, a petition calling for endorsement, and other new campaign resources can be found at www.kairoscanada.org.



Returning to Spirit – Upcoming Workshops

For information about this transformative program, specific registration contacts, and locations, e-mail: rts@aboriginalcircleofeducators.ca or call toll free 1-877-772-1991.

Part 1: Aboriginal workshop

Nov.8–12, 2010 St. Theresa Point, MB
Nov. 24–28, 2010 Yellowknife, NWT
Jan.10–14, 2010 Saskatchewan
Feb.14–18, 2011 Prince George, BC
March 7–11, 2011 Vancouver Island
May 30–June 3, 2011 Thunderchild, SK

Part 2: Church and Non-Aboriginal

Nov.10–14, 2010 Yellowknife, NWT
Jan.3–7, 2011 Prince George, BC
Feb.14–18, 2011 Beasejour, MB
March 7–11, 2011 Vancouver Island

Part 3: Reconciliation

Jan.27–Feb.2, 2011 Yellowknife, NWT
March 24–30, 2011 Prince George, BC
June 9–15, 2011 Vancouver Island
July 7–13, 2011 Winnipeg

Part 2 and Part 1 weekend pilot

Feb.25–27, and March 18–20, 2011
Winnipeg
Aboriginal Clergy May 9–13, 2011
Beausejour

Funding is available for the registration fee, accommodation, and meals for up to 10 Aboriginal and 10 non-Aboriginal people in 2010. You can apply by sending a copy of your registration form directly to jvscott@united-church.ca, prior to the workshop.

Contact Us

Questions, concerns, or comments? We’d like to hear from you!

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