



# 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 2012

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## TRC Third National Event Held in Halifax, Nova Scotia

### "It's All About Love"

The theme of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission event on October 26–29, 2011, was "Love." Reflecting on the theme as one of the seven sacred teachings, Commissioner Marie Wilson affirmed that although former students of residential school may not have received love from those they expected it, needed it, or had a right to it from, "you were love in that place." She celebrated how students had protected the younger ones, cuddled them when they were crying, shared stolen food with them, and offered friendship to strangers who became family. Throughout the event, many were seen comforting those who had difficulty sharing their stories and listening to the stories. Resolution Health Support Workers were especially evident. Honorary Witness Shelagh Rogers hosted the "Dialogue on Resilience" and Justice Sinclair urged former students to inspire their children by sharing "how they survived."



Moderator Mardi Tindal (far right) joined the platform of dignitaries at the opening ceremonies.

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## Nora Bernard Honoured

There was one residential school in the Maritimes. It was located at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, and operated by The Archdiocese of Halifax, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and the Sisters of Charity. In the 1990s, the late Nora Bernard, a determined woman with an unforgettable smile and a former student of that school, began to gather other survivors to talk about their experiences. They were the first to launch a class action lawsuit concerning their treatment in a residential school.

The evening prior to the opening of the TRC event, family members and fellow survivors paid tribute to Nora at the Halifax Convention Centre, acknowledging Nora's dedication to justice for her people, and pledged to continue her work.

In 2000, when the Association for Survivors of Shubenacadie was struggling to meet, to build the database of former students, and to provide healing support, the United Church Healing Fund granted them \$27,300.

## Expressions of Reconciliation

At each national TRC event, time is set aside for "expressions of reconciliation" from individuals and groups. Symbols of these gestures are placed in the Bentwood box for permanent inclusion in the TRC archives in the National Research Centre. Several expressions involved United Church participation. Russell Daye and Kathryn Fournier (on the left below), who co-chair the national Living into Right Relations task group, and Moderator Mardi Tindal described the genesis of the right relations program and the creation of home groups across the church that are working on building relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Together with the TRC Commissioners, they presented a broken chalice that has become a powerful symbol of the brokenness of our relationships, while embodying the hope of newness of life.



United Church minister Aileen Urquhart and survivor Garnet Angeconeb, representing the Sioux Lookout Community Coalition for Healing and Reconciliation, presented the publication *Starting to Talk: A Guide for Communities on Healing and Reconciliation from the Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. For copies of the handbook, call 807-737-1501 or download from the Sioux Lookout website ([www.slarc.ca](http://www.slarc.ca)).

KAIROS Board members Henriette Thompson, Stephen Allen, and Jennifer Henry (left to right) presented a banner from the Roll with the Declaration Campaign, June 2011.



### **A Greater Focus on Public Education and Knowledge Sharing**

This national TRC event included three education initiatives not undertaken previously. About 600 high school students attended the event taking in archival exhibits, films, and informational talks.

Five theological students from the Atlantic School of Theology took the opportunity to enroll in a credit course, including 18 hours attendance at the TRC event and four seminars with Adjunct Professor Russell Daye.

Professor Jennifer Llewellyn of Dalhousie University and Dr. Jane McMillan of St. Mary's University organized academic workshops, titled Mobilization Pathways to Reconciliation in Education. Over the course of the event, seven Indigenous Knowledge Mobilization Circles were conducted on such topics as Aboriginal Student Advisors Consortium, Research Ethics, Governance, Language, Knowledge and Rights, Health and Wellness, and Justice and Law.

### **TRC Regional Event Planned for Victoria, British Columbia**

The TRC will hold a Regional Event on Vancouver Island on April 13-14, 2012, at the Victoria Conference Centre and Fairmont Empress Hotel. This event will be in addition to the TRC National Event scheduled for Vancouver in September of 2013. Lynne Crawshaw, a United Church member active in Aboriginal Neighbours, is serving on the planning team for the Victoria event, which will be preceded by four community hearings on the island in Port Hardy (February 27-28), Campbell River (March 1-2), Port Alberni (March 26-27), and Duncan (March 29-30). More information is at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

## TRC Fourth National Event in Saskatoon, June 21–24, 2012

The ashes from the sacred fire at the Atlantic TRC event were placed in a basket with ashes from previous events, and given to representatives from Saskatchewan (below: Eugene Arcand of the TRC Survivors' Advisory Committee on the far right). Justice Sinclair observed that this basket of ashes is becoming a symbol of Canadian unity.



The Saskatchewan Regional Working Group and sub-committees on Programs and Logistics, which include representatives of Saskatchewan Conference and ANCC, are working on plans for the event, which will be held at the Prairielands in Saskatoon, June 21–24, 2012.

In advance of the Saskatchewan national event, the TRC will hold a number of community hearings around the province that are open to the public. They are excellent opportunities to learn first-hand about the residential school experience.

Regina: January 16–18  
Prince Albert: January 31–February 2  
Stony Rapids: February 16–17  
North Battleford: April 30–May 1  
Île-à-la-Crosse: May 5  
Buffalo Narrows: May 17–18

Key First Nation: January 20–22  
Pelican Narrows: February 13–14  
Onion Lake: April 3–5  
Beauval: May 3–4  
Fort Qu'Appelle: May 14–15  
La Ronge: June 5–7

### “What Is Reconciliation?”

Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has asked all parties to the Agreement to respond to the question “What is reconciliation?” and to offer expressions of reconciliation at the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The November 2011 meeting of the Executive of the General Council explored this question with the purpose of building a common understanding of “reconciliation.” After the session, the Executive adopted a motion recommending The United Church of Canada engage the question “What is reconciliation?” using the same process. The two-hour process was given a trial run at the fall meeting of the Committee of Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools.

## Returning to Spirit Workshops

Three United Church groups are sponsoring Returning to Spirit workshops early in 2012, including the Five Oaks Education Centre, the Regina Native Outreach Ministry, and the Alberta and Northwest Conference Living into Right Relations home group (workshops in St. Albert and Edmonton). Go to [www.returningtospirit.org](http://www.returningtospirit.org) for dates and registration contacts, as well as an eight-minute video outlining this program of healing and reconciliation. Elder Elise Charland from Cold Lake First Nation and Co-Executive Director Anne Taylor showed the video at the Atlantic TRC national event.

The Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools has renewed its decision to support 10 Aboriginal and 10 non-Aboriginal persons in 2012 to attend the program. The grant covers the registration fee, meals, and accommodation.

## Remembering the Children Society Formed

The inaugural general meeting of the Remembering the Children Society was held November 22, 2011, in Edmonton to elect the first Board of Directors for the Remembering the Children Society. The society has evolved from a working group that had as its focus the recovery and commemoration of the cemetery associated with the Red Deer Industrial School.

The objectives of the society are to

1. support the reclamation and preservation of Indian Residential School cemeteries and history in Alberta,
2. research missing children and unmarked burials,
3. commemorate and remember the children who attended Indian Residential Schools in Alberta, and died at the schools, and were buried in school cemeteries,
4. create public awareness and educate about residential school history,
5. assist other groups with similar objectives,
6. facilitate reconciliation between and within Indigenous families, communities, churches, governments, and Canadians.

The society has published a set of guidelines for any others who may want to initiate similar projects.

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### Contact Us [irs@united-church.ca](mailto:irs@united-church.ca)

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/residential-schools-update](http://www.united-church.ca/communications/newsletters/residential-schools-update)

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## Victoria Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Event Finds Balance

"Spectacular" was how Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Willie Littlechild described the April 13-14 Victoria TRC regional event. Over 2,300 attended, including about 400 survivors, while another 3,300 from 16 countries watched via live-streaming. Hundreds of high school students listened to National Chief Shawn Atleo

and perused the archival exhibits. For the first time, Aboriginal participants and Non-Aboriginal participants were in balance, helped by the efforts of United Church



*Lynne Crashaw, Cadboro Bay United Church in Victoria, stands beside a poster from her church: "Truth, Reconciliation and Equity: They Matter to Us."*

representatives like Lynne Crawshaw who spoke to congregations around the island about the importance of witnessing. Four advance TRC community hearings on the island also allowed survivors to share their testimony.

Former United Church Moderators Bob Smith and Marion Best listened as Chief Ed John reminded us that "indifference is an incubator of injustice." During "Expressions of Reconciliation," Mike Lewis, of the former St. Andrew's United, Alberni, described how that congregation delivered an apology to the Nuuchahnulth people at a 1997 feast. Marion Best spoke about how that prophetic action spurred General Council's journey toward its own 1998 apology to survivors, their families and communities, and the church's ongoing commitment to live out its apologies.

Honorary Witness, CBC journalist Shelagh Rodgers hosted two "town hall" forums on "Reconciliation: It Matters to Me." New Honorary Witness, Her Honour Gwendolyn Point (wife of B.C. Lieutenant Governor Steven L. Point of the Stó:lo Nation), said students in her social-work classes ask why the history and impact of residential schools isn't taught in public schools. The Legacy of Hope Foundation launched its high-school curriculum EduKit "100 Years of Loss."

Churches contributed funds to help survivors with travel, meals, and accommodations.

The community Getting Higher Choir brought the crowd to tears, and a youth group sang "Happy Birthday" to all the survivors whose birthdays went unmarked in school.

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### **TRC Community Hearing—Port Alberni, British Columbia**

The TRC held one of its largest community hearings yet, in Port Alberni, March 12-13, leading up to the Victoria Event. Nearly 800 people attended the truth sharing in the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council gym, on the original site of the Alberni Indian Residential School, one of 14 schools the United Church ran until 1969.

Some expressed fear at returning to the place where their innocence and childhood had been taken away. Others spoke of overcoming fears and rebuilding their lives.

The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council of 14 Vancouver Island First Nations provided hospitality, refreshments, and care for the more than 100 people who spoke, most of whom were former residential school students, or their children and grandchildren.

In moving and deeply emotional testimony, many referred to unbelievable hardship mixed with undeserved cruelty. Others recalled losing their language—"When your language is lost; all your culture is lost"—or emphasized healing and forgiveness.

One Alberni School survivor spoke of great sorrow, then asked the United Church representative to stand. When he did, she said she forgave him and the United Church. It was a quiet moment of deep healing.

You can view the schedule of future hearings and live or archived webcasts at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca); scroll down to the livestream channel.

### **Saskatoon National TRC Event**

*Truth* is the theme of the fourth national TRC event, set for June 21-24 in Saskatoon. It promises to be the largest gathering yet, with more than 20,000 former residential-school students living in Saskatchewan. The United Church operated three schools there.

United Church representatives in planning include: Dave Moors of Mayfair United, Saskatoon, on the TRC Regional Working Group (the main planning body); Janet Clarke and Elmo Brandon of Integrated Community Ministries on Program and Cultural Events; and Murray Scharf on Logistics. Moderator Mardi Tindal, national and regional staff, and local volunteers will attend for the United Church.



*Marie Wilson is one of the three TRC commissioners who will attend the Saskatoon event.*

The Saskatchewan Conference Justice and Right Relations (J&RR) Committee, supported by staffer Sue Bland, has been very busy for months, encouraging the United Church constituency throughout the province to engage in the Saskatoon event or in the advance Community Hearings. J&RR folk also joined KAIROS at the Calling Lakes Centre in March to offer *Witnessing to Truth and Reconciliation: A Retreat for All Who Support Indigenous Rights*.

The TRC event is set for the Prairie Land Exhibition Centre, in Saskatoon's Diefenbaker Park. Camping will be available as there is limited hotel space.

Hundreds of provincial school students will attend an Education Day to learn the history of residential schools and hear from survivors. Our Justice and Reconciliation Fund will help 350 students from Prince Albert attend.

For more information go to the Commission's website: [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

## Healing Moments at Peterborough TRC Event

Several years of community building by the interfaith and intercultural Kawartha Truth and Reconciliation Support Group (KTRSG) has paid off. Many of the 450 participants at a TRC event the group spearheaded in Peterborough this May—including Health Canada support workers with extensive TRC experience—described the event as



*Steering committee chair Alice Williams helped the Kawartha Truth and Reconciliation Support Group quilt their response to residential schools history. She also ran a workshop in Peterborough explaining the panels.*

uniquely peaceful and healing. Some said that that reflected the good intercultural relationships among the organizers themselves, and also signalled that healing is happening.

Speakers included TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson, Ontario's first Aboriginal Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman, former Manitoba MP Elijah Harper of Red Sucker Lake Cree First Nation (who famously stopped the Meech Lake Accord because Indigenous voices had been excluded), and Anishnabekwe Sister of St. Joseph Priscilla Solomon. Bay of Quinte Conference's Dancing in the Circle of Right Relations group was one of the groups to offer a workshop, based on members' experience.

Significantly, attendance was split almost evenly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, with most of the non-Indigenous folk becoming involved through local church connections. Liz Stone, executive director of the Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag Services Circle of Peterborough and her staff, did most

of the heavy lifting for the steering committee, which included members of Dancing the Circle, plus others from Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Quaker, Unitarian, and United Churches.

It is always amazing to witness the wonderful effect of a seemingly simple gesture like offering cupcakes and singing "Happy Birthday" to honour residential school survivors who were deprived of such celebrations as children incarcerated in the schools. It happened again at the Peterborough event, where many were moved to tears by the ceremony, perhaps because it clearly came from the hearts of the church people who offered it.

## Future TRC Events

The remaining national TRC events are scheduled as follows:

- Quebec (Montreal or Quebec City) in the spring of 2013
- Vancouver, September 19-21, 2013
- Alberta (likely Edmonton) in the spring of 2014
- Closing Event in Ottawa, June 2014

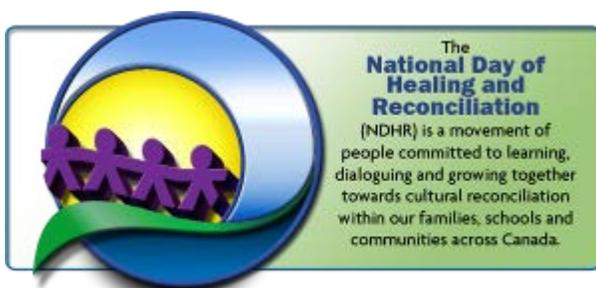
## TRC Faces Funding Crisis, Says Interim Report

TRC Commissioners flagged an expected shortfall in funding to complete their mandate in an Interim Report issued February 23, at the mid-point of their five-year term. The 29-page report summarized their activities and learnings, updated the status of each element of the mandate, and offered 20 recommendations, including several for the Parties to the Settlement Agreement (which includes the United Church):

- that the Government of Canada and churches establish an ongoing cultural-revival fund designed to fund projects that promote the traditional spiritual, cultural, and linguistic heritages of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada
- that the Government of Canada and the churches produce all their relevant records to the Commission as quickly as possible
- that governments, educational institutions, and churches consult, design, announce, and publically unveil residential school commemorations before the completion of the Commission's mandate

The Commission also recommends the federal government send copies of its 2008 national Apology to all survivors, and display it in all secondary schools, across Canada. Along with the report, the Commission released *They Came for the Children*, a historical summary of the residential school era. Both are available at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

### **National Day of Healing and Reconciliation Marks Anniversary of Apology**



The National Day of Healing and Reconciliation is June 11, the anniversary of the federal government's 2008 apology to former students of Indian residential schools. It's a good day to learn, remember and reflect on how mainstream Canada has discriminated against different peoples, and to promote healing and reconciliation.

Since January 2012, the National Youth Network for Healing and Reconciliation and Project of Heart have been working together to reach Canadian schools. Project of Heart was created by Ottawa teacher Sylvia Smith, to honour the thousands of Indigenous children who died in residential schools. Sylvia received the Governor General's Award last December for this work. Visit the websites [www.ndhr.ca](http://www.ndhr.ca) and [www.projectofheart.ca](http://www.projectofheart.ca).

### **National Living into Right Relations (LIRR) Task Group visits Saskatoon**

To delve more deeply into what "right relations" might look like, and to apply that awareness to our personal relations, the national LIRR Task Group asked Brian Strom from the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution to lead a two-day reflection process at its April meeting in Saskatoon. Elder Walter Linklater also shared his wisdom. The Task Group, co-chaired by Kathryn Fournier and Russell Daye, drafted a behavioural covenant to help move forward in a good way through hard conversations. The Task Group hopes to offer a similar workshop to LIRR home groups across the country.

The Task Group also met in a sharing circle with 30 community members (some from the Saskatchewan Justice and Right Relations group). Janet Clarke, staff of Inner City Ministry, and Elder helper Gilbert Kewistep were gracious hosts. Community folks shared courageous steps that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are taking to face the painful legacy of residential schools, and to prepare for June's national TRC event.

### **United Church Archives Continues the TRC Document Collection**

Contractors hired by the TRC began collecting all documents relevant to Indian Residential Schools history from the United Church Archives last December. A consultant hired by the church spent nearly two years organizing the relevant material.

On February 29, the contractors were withdrawn by the Commission, which lacks funding to finish the job. As of March 19, General Council has hired Laura Hallman to continue copying relevant documents to turn over to the TRC.

The Archivists continue to attend events, including the Victoria Regional TRC event, to bring displays and photos from the archives to the Learning Place where copies can be made for survivors. Photos of United Church-run schools can still be accessed online at [www.thechildrenremembered.ca](http://www.thechildrenremembered.ca).

### **We Rediscover the Doctrine of Discovery**

The United Church's General Council Executive has followed the lead of the World Council of Churches in renouncing the Doctrine of Discovery, and has asked General Council 41, meeting in Ottawa this August, to study the doctrine and its significance, to renounce the doctrine, and to commend its action to the wider church for further study and action.

The Doctrine of Discovery is a series of papal statements from the mid-1400s that directed European Christians to capture, vanquish and seize the lands and possessions of non-Christian people. This led to the colonizing premise that Europeans were superior to Indigenous peoples. The colonial process has gone on around the world.

The premise still underlies much of the law, policy, and practice of Western governments and institutions, including the United Church. One example is the way our 1925 Basis of Union ignored the role and presence of Indigenous peoples.

### **Mixing Metaphors in a Good Way—The New Right Relations Logo**

Living into Right Relations has a new logo, the result of a voluntary collaboration between British-Canadian Heather Hobbs, Brian Wildcat of the Hobbema (Alberta) Cree First Nation, and Michelle Harland, a graphic designer with Metis roots.

We like the bold, crisp lines of their logo, which incorporates four Indigenous spiritual symbols and three Christian spiritual symbols. A very big thank you to Michelle, Brian, and Heather for donating their time and creativity—and for giving us this powerful artistic message of inclusion and equality that can only strengthen our understanding of what right relations can mean.



### **Saying Goodbye to Two Steering Committee Members**

The Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools (IJRS) Steering Committee said goodbye at its March meeting to Geraldine Robertson of Aamjiwaang First Nation (Sarnia, Ontario) and Allan Sinclair of Toronto Urban Native Ministries (originally from Fisher River First Nation, Manitoba), two longstanding committee members whose terms have come to an end.

"I appreciate the opportunity of meeting each and every one of you," wrote Geraldine in a heartfelt note to her fellow committee members—"the gift of friendship, the comradery, all the gifts of knowledge you all so generously shared, the opportunity to travel and to participate in various workshops, the opportunity for me to grow in grace and become a better person. All of you gave me this and I will always treasure these gifts and be grateful. I have been so fortunate to have worthy mentors in my life."

### **KAIROS Moves to Bring Indigenous Focus Front and Centre**

The KAIROS Indigenous Rights Circle (KIRC) took a leadership role when KAIROS held its second annual gathering of its board and circles in Toronto this May. Extensive discussions focused on the board decision to have all of KAIROS "pursue a long-term

Indigenous rights initiative.” KIRC members spread themselves among the other circles (Partnerships, Sustainability and Movement Building) to facilitate discussions.

Much of the talk focused on how this may change both the work KAIROS does and its approach to the work, to be increasingly guided by Indigenous partners, and their principles and ways of being together in relationship. gkisedtanamoogk, a Wabenaki Elder, and a member of both KIRC and Maritime Conference’s Right Relations home group, said we all need to become “Indigenized.”

The KAIROS gathering also featured a moving celebration to honour its new executive director, Jennifer Henry. She has served on KAIROS staff since its inception. The service was held at Jennifer’s own church, Holy Trinity Anglican, Toronto.

### **B.C. Native Ministries and National Aboriginal Ministries Councils Seek National Support against Northern Gateway Pipeline**

Look for a resolution against the proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline to come before General Council 41 in Ottawa this August. Both the church’s national Aboriginal Ministries Council and the B.C. Native Ministries Council (BCNM) have asked the national church to support their opposition to the pipeline project.

The proposed project consists of two pipelines running from northern Alberta across Indigenous lands to Kitimat, B.C., carrying 525,000 barrels of diluted bitumen a day to the west coast for export, and returning 193,000 barrels of condensate.

It would also mean 268 supertankers (much bigger than the *Exxon Valdez*) navigating a narrow, twisting, and tide-torn fiord 96 km into and out of Kitimat each year. Many fear catastrophic environmental accidents—and a huge threat to the land-and-sea-based ways of life and cultures of all First Nations along its path.

“We wake up every morning with a sickening in our hearts and souls,” said BCNM staffer Clare Ha’eis Hill, a hereditary chief of the Gitga’at people (Tsimshian First Nation) from Hartley Bay, which lies on the proposed shipping route. Ray Jones, Aboriginal Ministries Council chair and a hereditary chief of the village of Gitsegukla, Gitksan Nation, said the pipeline will run through where 80 percent of the region’s spring salmon spawn.

See [www.coastalfirstnations.ca/about/declaration](http://www.coastalfirstnations.ca/about/declaration), Declaration of the Coastal First Nations, and a backgrounder at [www.kairoscanada.org/?s=enbridge](http://www.kairoscanada.org/?s=enbridge).

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### **Contact us: [irs@united-church.ca](mailto:irs@united-church.ca)**

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## **Fourth National TRC Event Kicks Off Aboriginal Day in Saskatoon: More Settlers Get Involved as Focus Moves toward Reconciliation**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) fourth National Event in Saskatoon, June 21–24, 2012, saw both another jump in the growing levels of engagement by non-Aboriginal folk, and even stronger emphasis on the Commission's emerging focus on reconciliation. And Saskatchewan Conference's Justice and Right Relations group helped push both those developments forward, as did KAIROS.

The powerful Saskatoon event included the important elements that have come to be expected after three prior national events and other, locally organized gatherings:

- sunrise and pipe ceremonies, and a continually burning sacred fire
- Commissioners Sharing Panels, where moving testimonies from many of the estimated 1,500 residential school survivors often had tears flowing freely
- formal statement gathering (about 245 statements collected over four days)
- archival displays where some people found their younger selves in photos
- joyfully tearful reunions
- an education day where more than 2,000 Grade 7–9 students discovered they'd been taught a very incomplete version of Canadian history



*Moderator Mardi Tindal (centre) joins Donna Kennedy (left) of the national Living into Right Relations Task Group, and her sister Lucy, at the Saskatoon TRC event*

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- new Honorary Witnesses, including former prime minister Joe Clark, actor and former MP Tina Keeper, and former auditor general Sheila Fraser
- evenings of musical fun, with Buffy Sainte-Marie, and Métis fiddling and dancing

Expanding on her role from the Victoria TRC event, CBC's Shelagh Rogers hosted several town-hall meetings to focus on what reconciliation means—for all Canadians.

The Churches Listening Area was busy, thanks largely to Janet Clarke's care to provide an inviting, safe space for people to share from the heart, and a roster of volunteers to listen compassionately. If former students wished to speak one-to-one with a church representative, and receive a personal apology, someone from each of the four denominations that operated residential schools was always on hand. Many more people requested such conversations than at previous events. Each day featured a sharing circle in the tipi on one of the seven sacred teachings. The United Church circle, facilitated by Alvin Dixon and Bernice Saulteaux, focused on love.

You can watch video records of most of the TRC events, including Saskatoon and the nine Saskatchewan community hearings, on the Commission's website at [www.TRC.ca](http://www.TRC.ca). You will also find schedules for upcoming hearings, and more.

### Toronto TRC Event: Realizing a Shared Dream Helps Build Right Relations



*Elders Grafton Antone and Andrew Wesley (Stan Wesley photos)*

It started with a dream shared among members of Toronto Conference's Living into Right Relations Circle. They rose to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's challenge to community groups to organize local TRC events to support the commission and complement its national events.

But they knew that to be successful, the event had to be a joint effort with other community groups, particularly Indigenous organizations. The Circle already had a relationship with Canadian Roots Exchange director Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, and with Toronto Council Fire's board designate Andrea Chrisjohn. They put out feelers—and the response was overwhelming.

In the end, the Toronto event brought in about 650 people over three days to the Sheraton Centre across from city hall. The planning committee included folks from Council Fire, Canadian Roots Exchange, the Toronto Ambassadors of Reconciliation, the University of Toronto Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives,

the Toronto LIRR Circle (particularly Linda Parsons and Donna Magee), and the United Church's General Council Office—not to mention about a hundred volunteers.

The gathering, named The Meeting Place, focused on education to complement testimony from former students. It included a separate youth component that drew 150 young people, plus 18 separate workshops on aspects of the residential schools, colonialism, reconciliation and new Canadians, and the residential schools legacy. Speakers included the three TRC Commissioners, AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo and former national chief Ovide Mercredi, Mohawk educator Mike Myers, and United Church Moderator Mardi Tindal. The budget ran to well over \$200,000, almost all locally raised. United Church



*Betty Lou McNabb, minister at Georgina Island United Church*

members have reason to feel good about their significant financial support and volunteer commitment, which came from all four courts of the church.

The good news: The Meeting Place created such a buzz that many, many people wanted in. The bad news: because of space limitations, we had to turn away interested people. But evaluations from those who did attend were overwhelmingly positive. And perhaps best of all, a group of Indigenous and settler Canadians forged an ongoing relationship that's bound to lead to more projects together.

### **'Colonizers, Heal Yourselves,' Says Mount Elgin Speaker**



*Eva Jewell challenges settlers at Mount Elgin monument unveiling*

Twenty-four-year-old Anishnaabekwe artist Eva Jewell issued a heartfelt challenge to settler Canadians at a June 20 event at the site of the former Mount Elgin Residential School.

"I am calling for the healing of the colonizer, the abuser," she said in an address to nearly 400 people gathered to witness the unveiling of a monument commemorating the survivors of Mount Elgin, the only residential school the United Church operated in Ontario. Mount Elgin stood near the river on the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, west of London.

The colonization process that Europeans applied to Eva's people, and to Indigenous peoples around the world, was "a process already tried and true—for they had done it to themselves," said Jewell, who grew up on the

school site in her home community of Chippewas of the Thames. She is a direct descendant of four former students at Mount Elgin, which closed in 1946.

"It is now time for the settlers to recognize their responsibility in healing themselves," she added. "I hope there will be reciprocity now and into the future, with meaningful and respectful engagement happening on both sides. We need to restore the idea of balance and harmony with our land and fellow beings." Prime Minister Harper apologized "for what the political state of Canada has done to our Nations," Jewell noted. "But...healing must begin on his side as well."

The Commemoration event lived up to its theme—"Remember, Reconcile, Rejoice"—as speakers including AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo, former national chief Phil Fontaine, Cree leader Elijah Harper, and Jewell all honoured the school's survivors. In a thoughtful, reflective address, Fontaine shared his own journey of healing from abuses at a Manitoba school, and said that true healing means moving beyond anger.



*Former Mount Elgin student Geraldine Robertson of Aamjiwnaang First Nation helped plan the event*

The monument itself features seven pillars standing in a circle. Each is inscribed on the outside with one of the seven grandfather teachings of Anishnaabe tradition, and a photo from the school's history. On the inside of the pillars are the names of former Mount Elgin students. It's a moving work of art, and worth a pilgrimage for anyone who can take the opportunity to visit it.

## Thank You, Kelly, for Sharing Your Laughter, Tears, Wisdom, and Friendship

Everyone who cares about the residential schools legacy and right relations between Indigenous and settler peoples lost a strong ally May 19, when Kelly Running Wolf succumbed to the ravages of lung and throat cancer. A survivor of horrendous residential schools experiences at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, Kelly was a member of Kanesatake United Church, Montreal Presbytery, co-chair of the Montreal and Ottawa Conference Native Concerns Committee, Keeper of the Sweat Lodge, Sacred Pipe Carrier, and well-known, loved, and respected in many congregations for sharing his "healing journey of good medicine."

"Meegwetch, Kelly," said Ian Smith, "for sharing your stories, your pain and tears, your humour and laughter, your wisdom, critique, friendship, and your invitation to all to live in harmony with the Creator, Mother Earth, and each other of every tribe and nation. You taught and lived the meaning of 'all my relations.' May you rest in peace in the Creator's arms along with your precious sister, Gentle Wind. Please drum for us that beat which is the one heartbeat of the Creator and Mother Earth."

## Participants at Remembering the Children Find Some Closure



*Bill McLean: Overcoming distrust*

Adult children of Red Deer Industrial School survivors shared stories of pain and healing, wept, and found some closure, at the third Remembering the Children ceremony held June 30 outside Sunnybrook United Church, Red Deer, Alberta.

Eva Favel, from Saddle Lake, spoke in Cree of her father John Nayawatatik's memories of a possible Charles Hunter, killed in a cave-in while digging trenches as a student at the Red Deer school. Her son, Victor Houle, who'd heard his grandfather share these memories on the trapline, translated and wept, for finally achieving some closure.

Bill McLean, son of former student Stoney Nakoda Chief Walking Buffalo, told of overcoming his distrust of "White people" and forming a lifelong friendship

with Jack Freebury (of Trinity United Church, Edmonton), who was in the audience.

After visiting a nearly forgotten cemetery associated with the Red Deer Industrial School in 2009, members of the Saddle Lake and Stoney Nakoda First Nations, and of the Métis Nation of Alberta, decided to hold feast and pipe ceremonies to free the spirits of former students. They began preparing four annual Remembering the Children ceremonies, and formed the Remembering the Children Society.

This was the third event, hosted by Saddle Lake Cree Nation and Nelson House First Nation, and attended by about 130 witnesses.

Former Moderator Bill Phipps and residential schools liaison minister Cecile Fausak emphasized that the United Church supports the TRC's calls for public education and curriculum about residential schools.

The Society is planning a three-day, community-based TRC gathering for June 2013, in conjunction with the fourth ceremony. Hosted by the Métis Nation of Alberta, it will include a day dedicated to teaching today's schoolchildren about the residential school system and its legacy, including, specifically, the Red Deer Industrial School.

## Papaschase First Nation Recovering from Illegal Government Destruction

About 150 people learned about a little-known chapter of the early Mill Woods and South Edmonton history, paid tribute to the Papaschase First Nation, and used the

blanket exercise to begin developing new relationships at a June 11 Reconciliation gathering.

In 1886, the Canadian government began discharging many Papaschase members from Treaty status, transferring them to Enoch and other bands, or in other ways starving or buying them out, so that by 1888 the band was dispersed and their lands taken over. By 1930, Canada had sold all the IR 136 lands to third parties.

Upon learning some of this sad history, Mill Woods resident Theresa Wynn wanted to meet Calvin Bruneau, the current Chief of the Papaschase First Nation. She did meet him, and she ended up coordinating the Reconciliation gathering.

Today, Mill Woods United Church, Southminster-Steinhauer United Church, and ABNW Conference offices all sit within the bounds of what was once the Papaschase reserve. The descendants of the Papaschase First Nation are in the process of legally re-banding and are planning a reunion in August. You can



*The blanket exercise at Papaschase First Nation Reconciliation Gathering*

find more information about the Papaschase claim at [www.papaschase.ca](http://www.papaschase.ca).

### **Elders Honour Children Buried at File Hills Residential School Site**

Elders Francis Tuckanow and John Stonechild, who attended the File Hills Indian Residential School on the Okanese reserve, want to see the school cemetery marked, commemorated, and cared for before they die. So they met with United Church personnel, TRC Missing Children's coordinator Alex Maass, and Chief Marie-Anne Daywalker, June 26.

Due to flooding, they were unable to visit the cemetery site, but over lunch at the Okanese Wellness Centre, they agreed to hold the first of a series of feasts to remember the children at the school site on August 25. Research suggests the children and youth buried there were not from the File Hills agency area, but from more distant reserves like Carry the Kettle, Pasqua, Piapot, Muscowpetung, Pelly, and Duck Lake.

### **Paddling into Creation to Recreate Right Relationships**

Sixteen women offered a small birchbark canoe to the Bentwood Box as our Expression of Reconciliation, June 22 at the Saskatoon TRC National Event. We had sewn 16 symbols onto the canoe, representing our hopes and dreams as we set off to "paddle to reconciliation" together in an August 12–18 canoe trip on Lac La Ronge.

Half the participants in "Nimis Kahpomotate" (Cree for "Sister Journey") are Indigenous: Cree, Métis, Mohawk. The other half come from settler stock.

The journey of the “sistahs” began with a dream almost a year ago when most of us came to hear TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson speak at Saskatchewan Conference’s Annual Meeting. Since then, we’ve practised together on the Saskatchewan River and built relationships around the campfire at a weekend practice at Anglin Lake.



*Saskatchewan women paddlers at the TRC event*

Friendships have formed quickly. One woman beaded beautiful necklaces for the group to wear at the National Event. Another sewed beautiful ribbon shirts for a third’s traditional wedding ceremony. We have already reached out to each other in times of crisis and joy.

While paddling together in some of Canada’s most beautiful wilderness, we’ll open our hearts, share our stories, and listen to each other. We’ll fish, pick berries, swim, camp, cook, and pray together. We’ll share both laughter and tears. We’ll learn about different spiritual paths, about the Medicine Wheel, and about ourselves.

“I work with survivors of Indian Residential Schools and those affected by intergenerational impacts,” writes Maggie King of Onion Lake Cree Nation. “When my grandchildren ask what I did to help [with reconciliation], I will be proud to say that I travelled the river of life with some totally awesome sisters. Niawen Kowa, Hiy Hiy!!”

To learn more, visit: <https://sites.google.com/site/paddling2reconciliation/>

### **Moderator’s Blog Entry to Become Part of a High-School Textbook**

Moderator Mardi Tindal’s blog “Canada Heals,” a reflection on the first Remembering the Children ceremony held at Fort Normandeau in 2010, will be included in McGraw-Hill Ryerson’s new contemporary literary program for Grades 9–12 across Canada.

### **Contact Us: [irs@united-church.ca](mailto:irs@united-church.ca)**

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# 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)

December 2012

## General Council continues on path of right relations with new crest

Members of the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools (IIRS) celebrated with the Aboriginal Ministries Council (AMC)—and the whole church—after General Council 41 voted to adopt a revised United Church crest. The new crest incorporates the four colours of First Nations traditional teaching, and includes the words "**Akwe Nia'tetewá:neren,**" Mohawk for "All my relations."

The General Council also adopted insertions into the history of church union found in *The Manual*, recognizing—and rectifying—the exclusion of Aboriginal voices since creation of the United Church.

Ray Jones (Gitxsan, British Columbia), who chairs AMC and the working group that proposed the changes, said they chose the Mohawk language because that was the first Indigenous nation to develop congregations with the then-Methodist church. At the time of union in 1925, there were 62 First Nations congregations across Canada. "They were part of the church, but they weren't included in the history. They were pushed aside under Home Missions."

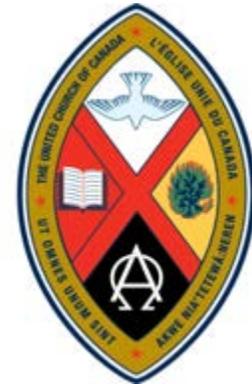
On Friday at Council, Jones joined outgoing Moderator Mardi Tindal to kick off a feast by cosigning a covenant to recognize GC41's actions, celebrate the first fruits of the



Harvey Gabriel

Aboriginal Ministries Council, and reject imposition of "European cultural norms as a condition of accepting the Gospel." The Basis of Union's revised introduction will affirm the place of the Indigenous church in the formation of the United Church, the crest will proclaim all peoples equally welcome in the church, and the covenant will "affirm our commitment to walking together, following Christ on a path toward right relations."

For those who would like to try the Mohawk phrase, Elder Satewas (Harvey Gabriel) of the Mohawk community of Kanesatake (and Kanesatake United Church) has provided this phonetic sounding out: *Ah gway nya' deh deh wah neyruhn.*



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### **Cindy Blackstock tells GC41 about caring for Indigenous children**



*Cindy Blackstock*

Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, brought three young women with her to speak to the General Council on behalf of the IJRS about issues Aboriginal communities, and especially children, face. The youths stirred Council with a powerful presentation about Shannen’s Dream, a campaign for healthy schools and equitable education funding for children on reserves. Cindy spoke about two other campaigns:

- Jordan’s Principle, which asserts that health agencies must first provide care for needy Indigenous children, and worry later about who pays; and
- I Am a Witness, a case Blackstock is taking before

the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to force the federal government to provide the same level of funding for 160,000 First Nations children for culturally based welfare services as other Canadian children get.

You can find out more about these campaigns and how to support them by going to [www.fncaringssociety.com](http://www.fncaringssociety.com) and clicking on “What You Can Do.”

### **“Don’t be afraid to visit us,” chief tells youth on GC41 Justice Walk**

Then-Moderator Mardi Tindal, former Moderator Stan McKay, and 90 youth at GC41 walked from Parliament Hill to Victoria Island (Ottawa River). Chief Gilbert Whiteduck of Kitigan Zibi First Nation welcomed them to this sacred site in unceded Algonquin territory.



*Gilbert Whiteduck*

“If we take care of the land, it will take care of us,” he said, and urged the crowd to “come and visit our communities; don’t be afraid.”

Sylvia Smith of Project of Heart explained several initiatives of the Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Movement of Ottawa (IPSMO), including supporting those who oppose logging on the Barriere Lake Algonquin Nation’s traditional territory, and the campaigns of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (above).



*Sylvia Smith*

The group kicked off its Justice Walk with a flash mob and prayers on the steps of Parliament Hill, August 15, and visited the offices of KAIROS on their way to Victoria Island.

### **“Good work,” Wilson tells GC41; “be even bolder for TRC’s last two years”**



*Marie Wilson*

While the United Church is “doing well relatively, you need to ‘muscle up’ for the final two years of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s mandate,” TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson told General Council.

This means educating more of our members about the legacy of the residential school system, creating or participating in more community TRC events where we live, drawing larger groups of non-Aboriginal people to the remaining national TRC events in Quebec, B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, and living more boldly into this historic opportunity for national healing. Commissioner Wilson, who is also an active United Church member, addressed GC41 as part of the IJRS report to General Council. Learn more about the TRC at [www.trc.ca](http://www.trc.ca).

## **Caring for Sudbury's Apology Cairn, the United Church's holy site**

"We don't have a lot of holy places in The United Church of Canada," says Manitou Conference Executive Secretary Will Kunder about the cairn that marks the site where the United Church apologized to Aboriginal peoples in 1986. "But if there is one, this is it."

That's why the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools has joined with the Aboriginal Ministries Council and members of Manitou Conference and Sudbury Presbytery to document, protect, and improve the site of the 1986 cairn.

Tucked away in what is now a back parking lot at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, the cairn is surrounded by overgrown bushes and is poorly signed. Manitou folks make regular pilgrimages to the cairn, but even many staff and students at Laurentian, who use the parking lot regularly, are unaware of the cairn's existence.

The cairn is a historic milestone in the United Church's journey toward right relations and an important reminder of our commitment to "walk the talk" by living the words of the Apology.

To ensure that future generations recognize and understand the importance of this symbol, we will be repairing the cement work of the cairn itself, adding a plaque to the site with the words of the Apology and arranging additional signage on the roads leading to the site.

We are also developing a webpage with video, images, and stories from those who were there in 1986 to better preserve the history and explain the significance of this "sacred place."



*Elder Murray Whetung at Cairn, 2005*

## **Following the children's lead at Manitoba Feast for Friends**

Children are playing—working together to create a structure from the carefully stacked woodpile, sharing, negotiating, being stubborn, co-operating, joking, celebrating.

Adults are sitting together in circles—sharing stories, reflections, and prayers—in a sweat lodge, around fires, in drumming and dancing circles.

In the kitchen, volunteers prepare a feast—a feast for friends. The menu includes foods sacred to various clans and nations: pickerel, beef, corn, berries...

We have spent the day together at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, about 120 of us, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, learning about ourselves and one another, and participating in a sunrise ceremony; a "blanket exercise" to learn about the impact of colonization on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples; small reflection and sharing circles; workshops on treaties, the Indian Act, colonization and Christianity; games and crafts; and, of course, sharing food.

We have gathered at the call of a group of planners/seekers connected to many communities and officially representing the All Native Circle Conference, the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, the North End Community Ministry, and the Centre for Christian Studies. We are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people yearning for reconciliation from the broken relationships between our cultures, committed to finding ways to create and nurture partnerships, relationships marked by respect, honesty, justice, and compassion.

We are committed to uphold a fundamental connection among all peoples, all living beings, and with the earth itself, the kind of connection reflected in Anishinaabe prayers that end by affirming “all our relations.” We are taking small steps into deeper relationship.



*Feast for Friends at Sandy-Saulteaux Centre*

The adults listen to one another cautiously, sharing stories, stumbling over assumptions, experiencing moments of understanding, bringing to the effort the awkwardness of our differences, the inevitable moments of awareness that we/you just don't get it. But we keep on working to build trust. We are travelling a sacred path.

The children are playing together, reaching across differences, risking relationship, creating anew. In the vision of Isaiah: “and a little child shall lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6)

—Ann Naylor, excerpted from *Centre for Christian Studies* blog

### **IAP deadline passes—with no extension—but hearings continue**

Midnight, September 19, was the deadline for submitting applications in the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) for sexual and serious physical abuse. So far there have been no extension discussions, although the United Church says it's willing. We are concerned some survivors, especially in institutions or on the street, have still not made a claim. Nearly 30,000 people submitted IAP and Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) claims between September 19, 2007, and August 31, 2012, many more than the 12,500 originally expected. About half have been settled. Hearings will continue into 2015.

*Over 65 project:* The parties to the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement launched a pilot project in April to expedite over 500 identified claims by those over 65 and in failing health. A report was due by the end of October.

The United Church has received nearly 2,400 IAP/ADR claims. We thank the people who represent the church so faithfully at two to three adjudicated hearings per month, mostly in B.C. and Manitoba (and only at the claimant's request). Thanks, on her retirement, to Linda Arklie in the MNWO Conference office for arranging for Manitoba representatives. Welcome to her replacement: Cheribella Abad.

### **Remembering the Children at File Hills Indian Residential School**

We don't know how many children died and were buried at the United Church's File Hills Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan, but we're working to find out. Historian Susan Roy, who researched and wrote histories of each United Church school for IJRS, has assigned her Waterloo University Aboriginal history class to search Aboriginal Affairs archives and compile a list of File Hills students.

About 90 people, including some 15 non-Aboriginal folk, attended an August 25 feast at the Okanese Learning Centre to remember and honour those children. The



*Francis Tuckanow at File Hills monument*

supporters came from the four File Hills First Nations in the Qu'appelle Valley (Okanese, Little Black Bear, Star Blanket, and Peepeekisis), as well as Muscopetung and Pasqua. Participants had also attended schools at Birtle, Brandon, Gordon's, Prince Albert, and Lebret.

The feast and ceremony, the first of a planned four, ended a week-long culture camp with speeches by Vice Chief Bobby Cameron (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), local chiefs, Elders, TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson, and Saskatchewan Conference president Darrell Reine (after Elwood Pinay presented him with some File Hills church records). Sue Bland, who staffs the Saskatchewan Conference Justice and Right Relations group, arranged the archival display.

United Church personnel met with Okanese Chief Daywalker and other File Hills leaders at the end of October to discuss further efforts toward truth sharing and reconciliation.

### **Aboriginal Peoples Television investigates “unmarked burials”**

*APTN Investigates* aired a program October 12 and 14 titled “Unmarked Graves” about residential schools students who died or went missing while at school.

APTN interviewed United Church Liaison Minister Cecile Fausak, TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson, and TRC Executive Director Kim Murray about the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials Project. It reported on student graves at the Edmonton, Red Deer, and File Hills Residential Schools operated by the United Church and its Methodist and Presbyterian forebears—and challenged assertions made by Kevin Annett.

You can view the program online at <http://aptn.ca/pages/news/category/investigates>.

### **A healing walk in the oil sands lands—and a film**

“It’s a global phenomenon,” said George Poitras of the Mikisew Cree, on the eve of the third annual Healing Walk for the oil sands. “Norway, Amazon, the U.S., B.C.—they’re all invested in us. It’s David against Goliath.”



*Healing Walkers and United Church ministers: Cecile Fausak, Bruce Jackson, and Donnalee Williams*

Indigenous peoples and allies camped at Gregoire Lake, Fort McMurray First Nation (FMFN), before the August 4 Healing Walk, hosted by Keepers of the Athabasca and organized by Eriel Deranger of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN), Melina Laboucan of the Lubicon Cree, Cleo Reece and Roland Woodward of FMFN, and staff Jesse Cardinal. The 13-kilometre walk included pipe and water ceremonies, and prayers in the four directions for the healing of the land and its inhabitants.

“Instead of worrying about oil in the pipeline, put love and help in the pipeline of life,” Fred Deranger urged the walkers. Filmmakers Pirkko and Albert Karvonen created a 30-minute documentary about the walk. You can watch it at <http://youtu.be/Ay9L6Sn28> 8.

### **Future TRC Events**

The next national TRC event is set for April 24–27, 2013, in Montreal. September 18–21, 2013, Vancouver will host a national event, followed by another in Alberta in early 2014 (date not yet finalized). There will also be a closing event in Ottawa, expected to be at the end of June 2014.

## The Power of the Circle at Golden Lake, unceded Algonquin Territory

Twenty-eight people experienced the spiritual power of the circle in September when United Church folks gathered for a workshop with First Nations neighbours at Golden Lake United Church Camp, Algonquin territory.

After circle introductions Friday evening, we watched the gripping film *Avatar*, which contrasted the acquisitive values of “empire” with those of a life connected to Mother Earth and community.

We spent the next two days sharing round the circle, with the power and focus of a talking stick. The circle process helps everyone share from the heart in equality and trust as one another’s teachers.

We also sought signs from creation to direct our personal journeys. I found a stick on the beach that spoke to me, so on Sunday, as we each chose a piece of ribbon—white, red, yellow, or black—and spoke a new commitment to our own spiritual journeys, we tied the ribbon to our neighbours. We then wrapped the ribbons around my stick to offer the power of our intentions and create a new talking stick for our Dancing the Circle of Right Relations group.

Thanks to the planning team: Aimee Bailey, Pearl Cameron, and Kim Hanewich ([www.thecircleofturtlelodge.ca](http://www.thecircleofturtlelodge.ca)), and the Rev. Debbie Roi (Pakenham Pastoral Charge), who joined me—the rep from Bay of Quinte’s Dancing the Circle of Right Relations Committee. Thanks to all who fed, housed, and funded us, and tended the sacred fire, and to each one round the circle for sharing deep wisdom and spiritual energy.  
—Bronwen Harman



The planning team: Bronwen Harman, Debbie Roi, Kim Hanewich, Aimee Bailey, Pearl Cameron

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