



**Report from the Healing and Reconciliation Programme
Ideas from Commissioners to the 137th General Assembly of
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
June 9-10, 2011**

This document reports on a period of discussion which followed a presentation at the 137th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada about how Presbyterians are participating in the work of Healing and Reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Canada. The presentation was made on Thursday, June 9, 2011. Following the presentation, commissioners to the Assembly were invited to spend time talking together about what they might do in their congregations, presbyteries, synods, AMS, WMS and youth groups to further healing and reconciliation. They also were asked to think about what support they might need to assist them in this work. Following are the responses received from commissioners. These were reported to the General Assembly on Friday, June 10, 2011. The resulting list of ideas generated is commended to everyone for consideration in the hope that it will inspire more ideas and that many such activities will be initiated.

What might Presbyterians do to support Healing and Reconciliation, and build on work already under way?

i. Education and Research

- Do research on the First Nation people in our area
- Find out who has been to residential school
- Help improve understanding by learning how to be supportive to local First Nation(s) and to work through potential for conflict
- Simply talk about it; there are still a lot of misconceptions and racial biases
- Make contact: talk to at least one person, listen
- Obtain information from church office before proceeding [if unsure], invite someone with knowledge and tools to speak to congregation
- Educate ourselves about people of other nationalities
- Be aware of racial slurs common in our everyday language

- Include works by Aboriginal writers in book club and/or library
- Speakers from Canadian Bible Society involved in translating, printing and distribution of Scriptures in Native languages can help raise awareness
- Put out a “literature table,” e.g. with residential school and TRC leaflets
- Post The PCC’s Confession
- Post government posters conveying First Nation, Inuit and Métis information, and update posters regularly
- Promote and gain awareness of national PCC program of Healing and Reconciliation
- Learn about and experience Native spirituality

ii. **Speakers**

- Invite First Nations representatives to a day-long event to tell their stories of residential schools and/or of living in a western, multi-cultural world, or other stories. Learn about their world views. Share traditional stories, demonstrate traditional handiwork, share a meal.
- Invite The Rev. Mary Fontaine of Hummingbird Ministries to speak
- Invite The Rev. Gordon Williams, of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) residential schools advisory committee, to speak
- Invite representatives from local First Nations to come to tell us about themselves; conduct a prayer circle, for example
- Hold a “mission open house,” e.g. Fort Erie Friendship Centre (Niagara) sent a speaker to a Presbytery/Presbyterial gathering and it was a good experience
- Invite local chief to speak as anniversary speaker (as one church did that reported “a wonderful experience”)

iii. **Worship**

- Use Native imagery in worship services
- Use worship materials from national church on other Sundays
- Bring in Native artist to assist with worship
- Hold John Bell/Iona-style evenings of discussion, information, worship.
- Hold a drum circle in the service
- Re. children’s stories on Sundays: tell a First Nations legend; children could do a craft such as ribbons and present to other First Nation children as a gesture of reconciliation
- Teach Huron Christmas Carol
- Pray, inc. e.g. when there are news reports about land rights issues, murders or suicides, other issues of concern involving Aboriginal peoples
- Participate in Hummingbird Circles (in Westminster Presbytery)
- Observe National Aboriginal Day Sunday (Sunday immediately preceding National Aboriginal Day on June 21st each year)

- Invite local First Nation Chief to speak at a special service, e.g. anniversary Sunday
- Invite Native leaders for dialogue and reconciliation with local churches—can include government representatives
- Preach about healing and reconciliation

iv. Fellowship and Other Events

- Have a lunch or dinner then work through KAIROS blanket exercise with a talk from a local Elder.
- Share traditional stories, demonstrate traditional handiwork, share a meal
- Invite local Native people to church dinner as part of a cultural evening
- Visit local First Nation community (e.g. to follow-up on event where local chief spoke to congregation)
- Get together at local church to share food, stories, perhaps render an apology
- Plan a presbytery event for at/with a First Nations community: reach out to leadership of First Nation and Métis groups in our area
- Hold events to share stories
- Hold healing circles
- Organize an ASANI concert (Alberta musicians)
- Partner with First Nation leaders to hold cultural experiences: art, display, music, dance, and salmon feast

v. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)

- Have started a fund to help with transportation/accommodation costs to help get First Nation members, esp. survivors of residential schools, to Halifax TRC event (Pictou Presbytery). [Such fundraising will be needed for other national events.]
- Are encouraging congregations to participate in TRC national event (Pictou Presbytery)
- Organize a TRC community event, e.g. as one group suggested specifically for Toronto for 2013
- Tell the story of the TRC to individual congregations and presbyteries
- Hold workshops on TRC for Presbyterians and local congregations

vi. Youth activities

- Organize school twinning (in town and in First Nation community)
- Support area camperships for Aboriginal young people
- E.g. St. Andrews/New Liskeard, Temiskaming holds camps in partnership with “Smoky Trails” -- crafts, music, the Words of the Creator—young people are local, many from the reserves near

Kapuskasing. St. Andrews/New Liskeard helps out with cooking, providing in the winter truck-loads of sweaters, mittens, toques, quilts, up to that area. Have a literacy programme.

- Make videos for YouTube on why healing and reconciliation matters to youth

vii. Expressions of Solidarity and Support

- Congregations (Niagara Presbytery) participating in KAIROS Banner Train: proved to be a chance for interaction with local First Nations, indigenous women's groups, and others
- In conflict situations, organize an evening of prayer, dialogue, open avenues of communication; healing circles

viii. Methods

- Ecumenical approaches with other congregations
- Start (healing and reconciliation) with ourselves
- Help meet needs, e.g.
 - First Nations people drop in for counselling and financial assistance (Calgary-Macleod)
 - Camp scholarships for Aboriginal kids
 - Provide space for young Native families in nutrition, child care, parenting
 - Partner with schools in First Nation community (e.g. Central Church, Cambridge and Split Lake, MB) to support a program developed by the First Nation educators to improve school attendance through the purchase of toys, t-shirts to be presented to students with good attendance
 - Westmount Presbyterian's "Partnership Promise" mission to Manitoba
- Prison ministry

What do Presbyterians need to assist them on the journey of Healing and Reconciliation?

A. Information

- Information on Aboriginal History—reserves in our area—from an historical society /Aboriginal resources
- Information about our history with indigenous peoples and the need for healing and reconciliation
- Information on Aboriginal respect for the land and animals [traditional teachings on creation]
- List of available resources
- More information on projects at the local or presbytery level for Aboriginal youth to participate in the camps across the country
- A small pamphlet for concrete ways a congregation could advance the work—downloadable from The PCC website

- Video or slide presentations (x2)
- Continue producing PCC print resources for information and study
- A PCC calendar: Aboriginal theme year with pictures solicited from congregations showing both traditional and contemporary activities

B. Advice

- Ideas/information on how to engage others
- Assistance learning how to engage in relationship and dialogue
- Advice on arranging TRC events
- Ideas about what to do/approaches for dealing with local conflicts involving indigenous peoples: resource people, contact for guidance, literature
- Help knowing what resources are available

C. Contacts

- Contacts with closest First Nations people: a list of who would be willing to come and speak from the communities and other good speakers on relevant topics (x4)
- Identify Aboriginal school districts which may have needs that they have identified which churches can help address

D. Other Support from Presbyterian Church Office

- A facilitator to help make invitations and make connections
- Financial assistance, staff

For further information, including on available support, resources, and funding, please contact the staff of Justice Ministries at 1-800-619-7301.