



ONE IN THE SPIRIT

Aboriginal and
Non-Aboriginal Peoples
Walking Together in Ministry
and toward Reconciliation

Healing & Reconciliation
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA



The Presbyterian Church in Canada



The Presbyterian Church in Canada, May 2010

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Non-Aboriginal Peoples
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Writers and Editors: Lori Ransom and Anne Saunders
Editorial Assistance: Stephen Allen
Design: Pat Martin
Printer: Reliable Printing

Dedication

We dedicate this resource to the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada who are striving to walk together in ministry and toward reconciliation.

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Introduction



Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians have a special relationship. This relationship dates back to the earliest days of contact between the original peoples of the land and the newcomers from Europe who began arriving over 500 years ago to trade with the first peoples and to explore and settle on the vast land base. The enormous size of the territory made it easy to conceive of peoples sharing the bounty of the land. The earliest treaties between the first peoples and the newcomers were called Peace and Friendship treaties - underlining the shared hope for mutually respectful and supportive relations between distinctive peoples who had well-defined cultures, languages, and traditions, including distinctive relationships with the Creator God.

Among the treaties were the “two-row wampum” belts - stunningly beautiful artistic expressions of relationship in purple and white seashells that symbolized how these distinctive peoples would share the land of Canada side by side, continuing to live in their own ways, respecting the gifts of each others’ distinctive identities as gifts from God. This original vision and hope for how communities would thrive together remains the vision and hope for a new relationship between the original peoples of Canada, the descendants of those first European settlers, and the many more recent immigrants to the land.

This publication about The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s work in support of healing and reconciliation in Canada is produced in conjunction with the Uniting Meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council in June 2010. The theme of the meeting, *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, from Ephesians 4, expresses the hoped for future of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

The special relationship today

The failure to achieve the hoped for peaceful and friendly sharing of the land and resources between the indigenous peoples of Canada and those who have immigrated to the country over the past 500 years is well documented. For the Christian community, that history is notable for the time in which denominations, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada, ran residential schools. These schools sought to educate indigenous children in the ways of Euro-Canadian society, supporting a government policy which originated in the late nineteenth century, of assimilation of the indigenous peoples into what was becoming the dominant Euro-Canadian society of the day. Church involvement in residential schools ended in 1969, though a few residential schools continued to operate as late as 1996.

Indigenous people spoke out, increasingly as the 20th century concluded, about how destructive the residential schools had been to their sense of identity and to the well-being of their communities. Tragically, many revealed how they had been physically and sexually abused at school. The great depth of the need for healing became apparent. It must be acknowledged that many well-meaning Christian women and men tried their best, in difficult circumstances (underfunding was chronic and training for the work was often very poor). They strived to love the children with all their hearts and to provide them with a good education, following the models of the day. Many “survivors” of residential schools acknowledge a bittersweet experience of residential school: sweet memories of kind teachers, and an education which did help them find success in a “white world,” but bitter memories of separation from family and dislocation from language, culture and tradition.

Hearing the witness of the voices from the indigenous community, churches in Canada felt called to confession and repentance. In 1994 The Presbyterian Church in Canada made a Confession to God and to the indigenous peoples about its complicity in the residential school system. In the Confession, the Church lamented how members of the indigenous community had been “deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada,” and sought forgiveness, praying for God’s guidance and promising to “seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God’s people.”

This publication provides examples of ways in which The Presbyterian Church in Canada is working towards healing and wholeness, and the restoration of peace and friendship in relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Sadly, there are now very few Presbyterian churches in Aboriginal communities: in fact, there is only one on reserve land, at Mistawasis; other Aboriginal communities of faith exist in urban areas as

well as in the Cariboo region of British Columbia, adjacent to several First Nation communities. We share stories from these ministries in this document.

In 2006, the 132nd General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada mandated a program called, *Walking Together*. Emphasizing the pursuit of local relationship building, the program envisions that by getting to know each other better, over time we will peel away the divisive myths, stereotypes, and misunderstandings and resolve the many outstanding issues in our relationship. Presbyterians across Canada have responded in creative ways to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples together and this publication includes stories of how this work is unfolding.

This is a sacred moment in our history. The Presbyterian Church in Canada is not alone in the pursuit of healing and reconciliation. Together with the major Aboriginal organizations in Canada, representatives of the over 90,000 survivors of residential schools, the other denominations which ran residential schools (the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, and 54 separate Roman Catholic entities), along with the Government of Canada, have mandated a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC began work in 2009 and over its five-year mandate will document the living history of residential schools for future generations; sponsor national and community-designed events that bring peoples together to model healing and reconciliation; and make recommendations to all parties about how Canadians may build on the momentum of this sacred time of truth-telling, healing and reconciliation to bring about a future where Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace prevails.

Lori Ransom, Healing and Reconciliation Animator, Justice Ministries

The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada

as adopted by the General Assembly, June 9th, 1994



THE HOLY SPIRIT,

speaking in and through Scripture, calls The Presbyterian Church in Canada to confession. This confession is our response to the word of God. We understand our mission and ministry in new ways in part because of the testimony of Aboriginal peoples.

1. We, the 120th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God, and aware of our own sin and shortcomings, are called to speak to the Church we love. We do this, out of new understandings of our past not out of any sense of being superior to those who have gone before us, nor out of any sense that we would have done things differently in the same context. It is with humility and in great sorrow that we come before God and our Aboriginal brothers and sisters with our confession.
2. We acknowledge that the stated policy of the Government of Canada was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominant culture, and that The Presbyterian Church in Canada co-operated in this policy. We acknowledge that the roots of the harm we have done are found in the attitudes and values of western European colonialism, and the assumption that what was not yet moulded in our image was to be discovered and exploited. As part of that policy we, with other churches, encouraged the government to ban some important spiritual practices through which Aboriginal peoples experienced the presence of the creator God. For the Church's complicity in this policy we ask forgiveness.
3. We recognize that there were many members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who, in good faith, gave unstintingly of themselves in love and compassion for their Aboriginal brothers and sisters. We acknowledge their devotion and commend them for their work. We recognize that there were some who, with prophetic insight, were aware of the damage that was being done and protested, but their efforts were thwarted. We acknowledge their insight. For the times we did not support them adequately nor hear their cries for justice, we ask forgiveness.

The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada continued

4. We confess that The Presbyterian Church in Canada presumed to know better than Aboriginal peoples what was needed for life. The Church said of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, “If they could be like us, if they could think like us, talk like us, worship like us, sing like us, and work like us, they would know God and therefore would have life abundant.” In our cultural arrogance we have been blind to the ways in which our own understanding of the Gospel has been culturally conditioned, and because of our insensitivity to Aboriginal cultures, we have demanded more of the Aboriginal people than the Gospel requires, and have thus misrepresented Jesus Christ who loves all peoples with compassionate, suffering love that all may come to God through him. For the Church’s presumption we ask forgiveness.
5. We confess that, with the encouragement and assistance of the Government of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada agreed to take the children of Aboriginal peoples from their own homes and place them in residential schools. In these schools, children were deprived of their traditional ways, which were replaced with Euro-Canadian customs that were helpful in the process of assimilation. To carry out this process, The Presbyterian Church in Canada used disciplinary practices which were foreign to Aboriginal peoples, and open to exploitation in physical and psychological punishment beyond any Christian maxim of care and discipline. In a setting of obedience and acquiescence there was opportunity for sexual abuse, and some were so abused. The effect of all this, for Aboriginal peoples, was the loss of cultural identity and the loss of a secure sense of self. For the Church’s insensitivity we ask forgiveness.
6. We regret that there are those whose lives have been deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. For our Church we ask forgiveness of God. It is our prayer that God, who is merciful, will guide us in compassionate ways towards helping them to heal.
7. We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples. What we have heard we acknowledge. It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say. With God’s guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God’s people.

A Brief History of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and Aboriginal Peoples



The first hundred years

- 1866 Presbyterian missionaries began working among Aboriginal peoples
- 1875 The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) was formed
- 1877-8 Women's Foreign Mission Society (WFMS) resolved to work among Aboriginal women, children
- 1883 The PCC opened Birtle school in Winnipeg, Manitoba
- 1890s Chief Mistawasis invited Presbyterians to form Mistawasis Memorial Church, Saskatchewan
- 1902 The PCC opened Cecilia Jeffrey school near Kenora, Ontario, for 40 children
- 1908 Over 500 Aboriginal children were attending Presbyterian schools
- 1912 Schools were enlarged to accommodate more children
- 1914 There were 21 centres of Aboriginal mission work: 8 boarding schools, 7 day schools attached to reserves, 6 reserves near boarding schools
- 1925 Formation of the United Church of Canada; The PCC continued to operate Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey schools
- 1967 Birtle school enrollment was 164 with a staff of 20 including 5 teachers; Cecilia Jeffrey's enrollment was 150 with a staff of 24 including 7 teachers
- 1960, 1962, 1969 The PCC General Assemblies began studying, acknowledging, and considering actions to address injustices done to the "Canadian Indian"
- 1961 The PCC opened in Ontario the Kenora Fellowship Centre or Anamiewigummig
- 1962 Flora House opened in Winnipeg, Manitoba, expanding six years later to include Anishinabe Fellowship Centre
- 1969 The PCC's remaining responsibilities for the Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey schools were transferred to the Government of Canada
- 1975, 1976 Reports to General Assemblies advocated educating non-Aboriginal members and seeking justice for "Native Canadians"
- 1976 Cecilia Jeffrey residence closed
- 1979 Board of World Missions began a self-assessment of its Aboriginal work
- 1986-7 Board of World Missions conducted major study of Aboriginal peoples and The PCC
- 1989 Formation of Native Ministries

- 1976-1988 The PCC was a member of ecumenical Project North, an ecumenical coalition established in 1975 to support Aboriginal peoples' quest for justice
- 1980 Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry (SNCM) began at first in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, moving to Saskatoon in 1986
- 1987 The PCC with other church leaders signed *A New Covenant: Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada*
- 1988 Project North expanded its mandate and changed its name to Aboriginal Rights Coalition

The last two decades

- 1992 Recommendation to General Assembly that The PCC adopt a confession to God and Aboriginal peoples
- 1994 The PCC adopted and presented *The Confession of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* to Aboriginal peoples
- 1996 Publication of *The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*
- 1996 Closure of last Canadian residential school for Aboriginal children
- 2000 Aboriginal Rights Coalition along with nine other ecumenical coalitions form KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives of which The PCC is a member
- 2004 The PCC opened the Edmonton Urban Native Ministries (EUNM)
- 2005 Hummingbird Ministries (HM) began in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia
- 2006 The PCC appoints a Healing and Reconciliation Program Animator and launches *Walking Together* initiative
- 2006 Government of Canada approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, including a Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- 2007 The PCC's work in Winnipeg, Manitoba, expanded to include Anishinabe Place of Hope or Endaayang as part of Winnipeg Inner City Missions (WICM)
- 2007 The PCC with other church leaders signed "Working Ecumenically and Collaboratively with Aboriginal Peoples: Statement Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of *A New Covenant*."
- 2008 The PCC participates in the Remembering the Children Aboriginal and Church leaders' tour supporting healing and reconciliation in preparation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- 2008 Government of Canada issues *Statement of Apology - to former students of Indian Residential Schools*
- 2009 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) appointed
- 2010 The PCC participates in first national TRC event in Winnipeg

Native Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada



The Presbyterian Church in Canada supports seven Native Ministries. Each one is unique for its history, current situation and people. But all of them share a common commitment to a mutual sharing of God's love and abundance and justice for all Creation. As Native ministries staff, volunteers and community members come together - to talk, eat, play, learn, dance, sing, worship - the dividing lines between giver and receiver fade. The one offering services, receives. The one coming to receive, gives.

“WHOEVER RECEIVES ONE
WHOM I SEND RECEIVES ME;
AND WHOEVER RECEIVES ME
RECEIVES HIM WHO SENT ME.”

JOHN 13:20

May you glimpse that experience of being in God's presence in the stories that follow.



Map of Native Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Legend

(KFC) Anamiewigummig or Kenora Fellowship
Centre

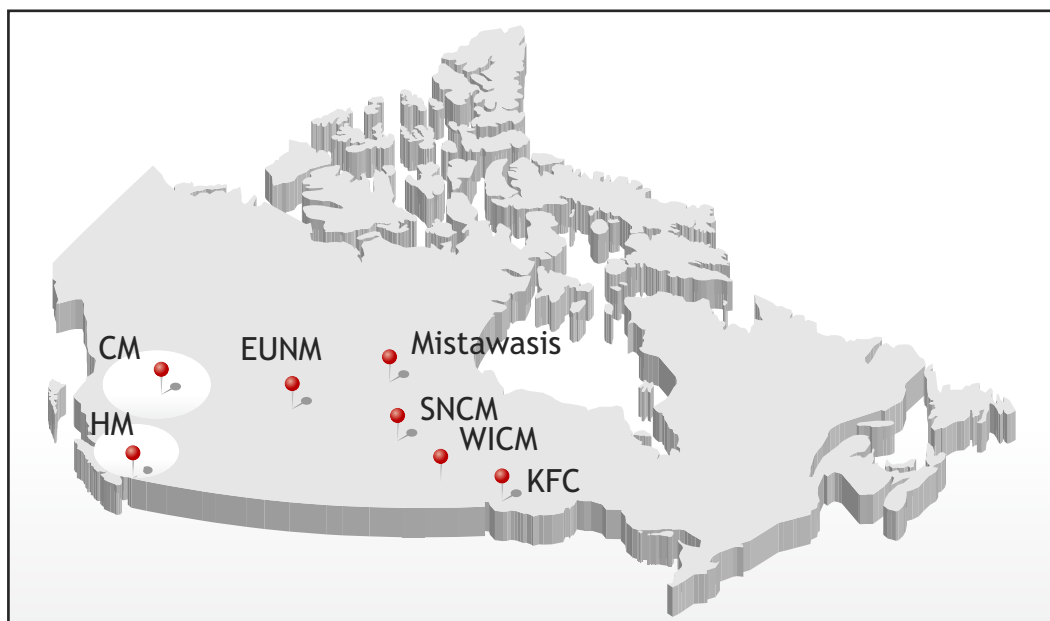
(CM) Cariboo Ministry

(EUNM) Edmonton Urban Native Ministries

(HM) Hummingbird Ministries
Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian
Church

(SNCM) Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry

(WICM) Winnipeg Inner City Missions (WICM)



Native Ministries are in rural communities

"O LORD, HOW MANIFOLD ARE YOUR WORKS!
IN WISDOM YOU HAVE MADE THEM ALL:
THE EARTH IS FULL OF YOUR CREATURES."

PSALMS 104:24

One cannot be in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of British Columbia - land of big valleys and mountains, rivers and lakes - without being awestruck by the Creator. And in a different way, the endless, rolling eastern plains and big skies of Saskatchewan have the same effect. Imagine when one's history and survival are intertwined with such natural surroundings! So it is with the people touched by Native Ministries in rural Canada.



Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church, Saskatchewan

The Mistawasis First Nation people honour the memory of Chief Mistawasis whom they credit for their survival. With the buffalo disappearing in the 1860s, the traditional hunting way of life no longer met their needs. A remarkable leader of the plains Cree, Chief Mistawasis signed Treaty 6 to ensure a future for his people in changing times: “We have to find a new way to feed our people.”

Located near the Chief’s gravesite, Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church with its community continues to find new ways to serve the Mistawasis people. In the past the community utilized its land base for agriculture, fishing, hunting, fur trapping, silviculture, logging, herbs and craft materials. Today, with 50% of the reserve’s 2100 residents under the age of 25, young people need opportunities to ensure their future. In cooperation with the Mistawasis First Nation council, there are plans to launch a Youth Consultative Process - a program of encouragement and empowerment of youth. With many Mistawasis members relocating to the city of Prince Albert (where 34% of the population are Aboriginal people) to pursue post-secondary education and to find employment or housing, dialogue has begun with St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church in Prince Albert to explore establishing an urban ministry. At the same time the Mistawasis ministry continues holding regular worship, Vacation Bible School, and a healing circle for young single mothers.

*Opened in the 1890’s,
Mistawasis
Memorial Church
is located in central
Saskatchewan,
about 70 km west of
Prince Albert and
120 km north of
Saskatoon.*

*It covers an area of
125 sq. km. It is located
on a reserve that is named
after Chief Mistawasis,
who first extended the
invitation to The
Presbyterian Church in
Canada to establish
worship on
the reserve.*

Cariboo Ministry (CM), British Columbia



The Cariboo Ministry covers an area of 80,000 square miles in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of British Columbia. In ministering to people who live beyond the reach of the traditional church, ministers travel great distances in remote rural areas, always seeking to live and work among the people of these territories in a way that is Christ-centred, biblically-based, rooted in prayer, culturally honouring and socially transforming.

With one of the largest children's ministries among Presbyterian churches in British Columbia, the Cariboo Ministry (CM) is full of the laughter and tears, singing and crying, and the ups and downs of childhood and parenting! Much work is being done with children of the Ndazkoh First Nation. A Bible class takes place weekly on the Ndazkoh reserve, offering games, healthy snacks, crafts, Bible stories, praise songs and prayer in a way that also celebrates and honours the children's Carrier culture. The CM also offers a Vacation Bible School and a Talking Circle for teen girls.

The Nazko and Area Dakelh Outreach (NADO) is part of this ministry, reaching out to the people of the Southern Carrier territories of Ndazkoh, Lhoosk'uz and Lhatako.

NADO plans to expand the present ministry to focus on the healing and equipping of local people. "We believe," writes the Rev. Shannon Bell, "God is leading us to develop a larger team which will provide opportunities for healing from past abuse and addictions without removing people from their community. The vision is to offer discipleship and training for local people to become leaders in the body of Christ and equipped for ministry themselves."

In the Ndazkoh Valley house church, the Rev. Shannon Bell says, "We gather weekly for worship using a mix of styles and instruments - some contemporary (drums, guitars, piano) and some traditional First Nations (hand and pow wow drums, rattles, flute). We sing and chant together our praises to the Creator God. Together we study the Bible to hear God's word for us in our lives and discuss it. We share baptism, affirmation of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In prayer we honour each person in the circle by using a beaded prayer stick which is passed between us."

The circle

An Aboriginal Elder described the circle's significance in this way:

"The Circle has healing power.

In the Circle we are all equal.

When in the Circle, no one is in front of you.

No one is behind you.

No one is above you.

No one is below you.

The sacred Circle is designed to create unity."

Native Ministries are in urban communities

"MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF
PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS."

ISAIAH 56:7C

For decades some of Canada's Aboriginal people have lived off-reserve seeking the advantages of the city. Life in Canadian cities can be exciting but bewildering, full of opportunities but marginalizing, crowded but lonely and alienating, offering new experiences but also unexpected losses and disparagement. Native ministries in urban centres provide "a safe home away from home" for Aboriginal people coping with the harsh realities of past history and current urban life.

Anamiewigummig or Kenora Fellowship Centre (KFC), Ontario

Kenora, Ontario, is a city with a population of 64,500 where 16% are Aboriginal people. Anamiewigummig, meaning "house of prayer" in Ojibway, opened in 1961 in Kenora to be a place of refuge and sanctuary for those marginalized by poverty and addictions in the Kenora area of northern Ontario. Its staff and volunteers offer a ministry of hospitality and healing.

Anamiewigummig operates a drop-in centre and provides medical, housing, legal and detoxification in coordination with other community agencies. It offers homeless people a 24 hour shelter during the winter as well as a year-round soup kitchen program and other services as needs become apparent. Sunday worship and weekly Bible study are regular events.

"Many of our operations," reports a staff member, "are facilitated by the work of about 50 volunteers, some of whom are former visitors themselves who have experienced difficulties coping with addictions and poverty. These volunteers can be found serving beverages and meals, sweeping the floor or sitting down with others to do a jig-saw puzzle or play cribbage. It is this interaction between caring individuals and those beset by life's challenges that creates opportunities for growth and empowerment."

The values of sharing mutual respect, equity and compassion are present everywhere at Anamiewigummig. As one volunteer remembers, "The place helped me make a better life. It was a hard journey, but now I don't drink. I try to help those who are still on the streets because I remember how it was."

"The centre is a meeting place, a place of camaraderie," said one Anamiewigummig staff. "Many regard it as home, a secure place where there is assurance of personal worth and self-confidence is rebuilt."

"This is a place where people come to feel good, and they leave feeling better," said a community member.

Edmonton Urban Native Ministries (EUNM), Alberta

Striving to share God's love in many practical ways, ENUM "has become a place of belonging," reports one staff member, "providing a safe environment where no one harbours judgment and everyone offers hope and encouragement" to all ages and to people dealing with a range of challenges.

The number of Aboriginal residents in Edmonton, Alberta, has risen to 52,000 in recent years, comprising over 5% of the city's population. In 2004 with support from Canada Ministries and local congregations, the Presbyteries of Edmonton-Lakeland and Western Han Ca established Edmonton Urban Native Ministries (EUNM) to provide outreach to Edmonton's Aboriginal population. In the intervening six years it has grown to meet the increased demand for services.

EUNM staff and volunteers offer hope and encouragement to the community through programs like its drop-in centre, meals, food bank, clothing bank, computers, phone service, and administrative assistance. Its support to those on recovery and spiritual journeys includes morning devotions where all can share in a time of worship and prayer. Along with practical supports, healing initiatives are promoted through arts, crafts, music, recreation, and language programs (Cree).

This ministry particularly reaches out to children and youth by providing Vacation Bible School, soccer camp, and Tae Kwon Do lessons. These programs encourage the development of leadership skills and role modeling to enable young people to become leaders in their communities.

With the implementation of the program "Walking Together, Moving Forward," ENUM staff and volunteers with community Aboriginal leaders are creating opportunities, identifying strengths and equipping Aboriginal people for the future.



Winnipeg Inner City Missions (WICM), Manitoba

"We strive to help provide a safe, nurturing and peaceful atmosphere," says one staff member. "In such surroundings people begin to achieve their potential and find their way to having adequate food, clothing and a safe place to live. While being listened to and understood, they achieve employment and develop physical, emotional, spiritual and social well-being."

Winnipeg Inner City Missions (WICM) has been an integral part of the neighbourhoods of Winnipeg, Manitoba, for 40 years. It is committed to serving Aboriginal individuals and families and others living in the inner city of Winnipeg. Today Winnipeg's population is approximately 745,000, 10% being Aboriginal people.

WICM's three locations include Flora House in the north end of the city. Opened in 1962, Flora House offers programs primarily for children and teens, but does have some family programs. In creating a safe place in the community, it nurtures and supports the special needs of children and youth. It

offers an after-school program, a "learn and play" program for caregivers with young children, a summer camp, and a computer training program for older youth. It also offers drop-in services for adults, including free phone and internet access.

Six years later Anishinabe Fellowship Centre opened nearby and offers Alcoholics Anonymous meetings three times a week and a clothing bank. Anishinabe Place of Hope or Endaayang (meaning "Our Place") opened in 2007 to provide housing for displaced Aboriginal people committed to gaining the practical and emotional skills needed for successful independent urban living.

Dedicated staff and volunteers at these three locations, minister to the four aspects of well being: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. They offer hope and opportunity for children, youth and adults in complex social situations and living with poverty.

Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry (SNCM), Saskatchewan

"All people are welcome and it doesn't matter what background they have or what nation they belong to or what status they have in society," wrote Rev. Folster. "This place is their place. We want to show them the love of Christ. We feed them and show them that the church cares about them. It is a healing journey that we all need to walk together."

Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry began as a house ministry in 1980 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. A year later it moved to Saskatoon and in 1986 it began sharing worship space with the Circle West Presbyterian Church. Under the leadership of the Rev. Stewart Folster, the ministry changed its name in the 1990s to Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry.

Located in the inner city of Saskatoon, SNCM is eight blocks from downtown where the majority of Saskatoon's 21,500 Aboriginal people live. They make up 9% of the city's population. The programs include a sandwich Monday program supported by the Presbyterian churches in the city, the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan and by their twinning partner, St. Andrew & St. Paul Presbyterian Church in Montreal, Quebec. There is also a mission outreach program where more sandwiches are served on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday - so 100-200 street people drop in these days to enjoy sandwiches, coffee, juice, and donuts. Friday is soup day.

On Monday evenings, SNCM offers a healing circle led by the traditional Native Elders of Saskatoon. The Elders give their teachings from the Medicine Wheel and they share their stories and their wisdom. It is followed by serious and emotional sharing of the people who want to take part in such a healing program. Rev. Folster and the Native Elders offer spiritual counseling and prayer.

"Corine serves in the Healing Circle as the Elder," reports Rev. Folster. "Everyone respects her and turns to her for counseling and guidance. She is traditional and a faithful Christian with many gifts to offer to our work - she is fluent in Plains Cree, she sings drum songs and dances pow wow. Rev. Foster continues, "We are also blessed to have Fred, an Inuit, leading our healing circle, sharing his wisdom and experiences with us. He also sings drum songs and prays in his Inuit language. So, we have many gifts and talents to draw from in our mission work. Corine also bakes bannock to die for! Megwetch [(thank-you)]."

Sunday is worship day with fellowship time beginning at 2 pm. More food is served after worship. Mrs. Terry Folster and women from the Native Circle introduced the circle worship. The traditional smudging ceremony and other elements of Native spirituality have been incorporated into the worship and the ministry.

Native Ministries are in new regional relationships

BEHOLD, I AM DOING A NEW THING!
NOW IT SPRINGS UP; DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT?
I AM MAKING A WAY IN THE DESERT
AND STREAMS IN THE WASTELAND.

ISAIAH 43:19

The 1994 Confession of The Presbyterian Church in Canada ended saying, “With God’s guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God’s people.” Native Ministries seek to enable new relationships between Aboriginal people and the Church by supporting initiatives that develop from the unique communities and people of a region.

Hummingbird Ministries (HM), British Columbia

Hummingbird Ministries envisions establishing various types of Circle ministries to restore hope, freedom and justice for Aboriginal healing socially, politically and spiritually in the southern regions of British Columbia (BC). HM began in 2005 at the Tsawwassen First Nation in Delta. At first a program of Vancouver’s Central Presbyterian Church, HM became a ministry of the Presbytery of Westminster in 2007. Mary Fontaine was ordained and officially recognized as Director in 2008. Today HM includes working with the Youth Services Agency in Richmond and Circle ministries at the Sechelt First Nation (on the Sunshine Coast) and the Kikino Native Housing complex (in Surrey) all in BC’s Lower Mainland - the area surrounding Vancouver that includes the traditional territories of many First Nations people.

But HM includes more than Circle ministries. Rev. Fontaine conducts funeral and wake services, healing and prayer services, weddings and pastoral care in homes and local hospitals. Staff and volunteers work with the communities in the Aboriginal Leadership in

“The journey with Hummingbird Ministries has been healing and strengthening for our family and our community.”

Ruth in Tsawwassen

“We’re so glad when our parents started hosting the Circles because the circles brought our family closer together and always make me feel good.”

Joyce in Sechelt

“Ever since we started having the Circles here, I gained self-confidence and things started to change for me in my personal life.”

Pam in Tsawwassen

Ministry program, the Youth Cultural Recovery project, and the Peace through the Arts project. In Richmond, HM has supported the annual Aboriginal Day celebration and the City of Richmond's Advisory Committee working with its approximately 2,000 Aboriginal citizens. Through the Wai Wah Sports & Recreation Society of Richmond, HM sponsored Aboriginal athletes in the 2008 North American Indigenous Games.

HM seeks a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Church, inviting the Church and non-Aboriginal people into this relationship by

- being with First Nations as friends and neighbours
- honouring First Nations' leadership
- inviting First Nations into worship services singing in their own languages and using their drums
- participating in Circle gatherings and supporting HM's work
- listening and sharing in the lives of First Nations through reports and prayer requests.
- honouring the sacredness of the Circle in both ministry and administration
- honouring contextual language development that allows Indigenous spiritual freedom



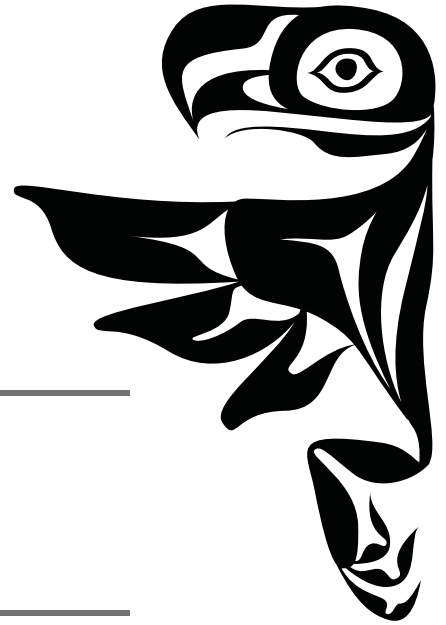
Rev. Mary Fountaine (Hummingbird Ministries) and Leslee Picton (Pow Wow Dance Choreographer)

The tradition of talking circles

Often when Aboriginal people want to discuss an important subject with three or more people, they form a circle. Then they can see each other when they speak, giving equal importance to all in the circle. "From the time the first person speaks," says Elder Audrey Bone, "it is the person to their left that speaks next, and continues around the circle. If there is more to be said once a person's turn has passed, the person must wait until their turn comes again around the circle. It is not unusual to have three or four "rounds" before everybody has finished talking. And this takes time!"

A traditional talking circle is based on respect, sharing, interdependence and harmony. An Elder (or other leader) begins the conversation by holding a sacred eagle feather (or talking stick or stone) in the left hand (the side closest to the heart) and offering thoughts on the question at hand. The object is passed around the circle to allow everyone an opportunity to speak. If decisions are necessary, they are reached by consensus. Talking circles are considered to be sacred, confidential, and safe. Anything said in the circle is not repeated outside the circle.

Healing and Reconciliation ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada



JESUS ANSWERED, "YOU SHALL
LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
MATTHEW 22:39

At the heart of the Healing and Reconciliation Ministries is the belief that society will be transformed for the better when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people develop a new understanding of each other and build a new relationship founded on mutual respect and love of neighbour. The approach is simple: local church members and groups are encouraged to reach out and get to know their Aboriginal neighbours. The following are some examples of how some Presbyterians across Canada are building new communities with Aboriginal people through congregational, presbytery and synod initiatives.

Synods can help congregational leaders get to know their neighbours

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest and congregations and Aboriginal people of the region Dianne Ollerenshaw, Director of Regional Ministries in the Synod of Alberta and the Northwest, brought the workshop series, "Returning to the Spirit," to urban centres in the synod, and organized participation in the event by members of the Synod and the Aboriginal community. This three-part training program consists of three five-day intensive workshops. Part I is with Aboriginal peoples only. Part II is with clergy, religious communities and non-Aboriginal individuals. Part III brings both groups together for communication and completion. "Through participation in these workshops, leaders and teams are trained," reported Marlene Peck, lay missionary, Chetwynd Shared Ministry, Peace River Presbytery. "It is a unique model in which various groups of people are taught ways to heal and reconcile themselves in order to be able to come together for healing and reconciliation with each other."

Presbyteries can help congregations get to know their neighbours

Presbytery of Grey-Bruce-Maitland and the Saugeen First Nations, Ontario

The Rev. Susan Samuel, minister of Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine, Ontario, writes, “How does one begin to connect with the Aboriginal people of Canada? It’s not as difficult as you might think!” In 2007 the Presbytery Mission Committee gathered information about the summer events of their Aboriginal neighbours. Inviting bulletin inserts, prepared with information about the annual pow wow and two storytelling events, were sent to each congregation in the presbytery. Elder Priscilla Yellowhead Tobey, an Ojibway Elder, was the storyteller. “Those who attended the storytelling events reported that the dinner was exceptional!” writes Rev. Samuel. “It included fresh whitefish, lightly coated and cooked over an open fire, served with potatoes sautéed with wild leeks, corn on the cob, oven-baked bannock, a dessert made of in-season fruit, and a traditional cedar tea flavoured with a touch of wild ginger syrup.”

Presbytery of Kamloops and First Nations people in the Cariboo and Okanagan, British Columbia

The Presbytery of Kamloops in British Columbia (BC) organized the Cheryl Bear tour of the Cariboo and Okanagan, enabling BC First Nations singer and storyteller Cheryl Bear and her musicians to do a two-week tour. They visited Quesnel, Ndazkoh, Lhoosk’uz village, Prince George, Lac la Hache, Kamloops, Pentiction and participated in worship services, workshops, Bible classes, concerts, high school presentations, and many community meals. The following comments illustrate the impact of this tour:

“[At Quesnel High School] they gave an invitation for First Nations youth to join with their drum and dance teams who go overseas regularly. Both schools provided great opportunities to interact with students afterwards.”

“Because Cheryl had been to so many other venues through the week, word had spread and we packed the [Quesnel-Tillicum Friendship] Centre for this concert. It was a wonderful mix of Native and non-Native people.”

“[St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Armstrong] was packed including extra seating...It was a powerful evening of stories, dance and song. We were able to share about The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Confession and later several people requested copies of it. Some people had their eyes opened to the issues of residential schools in a totally new way.”

Aboriginal population by province

According to the 2006 Canadian Census, the approximate number of Aboriginal peoples in each province/territory (in decreasing order) is:

Ontario	242,500
British Columbia	196,100
Alberta	188,400
Manitoba	175,400
Saskatchewan	141,900
Quebec	108,400
Nunavut	24,900
Nova Scotia	24,200
Newfoundland & Labrador	23,500
Northwest Territories	20,600
New Brunswick	17,700
Yukon	7,600
Prince Edward Island	1,700

See 2006 Census Highlights: Factsheet 9 at www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi06-9.html

Congregations can initiate getting to know their neighbours

Members of St. Andrew's, Knox and St. Giles Presbyterian Churches, Ottawa, Ontario, congregations and Inuit Elders

Bob Ferris and Sheila Selley of St. Andrew's, Jim Neelin of Knox and Carole Fletcher of St. Giles organized and coordinated to bring about the Inuit Residential School Workshop with Inuit Elders.

Early one Saturday morning about 40 people from St. Andrew's, Knox and St. Giles churches gathered by the Library and Archives Canada (LAC). They formed a circle around Elder Reepa Evic-Carleton and her "Quillig" or soapstone lamp. Reepa lit the lamp and, as the flames flickered, spoke movingly about the ongoing impact of the residential school system on the life of her family. She concluded with prayer in the Inuktitut language. After this ceremony, the group moved indoors where they sat in a circle listening as Elders Peter and Joe, classmates at Chesterfield Inlet School, spoke about their life experiences and about the healing power of apology and confession.

Discussion continued as part of the visit to the LAC exhibit "We were so far away." Elders asked their listeners to get out the message about the history and lasting impact of residential schools. "It was a moving and enlightening morning for all," wrote Doug and Sheila Selley, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, Ontario.

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Bramalea, and the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Ontario

The Sunday School of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church set out to learn about their Aboriginal neighbours while holding fund raising events to contribute to the needs identified by Toronto's Native Canadian Centre. The culminating event was the Children's Day worship

Where are our Aboriginal neighbours?

- In 2006, Aboriginal peoples (i.e. First Nations, Inuit and Métis) accounted for 3.8% of the total population of Canada, surpassing the one-million mark, reaching 1,172,790.
- In 2006, over half (53.5%) of Canada's Aboriginal population lived in three provinces: Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta.
- Ontario, the most populous province, is also the province with the largest Aboriginal population. One in five of Canada's Aboriginal peoples (21%) lived in Ontario in 2006.
- Between 2001 and 2006, Ontario's Aboriginal population grew faster than the non-Aboriginal population, increasing 28.3%, nearly five times faster than the 6.2% rate of growth for the non-Aboriginal population.
- About one in 10 Aboriginal people (26,575) in Ontario lived in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), representing 0.5% of the total population of the CMA.
- British Columbia had the second-largest Aboriginal population (17% of Canada), followed by Alberta (16%).
- The fastest increase in the last five years occurred east of Manitoba. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of people identifying themselves as Aboriginal increased 42% in Nova Scotia, 39.4% in Quebec, 28.6% in PEI, 28.3% in Ontario, and 24.9% in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census:
Aboriginal Peoples

www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/rt-td/ap-pa-eng.cfm

service on National Aboriginal Day Sunday. Guest Cindilee Ecker-Flagg from the Centre was presented with a cheque as well as gifts and prayers to take back to the Centre from a much more knowledgeable congregation.

“Celebrating Aboriginal Day with the congregation of St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church was a heartfelt experience,” said Cindilee Ecker-Flagg. “To see the teaching medicine wheels around the worship area, which indicated the many hours of work from the community, was humbling.”

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Grenfell, and the Sakimay First Nations, Saskatchewan

The Creation of Friendship Project of Trinity Presbyterian Church includes two activities. The Tae Kwon Do Club was organized to reach out to Aboriginal children and youth in the Sakimay First Nations, which is located 10 km north of Grenfell and the church. Held every Monday at the reserve’s gym complex, about 30 students of all ages (children, youth and adults) attend. Participants develop respect for others and self-discipline. Gradually friendships have formed between Aboriginal people and the eight church volunteers and the instructor, Rev. Jonathan Kwon, the church’s minister.

The Mosaic Mission Team consists of members from Trinity Presbyterian Church and Peace Lutheran Church, both in Grenfell. The team’s purpose is to build better relationships between Aboriginal people and church members and learn about each other. Church members visit Sakimay First Nations people at special times in the Christian calendar and Sakimay First Nations hosts them at various annual cultural events. They also participate in Grenfell High School youth night events.

“The Creation of Friendship Project gives us all opportunity to think about building bridges between the two different communities,” wrote Rev. Kwon.





St. Paul's Presbyterian Church and Riverside Community School, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

The event "Telling Founding Stories" was organized by St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Prince Albert and Riverside Community School. Three hundred and fifty children (90% of Aboriginal descent) from grades one to eight gathered initially in the gym and then in smaller groups in the library to hear Elders Philip Ledoux and Stewart Amyotte and the Rev. Sandy Scott tell stories about some of the first people who had built their community

During the event participants learned that when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities lived side-by-side with respect, both communities have benefited. Participants realized that some of their founding peoples had even dreamt of building a community where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples could live together in a mutually supportive way. "At this event we began talking about, and seeing ways, we can bridge two worlds and live together with respect and care," said Rev. Sandy Scott.

The event ended in the school gym with a supper cooked by the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association and hosted by St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, concluding with a celebration and round dance. John Schultz, the school principal commented, "There was a strong feeling of community and belonging at the event."

Duff's Presbyterian Church, Puslinch, Ontario with surrounding townships and Webequie First Nation in Northern Ontario

Organized by the North-South Partnership for Children (Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win), nine people from Kitchener, Guelph and Puslinch Townships - including members of Duff's Presbyterian Church, Puslinch - traveled to the remote fly in community of Webequie First Nation. The purpose of the trip was to begin to develop a relationship between a First Nation community in the remote north and volunteers in the south.

Webequie is a traditional Ojibway First Nation located in northwestern Ontario in Nishnawbe-Aski territory, 540 kilometers north of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Accessible only by air, the current population is approximately 700; 66% are under the age of 35.

During the week the community members and visitors enjoyed community meals, worked together to build nine landings and steps (designed by a local Webequie carpenter) and one 60 foot wheel chair ramp (for Elders in the community who were having difficulty accessing their homes), and a fishing trip on the Winisk River (pickerel and northern pike were caught). "Cultures were shared and relationship building began," said one participant.

How will

you and your

congregation,

presbytery,

synod

get to know your



Aboriginal neighbours?

For more information about seed funding for local initiatives
(like those described above) that build bridges between peoples, contact

Lori Ransom, Healing and Reconciliation Animator,
lransom@presbyterian.ca, 1-800-619-7301 or 1-416-441-1111, ext.283.

Additional Resources



A New Covenant: Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-government in Canada, A Pastoral Statement by the Leaders of the Christian Churches on Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution, originally signed February 5, 1987, and reaffirmed March 9, 2007. Copies available from the Ed Bianchi, Indigenous Rights Program Coordinator, KAIROS, 211-211 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H5, 613.235.9956; ebianchi@kairoscanada.org; www.kairoscanada.org

Miller, J.R., *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3rd Edition, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2000

Miller, J.R., *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2000

Milloy, John S., *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System*, The University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 1999

Ralston Saul, John, *A Fair Country: Telling truths about Canada*, Viking Canada, Toronto, 2008

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/rrc-eng.asp

Websites

Aboriginal Canada Portal: www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/index.html

Aboriginal Healing Foundation: www.ahf.ca

Assembly of First Nations: www.afn.ca

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Government of Canada:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami: www.itk.ca

KAIROS: Indigenous Rights Program: www.kairoscanada.org/e/aboriginal

Legacy of Hope Foundation: www.legacyofhope.ca/Home.aspx

Remembering the Children: Aboriginal and Church Leaders' Tour: www.rememberingthechildren.ca

The Presbyterian Church in Canada about Healing and Reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples:
www.presbyterian.ca/ministry/justice/healing

The Presbyterian Church in Canada about Native Ministries:
www.presbyterian.ca/ministry/canada/nativeministries

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: www.trc-cvr.ca

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:
www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html