



RETURNING TO SPIRIT Residential School Healing & Reconciliation Program

News update December 18, 2007



Greetings All!

Today marks the **first birthday of RTS Inc.** It has been a year of challenges, of opportunities, of transformation, and of creation in moving forward with our vision! Here are some of the highlights from the past year....

- With start-up funding from the CCCB, Settlement Corp and Counselling Foundation of Canada, the new non-profit organization, **Returning to Spirit – Residential School Reconciliation Inc. (RTS Inc)**, was incorporated with a vision to build a foundation to support the delivery of Returning to Spirit Workshops nationally. Towards this end a Board of Directors (Cecilia Opekokew; Dave Fortin, Gary Gordon, Rita Bisson, Veronica Dunne) were selected, along with an Executive Director – Admin (Anne Taylor) and Executive Director–Training (Marc Pizandawac). Anne and Marc have made a 3 year commitment to RTS and will provide leadership in the realization of our collective vision. An **alignment/business plan** was created as a working document to guide overall development for RTS Inc.
- The annual **Trainer Development Program (TDP)** held in Morley, Alberta, in January 07, attended by 42 individuals from First Nations, religious and non-First Nations communities across Canada. They came from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Nunavut. In 2008, 40 people will meet again in Morley, gathering from BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, Yukon, NWT – **Training teams will be certified** to begin to deliver RTS workshops -
- In July, twenty-six members of the Trainer Body met in Winnipeg for a three-day **business gathering** led by Marc. The main purpose of the gathering was to establish the criteria for certification and determine areas of development for moving forward with the development of the organization. This has been the work plan to date for Anne and the Board.
- **Trainer development** has been our priority in 2007. We have taken huge strides in moving closer to realizing our intention. That is to have certified teams ready to deliver workshop independently in the New Year. This will mean we can begin to meet the current demand for RTS workshops across Canada. Towards this goal,
*Trainers were chosen to form a **Core Training Group** and participated in intensive training sessions (Aug - Nov). Profound development and transformation has occurred for the group, individually and as a team. Clarity has been developed into what it takes to deliver this work and how much we are all called to **play the big game!!** Many are stepping up to do this and will create leadership in our transition to team delivery of RTS. The core training group are:
 - *John Peter Flett, Ann Thomson, Dave Fortin, Lea Boutin, Mike Flett, Francois Paradis, Elvier Brunel, Buma Bushie, Kurt Stang, Lisa Raven, Robyn Hall, Cecilia Opekokew, Dennis Chartrand, Sharon Klyne – Joanne Martell, Val Taylor and Olive Halpin attended as well.*
- In mid-November, Part I and a Part II were held simultaneously at the Aulneau Renewal Center in Winnipeg, MB hosted by the Missionary Oblates Sisters.

- The workshops were delivered by Core Group trainers to participants who had already taken the 5-day program. Two main objectives were realized –for participants, it was an opportunity to further understand and integrate the RTS principles and then to offer feedback to the team. For the presenters, it was an opportunity to practice delivering the work and to receive feedback, under the guidance and supervision of Master Trainer Marc Pizandawac. The experience was well appreciated by and beneficial to all concerned.
- In total there were **205 participants** for the 5-day workshops in 2007 – 142 First Nations, mostly from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and 63 “Church” from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon. There were 33 + Trainers involved for Part 1 & 2 workshops.
- Workshops continue to be requested from across the country –

Looking forward....

- **Teams** for Part 1 & 2 workshops will be delivering **independently**
- **Marc** is designing and developing an **Empowerment Series** which will be offered, in the community, by RTS Trainers. The series of 10 modules will be a follow-up to the five-day RTS workshop. The Series will be **introduced** at Annual TDP in Jan 2008 and community pilots will be scheduled starting thereafter...
- A **community based** office will be opened in Hollow Water and Winnipeg – demonstrating the developing partnership which will be a pilot for other communities across the country.
- It takes a **dedicated group of individuals** to realize any vision - Sharon Klyne, Lisa Raven, Olive Halpin, Elvier Brunel, Val Taylor, Dianna Bird and Anne Taylor will be involved in implementing the organizational goals for 2008!!
- An Ecumenical workshop (Part 2) will be held in March in Edmonton, AB,
- **Part 1 & 2 workshops** are planned for Saskatoon, SK: Hollow Water, St Theresa Point, Winnipeg, MB: St Albert. AB; Teslin, Yukon; Victoria, Prince George, BC. Workshops in Ontario, Quebec, NWT, and Maritimes will also be scheduled.
- **Three (3) Reconciliations** are planned in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and BC before the summer 2008
- **Delivery** of RTS workshops in **French** is also on the horizon... as well as translation into Cree and other languages!
- **Board membership** will be increased by 3 directors in 2008!
- **Workshops** for youth, community Reconciliation and other applications will be developed in the coming year....

As you can see, 2007 has been of year of ***moving forward*** for ***Returning to Spirit*** and ***you*** have all been part in making this happen. 2008 will be **full** of further possibilities and **developments!** Looking forward to a year full of **transformation and creation!!!**

Thank You! Tinhiki! Meegwich!! Merci!!



**HAVE A SPIRIT-FULL CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

The creation of this newsletter was an RTS team effort – Special Thanks to ALL involved!!