



# RETURNING TO SPIRIT

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1    FEBRUARY 24, 2010

## FUND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

We continue to receive verbal assurances that our core funding will become unstuck in the near future.

As of the writing of this newsletter, we have not received formal confirmation of this good news. We remain committed to identifying and developing funding sources to ensure the important work of Returning to Spirit continues as long as needed.

Our Fund Development Team has expanded to include nine members who

will be important stewards in the coming years:

Norman Opekokew (SK)—  
Chair & Board representative

Jacques Lafrance (MB)—  
Special Event Coordinator

Ruth Devries (NU)—  
Volunteer & Special Event Coordinator

Francois Paradis (MB)—  
Volunteer Coordinator

Gigi Jakobs (AB)—  
Communications & Grants/  
Proposals Coordinator

Robyn Hall (MB)—  
Corporate Sponsorship

Barb Atleo (BC)—  
Government Grants

Darlene Dick (BC)—  
Government Grants

Anthony Niiganii (MB)—  
Fund Development Coordination

Anne Taylor (AB)—  
Executive Director

We will keep you posted on developments as they arise! We are committed to moving forward powerfully!

## COMING UP!

April 6-11, 2010—Trainer Development in Hollow Water, MB

June 24-30, 2010—Reconciliation Workshop in Winnipeg, MB!



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## DIOCESE OF VICTORIA—THANK YOU!!!

In our last newsletter, we extended a heart felt thank you to many organizations who have supported RTS during our financial uncertainty. We forgot to acknowledge an important contributor: the Diocese of Victoria!!

The Diocese of Victoria responded to our initial request for support last summer and fall. In addition to their financial contribution to Returning to Spirit, they supported accommodation, meal and participant costs for two

RTS workshops in the summer and fall of 2009.

We are deeply grateful for their support and ongoing partnership in creating reconciliation on Vancouver Island.

The Diocese of Victoria is looking forward to a Reconciliation workshop for Vancouver Island in 2010.

A special thank you to Cynthia Bouchard-Watkins of the Bishop's Office, for organizing and coordinating workshops on the Island.

Bishop Richard Gagnon says that Returning to Spirit workshops in the Diocese, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have had a positive influence on relations Aboriginal and Church, opening avenues of communication. Cynthia also adds that conversations of possibility have been created and are bearing much fruit in many areas!

In future newsletters, we will highlight other contributors to Returning to Spirit.

## THANK YOU!!

This newsletter was copied, collated, stapled and stuffed by a dedicated group of RTS volunteers in Winnipeg. Thank you to the Missionary Oblate Sisters (Olive Halpin) for covering the copy costs.

## ANOTHER FIRST FOR RTS!

In January 2009, at the Trainer Development Program, we were asked to declare individual projects that would move RTS Forward. The project I declared was to host a 5-day Returning to Spirit Workshop for First Nations Clergy.

What prompted me to declare this possibility was the ongoing conversation between First Nations and Church Trainers every time workshop registrations were received from a First Nations person who also worked for the Church. If the First Nations participant was included in the workshop for Church/non-Aboriginal folk, they often had a hard time relating to the non-Aboriginal Church people. If the First Nations participant was included in the workshop for Aboriginal people, they often made the other participants, who had issues with the Church, uncomfortable. What to do?

My idea for a project created the possibility for First Nations clergy/professional church workers to experience the 5-day Returning to Spirit Workshop with a combined training team, including both First Nations and Church trainers. This had never been

done before! Would it work? How to put it into place? How would I do this??

After a long night of worrying, all of the trainers began a process of building a strategic map and a support team to help us move our projects forward. On a very large piece of brown paper we built our strategic map (better known as the "octopus"). At the center of the map was the project we had declared. We then began to attach arms to our "octopus", identifying four people from whom we could request support for the project. My "octopus" started with 4 arms and ended with 11 arms!!

The project was declared into the future with nothing to support that it would really happen. As soon as I declared it all the usual barriers, conversations of no possibilities, and fears that have always kept me from doing the things I really want to do, showed up! And they are just things to move through!

When I got home after the Trainer Development Program, I put my "octopus" on my office wall, to always keep it in the forefront of my thoughts! Over the next nine

months, many people stopped in and asked questions about what I was up to. Some even offered to add their name to the support team!

The excitement about the workshop continued to grow and most of the recruitment of participants happened through word of mouth and email communication. We even invited First Nations clergy/church professionals from other denominations but, in the end, the 11 participants were all from the United Church of Canada. It seems that maybe we need to declare another project to give the others another opportunity to participate in this special workshop!

When the participants were asked, "Who do you need to reconcile with?" They all replied: "both with the church and our people". Many of the First Nations clergy working in First Nations communities are challenged for working for an institution that participated with the government in the administration of the Indian Residential Schools. They are eagerly looking forward to the opportunity to participate in the Reconciliation Workshop!

THE MIND  
CREATES  
THE ABYSS,  
THE HEART  
CROSSES IT.

SRI  
NISARGADATTA



*This workshop has helped me move ahead and see a future for our native people. There are many healing and self help programs which are good but this one gets right to the core of the self. I'm not responsible for everyone's life and that is so liberating.*

*Peggy Monague, Beausoleil First Nation, Christian Island, ON*

## RTS BOARD NEWS

On February 6-7, 2010, Returning to Spirit held its Annual General Meeting in Winnipeg, MB. The meeting was attended by board members, Marc Pizandawac, Anne Taylor and Anthony Niiganii.

We welcomed four new board members:

Dennis Sinclair from Hollow Water FN (MB);

Jack Anawak from Iqaluit, NU;

Joanne Martell from Meadow Lake, SK

Bishop Gerry Wiesner from Prince George, B.C.

We also welcomed our returning Elder, Elise Charland from Cold Lake, AB.

These board members join our existing board members:

Norman Opekokew from Canoe Lake FN (SK)

Bishop Gary Gordon from Whitehorse, YT;

Sr. Veronica Dunna from Winnipeg, MB;

Sr. Rita Bisson from North Battleford, SK.

Dave Fortin from Thunderbay, ON, completed his three year terms as board member. We thank him for his dedicated service and wish him

well in creating his future powerfully. Wally Awasis, Thunderchild FN (SK), who served a short term as board member in 2009, resigned as a board member due to other commitments.

We have significantly increased the number of board members and are excited at this new development!

Our board members are ambassadors for reconciliation and stewards for Returning to Spirit. They all bring their unique contributions and regional representation to the

important role of serving as an RTS board member.

On the Saturday evening, we held a “Meet & Greet” event which was attended by the board members and trainers from the Winnipeg area. During this event, we held a blanket ceremony to welcome the new board members. They all expressed deep gratitude and honour in being selected to fulfill this role. The event was appreciated and enjoyed by all involved!



Back Row (l to r): Norman Opekokew, Gary Gordon, Gerry Wiesner, Dennis Sinclair, Jack Anawak

Front Row (l to r): Joanne Martell, Veronica Dunne, Elise Charland, Rita Bisson

THE OBJECT IS  
NOT TO SEE  
THROUGH ONE  
ANOTHER,  
BUT TO SEE ONE  
ANOTHER  
THROUGH

PETER DEVRIES

*Thank God for this workshop. It made a big difference, made me see the real me everything about myself why I'm the way I am and the way I want to be. I love completion it lightens my load puts the past I don't want behind me so I can move ahead. I especially like the honesty, I can be honest about things now. I've learned to communicate, whereas, before I would just be quiet never talk openly honestly. I learned not to blame in my speech in completion. I love myself for doing this I was hesitant at first but after awhile I jumped in and became part of the group. It was Great thank you for letting me be me.*

*(Daniel Frank, Ahousaht, BC)*

## UPCOMING SCHEDULE

Our workshops are scheduled well into 2010 and into 2011.

A Reconciliation on Vancouver Island is planned for sometime this fall. Confirmation is dependent on securing funding. We are also pleased to announce a Reconciliation in Winnipeg at the end of June 2010!!

For more information on any of these workshops or to host a workshop, please contact Lisa Raven at 204-772-1991 or Toll free at 1-877-772-1991 for Part 1 workshops and Olive Halpin at 204-414-9768 for Part 2 workshops.

**Feb 26 - Mar 2, 2010**  
**Non-Aboriginal** - Light of the Prairies, Lorette, MB  
 Contact: Jacques Lafrance  
 204-230-2725

**Mar 3 - 7, 2010**  
**Aboriginal** - Yellowknife, NWT  
 Contact: Gail Paquin  
 867-920-2129

**Mar 15 -19, 2010**  
**Aboriginal** – TBC  
 Contact: Winnipeg Office  
 204-772-1991

**Mar 15-19, 2010**  
**Non-Aboriginal** – Pr. George, B.C.  
 Contact: Jean Marie Lehtinen  
 250-964-4475

**April 19-23, 2010**  
**Non-Aboriginal** – Saskatoon, SK.  
 Contact: Lucie Leduc  
 306-242-1916

**Apr 26-30, 2010**  
**Aboriginal**—Pr. George BC  
 Contact: Jean Marie Lehtinen

250-964-4475

**May 10-14, 2010**  
**Non-Aboriginal** - Beausejour, MB  
 Dr Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre  
 Contact: Norah McMurtry  
 204-268-3913

**June 24-30, 2010**  
**Reconciliation** - Winnipeg, MB  
 Canadian Mennonite University  
 Contact: Olive Halpin  
 204-414-9768

Workshops are being scheduled and booked as funding is secured. There are more workshops being finalized. Contact the Winnipeg Office if you would like to see a workshop in your area (204-772-1991).

OUR TRUE ENEMIES,  
 AS WELL AS OUR  
 TRUE SOURCES OF  
 STRENGTH,  
 LIE WITHIN.  
 WILLARU HUAYTA,  
 QUECHUA NATION,  
 PERU

## RECONCILIATION—PRINCE GEORGE, BC

In early January 2010, the Diocese of Prince George hosted a Reconciliation workshop.

The circle was filled with 60 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from as far away as Toronto! All experienced the transformative results of this reconciliation process. We were honoured to have many elders participating. One was 87 years old

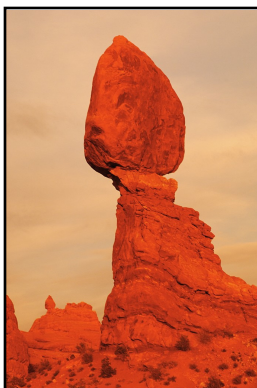
and was two weeks out of surgery. She offered a powerful presence to the circle.

We were honoured each morning as the Carrier people opened each day with songs and drumming.

Each Reconciliation seems to open a greater space for coming together. The words of the participants say it all:

*This workshop has truly transformed my life in a deep, to the core, yet gentle way. I have let go of the past experiences that left me stuck in my story and today I have the tools to create a future space of conversation, hope, dreams fulfilled and leadership. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience; reconciliation was what I expected and more.*

*Janine Luggi, Stellat'en First Nation*



*A long time ago, the Creator put inside the human being the secrets to the laws of life. We usually know this is true even though we may not know what these laws are. If something goes wrong with our lives, we usually fix the blame on something outside of ourselves. We tend to give up accountability. One way or another we say, "It's not my fault." We need to realize that all permanent and lasting change starts on the inside and works its way out. If it's meant to be, it is up to me.*



## A POSSIBILITY BECOMES A REALITY!

My name is Jacques Lafrance and I would like to share with you a project that I took on that has powerfully transformed my life!

About one and a half years ago, following a meeting with Marc Pizandawac and an intensive Seminar Series training, I took on the project of overseeing the construction of a new centre for Light of the Prairies (a non-profit retreat centre in Lorette, MB).

At that time, Light of the Prairies was at a crossroads. We did not know if we should launch into a new adventure or simply close down the Centre. It was clear that the future of the organization depended on my willingness to become Director of Light of the Prairies and to then do whatever would be needed to move the Centre forward. I was in a place of confusion, fear and doubt, caught in many conversations of no

possibility!

Despite all of the 'kaka-poo-poo' that was present in my space, I stepped into a conversation of possibilities and said "yes". I took on the project, in partnership with others, of getting the new Centre built, even though I did not know how that could be done and I did not know completely for what purpose it would ultimately be used. The only thing that I knew was that this possibility was before me and that it was up to me to either take it on or to let it fall. I chose to say "yes"!

On December 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, Light of the Prairies welcomed all to our Open House. People came from far and wide to see our new Centre, to get to know us and to see what we have to offer. With the encouragement of a fellow RTS trainer, I spoke to the 100 to 150 people who had come. I

told them that this beautiful Centre started as an idea, that it developed into a project and has now become a reality. If my intentional declaration of this project has created such a place, then there is a very real possibility that this Centre can become what it is meant to be!

When I took on this project it seemed an insurmountable, impossible task, and yet today, I can say that this project was easy and fun. All I needed to do each and every day was to be faithful to what was before me, to accomplish what was before me and, most importantly, to be surrounded by other people who were also committed to moving the project forward.

I have been transformed by this project. I am not the same man I was a year and a half ago. I lived a lot in a place of fear, confusion and self doubt. I am not in that space anymore. I am more confident. I am not overcome by fear anymore. I believe in what I am doing. I am in a space of living life with creative vitality. It is my lived experience that to move forward through the perceived barriers, by taking on what shows up in life, by persevering in commitment and integrity... then the present does heal the past and opens up new space to create the future powerfully!



Light of the Prairies, Lorette, MB

TO BE ALIVE IN  
THIS BEAUTIFUL,  
SELF-  
ORGANIZING  
UNIVERSE  
-- TO  
PARTICIPATE IN  
THE DANCE OF  
LIFE WITH SENSES  
TO PERCEIVE IT,  
LUNGS THAT  
BREATHE IT,  
ORGANS THAT  
DRAW  
NOURISHMENT  
FROM IT  
-- IS A WONDER  
BEYOND WORDS.  
JOANNA MACY

RETURNING TO SPIRIT—RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL RECONCILIATION INC.

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Newsletter articles are welcome!  
Send to the Editor (Gigi Jakobs):  
[communications@returningtospirit.org](mailto:communications@returningtospirit.org)

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Gigi Jakobs, Anthony Niiganii and Anne  
Taylor, for contributions & photos in this  
edition.

Next edition—July 1, 2010



Returning to Spirit (RTS) is a non-profit organization that designs and delivers workshops and training programs for reconciliation within the context of residential school issues that have negatively impacted First Nations People, Religious communities and Canadian society in general.

Our focus is on moving people forward through the principles of personal empowerment. This defines all our work, including coaching sessions and consulting, which are designed to support individuals, families, organizations and whole communities to move forward in life.

Our work goes beyond healing. It provides conditions for transformation in personal, family, community, and organizational life.

## UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

Have you moved recently? Changed your phone number or your email address?? Do you want to keep up to date with RTS workshops and information? Want to know when the next Part 3 is going to happen in your area?

If YES, then we invite you to fill out this change of address information and either fax it to us (403-270-3963) or mail it (to one of the addresses above), or email the info to us ([info@returningtospirit.org](mailto:info@returningtospirit.org)). Otherwise... we can't reach you!

Please print neatly (especially email address)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph # (H): \_\_\_\_\_ Ph # (W): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

JUST AS A  
FLOWER GIVES  
OUT ITS  
FRAGRANCE TO  
WHOMSOEVER  
APPROACHES OR  
USES IT, SO LOVE  
FROM WITHIN US  
RADIATES  
TOWARDS  
EVERYBODY AND  
MANIFESTS AS  
SPONTANEOUS  
SERVICE.  
SWAMI RAMDAS