



RETURNING TO SPIRIT

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1 MAY 1, 2011

BACK TO THE BEGINNING—RECONCILIATION

A Team of Leaders returned to the birthplace of Returning to Spirit in January 2011. Together, five Aboriginal and five non-Aboriginal trainers, delivered the seven-day Reconciliation Workshop to 40 participants. The process was powerful and moving, both for the team and for the participants.

Marc Pizandawac contributed to the success of the workshop by providing coaching to the Team each evening.

It was an honour to deliver this Reconciliation Workshop in Yellowknife, the birthplace of RTS. The first two days for each group (Non-Aboriginal and then Aboriginal) were held in the

teepee at Trapper's Lake. The three days of Coming Together were held in the Alliance Church.

It was inspiring to see the shift in participants from the beginning of the workshop to the end of the workshop.

Participants who entered the process with fear and anxiety, left the process inspired and committed to sharing transformation with others. Participants were intentional about letting go of old hurts and resentments. Participants were intentional about listening to the other and being open for something new to take place.

On the last day of the workshop, a group of Abo-

iginal and non-Aboriginal participants approached one of the trainers, asking how they could bring this process to their community, up along the Arctic coast.

Possibilities are opening up, and we are grateful to have played a role in supporting people in creating partnerships for the future.

We are grateful for the support and intentionality of all who held us in their prayers during that week!! You were with us in spirit.

We are grateful to the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith for their support and partnership in making this workshop a reality. We couldn't have accomplished it without them.

This workshop has touched the very pit of who I am, who I have always been, and who I want to be. I see that whatever wrong that has been done to me, is not my fault. I have been carrying so much blame and hurt, that shouldn't have been mine to carry. I find peace, calmness and see new possibilities for myself and my life, and especially to my children and grandchildren also family and home community. Thank you for the opportunity to helping me find me and the spirit of me.

Annie Rose Thrasher, Paulatuk, NT
Reconciliation Workshop—Yellowknife—Jan/Feb 2011

This workshop was full of honour and respect. Togetherness, openness, honesty, peace — were some of the fruits for me. I feel reconciliation with a whole body of people, my First Nations brothers and sisters and underlying this a growing reconciliation with myself.

Sr. Fay Trombley, SCIC, Tuktoyaktuk, NT
Reconciliation Workshop—Yellowknife—Jan/Feb 2011

COMING UP!

Reconciliation Workshops

Jun 9-15, 2011
Nanaimo, BC

Jul 7-13, 2011
Winnipeg, MB



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WINNIPEG SPECIAL EVENT	2
COMMUNITY OF LEADERS	3
WEEKEND PILOT	4
RIP—DAVE FORTIN	5
WEBSITE LAUNCH	6
BOARD MEMBER DENNIS SINCLAIR	7
SASKATCHEWAN SEMINAR SERIES	8

LATE MAILOUT

This newsletter has a delayed mailout due to a variety of factors! Our apologies and we hope that you enjoy it!

A TRANSFORMATION OF HAND AND HEART

Reconciliation and resurrection – it seems to me that there is a connection, and what better time, during this Easter season, to reflect upon and share a part of my experience of Returning to Spirit.

Returning to the spirit of who I really am, who I am meant to be with my weaknesses and strengths and to see all the possibilities for growth in relationships that I encounter with others every day... What a gift!

Returning to spirit... going within... deeply... trusting... like a diamond with many facets... life-changing... new eyes. These are but a few of the thoughts and images that come into my mind and heart as I recall the experience.

For me, the wealth and beauty of the experience has been how it relates continuously in my daily life. Since retiring from teaching my ministry has become very much a ministry of prayer, both in my home with small groups of women as well as in the larger inter-faith community. Situations arise in which I am called to be a listening presence to others. Many times I have referred to the examples of how we create “a story” in our interactions with others as I have tried to help

myself or others to work through a difficulty in relationships. The image of the river flowing to the future has been most powerful as I encourage someone who is trying to make a fresh start in life.

I experienced a transformation of both hand and heart during my experience of Returning to Spirit. For a number of years I had not been able to physically write with my right hand without it severely cramping. Even the day before I began the intensive 5-day workshop, I had difficulty addressing an envelope. I arrived at Returning to Spirit and you know how much writing we did! Even the first morning as we were asked to write down our desires or goals for the week I had difficulty to write 20 words without pain. As we were asked in the next exercise, to write our life story – and that we would write for one hour continuously – I thought how will I manage? However, I began to write and wrote continuously with no cramping in my hand. I don't think I realized until after the exercise what had taken place. I was quiet and did not mention it - only wanting to “be sure” it would last. And it has!

As I looked back at my desire for the week it was to grow into an inner freedom that allowed me to let go as well as to be transformed. As I continued to write the rest of the week, I was very conscious of this new freedom in my hand. Not until the end of January when I returned for the Reconciliation workshop did I share this new ability, this new freedom to write.

The experience of Reconciliation deepened the transformation begun in the 5-day workshop. A foundation had been set as my spirit was open to the work of the Spirit in our meetings. As we met one-on-one, face-to-face, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, it was as if I were holding the sacred, indeed I was. As we each shared our story, a new space was created and we were walking beside each other. After each encounter, returning to the quiet, prayerful space of our surroundings, I had the sense of walking on holy ground and holding a precious gift of new relationship in my hands. The freedom and potential that had been restored in my hand had now crossed to my heart.

Sr. Maggie Beaudette, csj

Hay River, NT

THE LITTLE THINGS?

THE LITTLE MOMENTS?

THEY AREN'T LITTLE.

JON KABAT-ZINN



I have a greater understanding of Story in my life...opening up to how it applies to everything, when things aren't going/working so well it all becomes story. I am getting a sense of how I can deliver the seminars, starting to get a feel of how I am going to do it. How I feel today is compared to the Day 2 of the workshop. The start of something great!

Chris Branigan Prince George BC
PG Seminar Series, October 2010

A COMMUNITY OF LEADERS—AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

On December 5 and 6 2010, RTS trainers, Board members and staff met at South Beach Hotel in Manitoba, for the first **Returning to Spirit Community Gathering**. It proved to be a powerfully amazing, inspiring and productive experience!

People came from the Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nunavut – 26 in all. The Design Team for the gathering was: Anne Taylor (Calgary, AB), John Peter Flett (St. Theresa Point, MB), Lorraine Vandall (Prince Albert, SK), Tarianne de Yonker (Adrian, Michigan, USA) and Olive Halpin (Winnipeg, MB). The purpose of this gathering was to get clear about where we are organizationally and as a community; get clarity and alignment on where we are going.

We experienced several facets of the gathering:

- created a fourth circle conversation where completions could be voiced,
- reconnected with our mission—reconciliation between Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal regarding the Residential School Legacy in Canada
- identified what needed to be addressed—instead of a “needs assessment”, we held it as an “opportunity assessment”,
- identified a time line for addressing opportunities
- had fun throughout the process!

The experiential process was based on the principles of RTS and created the space for all of this to be realized in an atmosphere of trust, openness

and partnership.

Although Marc Pizandawac did not attend – conserving his energy for the following 6 days of the Trainer Development Program – he nevertheless was very much with us.

It became clear that we are the organization, that we are responsible for the unfolding of RTS and that we, as a community of leaders, are called to take full ownership of it! We have come of age!

The presence of the “Spirit” was palpable throughout the gathering and the fact that RTS is a gift from the Creator was manifested once again! Yes, indeed, this was a Community of Leaders in action – an idea whose time had come!

We had a follow-up gathering in early April (see below).

Olive Halpin, mo
Winnipeg, MB



COMMUNITY OF LEADERS... MORE

Did you know that an organization can have a Story? Well, of course it can! Organizations are made up of people, and people have stories, so...

During our community gathering in early April, we got very clear on some stories that had begun to take root in our organization. It was very enlightening to engage in a process led by Marc Pizandawac, in which all of us were able to see the stories we had begun to create... and how similar our stories were!

We became clear on our conversations, and how we had become stuck in a conversation rooted in the past. Turning towards the future is so much more empowering!

We were all reminded that the organization is us... each one of us individually! There is no one “out there” who is going to handle things for us. It is up to each one of us to take the organization to the next level.

One of the key areas of

awareness was that of withholding. We became aware that when we withhold, when we do not communicate what is there for us, when we do not say what needs to be said, well... that creates a lot of “stuff” in the space! All of us made a commitment to stop withholding!

We also created a new organizational structure and began the process of identifying key leaders for different areas in the organization. This is a work in progress!

WHEN A
COMMUNITY
DOES
SOMETHING
TOGETHER,
THAT
COMMUNITY IS
VERY HAPPY,
JOVIAL,
CONNECTED,
AND UNIFIED.
LARRY P. AITKIN
CHIPPEWA

TO DO OR NOT TO DO...

NO INDIVIDUAL
OR GROUP CAN
BLOCK ANOTHER
INDIVIDUAL'S
PATH OR
CHANGE IT
AGAINST WHAT
FITS HIS OR HER
NATURE AND HIS
OR HER PURPOSE.
IT MIGHT
BE DONE
FOR A TIME,
BUT IN THE END
IT WON'T
WORK OUT.

ROLLING
THUNDER,
CHEROKEE

I'm an organized sort of person and am a great fan of To-Do lists. I like to know what I've got planned, what I need to get done, etc. For many years, my to do lists were written on scrap pieces of paper, often several at once. I don't think I'm the only one who does this either. You know, you write down a few things on this piece of paper, and a few things on that little sticky note, and then a few more things on the back of the envelope from the telephone company.

Before you know it... you've a dozen to-do lists on the go and I'll bet you lose a few in the process.

I've taken a peek at electronic version of the to-do list... and there's a lot of them out there, but I'm a paper-person. I like a tangible "something" that I can take with me. Same way I like a tangible daytimer. Some might say I should get an iPhone or a Blackberry or an Android but... I'm also a writer... I like the physical connection of writing... That's why I still like to write hand-written letters... yep,

on paper, in an envelope with a stamp and put into the mail!

So, my little pile of to-do lists were a to-do list in themselves! But then I hit upon a new system... using a coil-bound notebook (6x9 inches) is a good size... and every day I use a 2-page spread to keep track of my to-do items and write any notes to myself. No lost to-do notes. Yes, I do need to rewrite things every day... or second day... depending... but... it's great to be able to look back and see how long something's been on my to-do list. Or actually... not that great.

This current notebook, my first, I look back to (gulp!) September and see that there are some things that have travelled with me, from page to page, since then. They are becoming a permanent fixture in my to-do list...

Which makes me wonder... if completions create so much space (and I know that they do!), then why do I shy away from some of these things? I will avoid them and dance around them and ignore them. I'll justify my reasons

for not completing them. I have all sorts of excuses.

But in the end, it comes down to sheer procrastination. What I'm noticing though, is the longer these things hang around my space, the more space they begin to take up. The heavier they weigh upon my conscience. The more they drag me down.

When I stop and complete them, when I stop the procrastination, it creates a huge amount of space, sometimes physical, but always spiritual and emotional. And when there's space, well, there's more space to complete even bigger things!

I know that I am not what I do... but what I do not do influences who I am. If that makes sense. I also know that I am not my To-Do list! (Thank God)... I also know that who I am is up to me to create. I can be a procrastinator... or I can be someone who handles things in the moment... My choice...

*Gigi Jakobs
Calgary, AB*



WEEKEND PILOT

By the time you read this, we will have completed another first. The Aboriginal Circle of Educators in Winnipeg hosted the weekend version of the 5-Day Workshop on Feb 25-27 and Mar 18-20.

The weekend version of the 5-Day workshop is designed to

be delivered over two weekends. The first weekend is basically Day 1 and 2 of the regular workshop. The second weekend is Day 3, 4 & 5 of the regular workshop.

The Aboriginal team delivered the weekend pilot to 19 participants. In a room across

the hall, the Non-Aboriginal team delivered exactly the same material to 14 participants.

It was a powerful experience of partnership between the two teams! The weekend format does work, and we are planning more in the future.

RIP—DAVE FORTIN

Two days before the Yellowknife Reconciliation, the trainers learned that Dave Fortin, one of the first trainers, had passed away in August 2010. The team lead the Reconciliation knowing that Dave was with us in spirit.

As participants, we first met Dave at our Winnipeg Reconciliation in December 2004. He was one of the very first group of trainees that Marc was training at that time.

When we started our training in Morley, Alberta in January 2005, Dave was in his second year of training with Returning to Spirit. We found Dave to be a caring and supportive person willing to go that extra mile to help the fledgling trainers out. He encouraged us and worked with us in our development as trainers. He was always ready to take on whatever challenge showed up, being among the first of

the group to step up and demonstrate various parts of the work. He patiently coached us through our stuff and believed in our abilities to become effective trainers. He shared his knowledge and understanding of the work in a way that was clear and understandable, and demonstrated a strong sense of partnership.

Dave was committed to the Returning to Spirit program and believed it could bring empowerment to our people. He was involved with creating an organization that would serve the people of the First Nations in resolving Residential School issues. He was actively involved from the onset of the conversations with the Church about the development of a partnership. He became a member of the “working group” to prepare for the organization, which

eventually became Returning To Spirit, Inc. He continued on from that group to become one of the first Board members, a position which he held until 2009. As a Board member, Dave contributed generously of his knowledge, skills, experience, insights and perspectives. He was a strong and valuable team player. He was committed to the work and firmly believed that RTS needed to be brought to the First Nation communities.

Dave had a strong commitment to helping people and cared deeply about his family. He had a wonderful sense of humour and we will always remember his “rolodex” of jokes for every occasion. We will always treasure the times we spent with Dave, and know that his spirit lives on in all of us who have met him.

*Cecilia & Norman Opekokew
Canoe Lake, SK*



TRANSFORMATION IN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES...

On the final day of the Reconciliation Workshop, CBC North visited the workshop facility and interviewed some of the participants. Hank Wolki was one of those interviewed and spoke passionately about the power of the workshop. Here are some of his thoughts since then...

“This workshop has been a learning experience for me.

It has made me more open to communicating and more perceptive to listening not only to myself, but to my partner, friends and to all I

meet. No other workshop other than Returning to Spirit Residential School Reconciliation Program has done that for me.”

*Hank Wolki
Paulatuk, NT*

Marlene Wolki and some other participants are actively engaged in creating workshops in their communities near Iqaluit. They have high intentionality and we all know what that can create!

I’ve taken so many workshops and programs but none has touched me as much as the

Returning to Spirit Residential School Reconciliation Program.

The program has taught me to reconcile me with me, me to my life-time partner, and me to society through communicating intentionality. Today, who would ever think that I would be able to live an open life of endless possibilities? The spirit of who I really am today is like the transformation of a Caterpillar to a beautiful Butterfly!

*Marlene Wolki
Paulatuk, NT*

A PROBLEM
IS A CHANCE
FOR YOU
TO DO
YOUR BEST.
DUKE ELLINGTON

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

Our workshops are scheduled well into 2011.

We have three more Reconciliations scheduled for 2011, the most in any calendar year!

We are also expanding eastwards and September will see both an Aboriginal and a non-Aboriginal being hosted at Five Oaks, near Paris, ON.

For more information on any of these workshops or to host a workshop, please contact our Calgary Office at 403-244-3963 or

info@returningtospirit.org

Weekend Workshop May 27-29 & Jun 3-5, 2011

Aboriginal – Winnipeg, MB

Contact: Anne Taylor-403-244-3963

May 30-Jun 3, 2011

Aboriginal – Saskatoon, SK
Contact: Wally Awasis
306-845-8122

Jun 9-15, 2011

Reconciliation – Nanaimo, BC
Contact: Cynthia Bouchard-Watkins
250-479-1331

Jul 7-13, 2011

Reconciliation – Winnipeg, MB
Contact: Deborah Clark
204-772-2231

Aug 2-6, 2011

Aboriginal – Burns Lake, BC
Contact: Judy Charlie
250-692-4727

Aug 15-19, 2011

Non-Aboriginal – Smithers, BC
Contact: Jean Marie Lehtinen

250-964-4475

Sep 19-23, 2011

Aboriginal – Five Oaks Centre, Paris, ON
Contact: Robin McGauley
519-442-3212

Sep 19-23, 2011

Non-Aboriginal – Five Oaks Centre, Paris, ON
Contact: Robin McGauley
519-442-3212

Sept 26-30, 2011

Aboriginal – Star of the North, St. Albert, AB
Contact: Kathy Jackson
780-435-3995

Sept 26-30, 2011

Non-Aboriginal – Providence, Edmonton, AB
Contact: Kathy Jackson
780-435-3995

Contact the Calgary Office if you would like to see a workshop in your area.

IT'S
ALL SPIRIT
AND
IT'S
ALL CONNECTED."
GRANDFATHER
WILLIAM
COMMANDA,
ALGONQUIN

WEBSITE LAUNCH

We have a new website!!

We received funding from the Calgary Foundation to hire a web developer, and now we are very pleased to unveil our new, revamped, user friendly website. We are very grateful to the Calgary Foundation for their generous funding!

The address of the website is the same as the old one:

www.returningtospirit.org

There are all sorts of things to check out on the website.

You can **read bios** of our workshop teams. You can register **online** for a workshop. You can see our

upcoming schedule. You can flip through our **photo gallery** (more photos are still coming). You can find information on our **special event**. You can read the latest **newsletter** (this one!) online. You can keep up on the latest news through our **news blog**. You can **donate online**. You can read the **latest evaluations** from completed workshops. You'll find links to other **organizations and resources** (books to read, movies to watch, etc.).

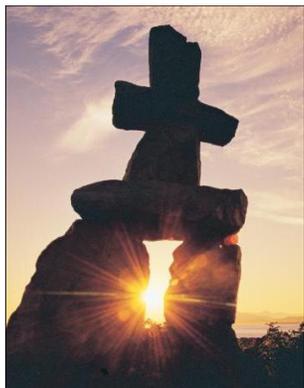
We are very happy with the new look of the website. Even more than that, we are

very pleased that we can update it ourselves. That means that the content can change from week to week or even day to day!

We also have a Facebook Page and hope you can visit it and "like us". We're also going to get a Twitter account so that we can tweet with the best of them.

If you have any comments or suggestions, let us know! We have a Contact Us form for suggestions as well.

Explore the website and let us know what you think!



So many people tell me that they see me as a strong, confident, fearless person. I am that person in many ways. I am not that person in some areas of my life and that may not be seen by others because once I close the door on something or someone it is closed – shut tight. I am seeing how many of those doors have glued tight with fear. To even consider opening the door to my history of sexual abuse and then sexual acting out was terrifying. To open the door to the “Church” seemed impossible. Individuals in the “church” O.K. but nothing else. Talking about tough things with my family was a door I just did not want to bother opening anymore. I gave up.

In the spirit of love and reconciliation I open those doors and look forward to opening others. I am humbled and filled with joy. Thank you.

*Annette Russell, Prince George, BC
Reconciliation Workshop, Pr. George, Mar 2011*

I feel like a whole person. Connected to my life, family and to others. The process is such an amazing healing journey. To be responsible for my life, I am filled with love and acceptance. I am filled with light to inspire myself and others. Thanks, RTS.

*D. Taylor, Prince George, BC
Reconciliation Workshop, Pr. George, Mar 2011*



SPOTLIGHT ON A BOARD MEMBER—DENNIS SINCLAIR

I'm from Hollow Water First Nation, MB. I'm 56 years old and I've been married to my wife Marilyn for 27 yrs with 3 daughters and 1 son and grandchildren.

I began being involved with the Returning to Spirit program around 2003 when I first went to the workshop in our neighbouring community with my wife and friend. I immediately booked the workshop for our community because I could see how much it would help our members.

I personally fell in love with the program and began to follow Marc Pizandawac, the facilitator, wherever he went so that I could gain more understanding of the program and also to help me with my own life. I probably went to about 17 or more of the workshops, sometimes at my own cost, because there was

the opportunity for me to become a facilitator also.

When I went to the workshops, there was always something new that I would learn on how to be able to help my community members and myself. I experienced many different Aboriginal communities, but they all had similar issues and did not know how to move out of their past. This is why I believe that this workshop can support people in moving forward and to creating a better way of life for Aboriginal people.

On my own personal journey with healing and altering my behaviors and my attitudes, I would have to give all the credit to Returning to Spirit. It gave me a different perspective on life and on how to create new understanding and balance with my own spirit.

My family and people around me can see how much I've grown and are always asking me how I did it. It also helped with the work I do in my community. I continue to be involved with RTS as a Board member and I continue to promote healing and reconciliation wherever I go.

This program has given me a great opportunity to enhance my personal and professional life and I will always be very grateful for that opportunity.

Thank-you very much.



WE CANNOT
BECOME WHAT
WE NEED TO BE,
REMAINING
WHAT WE ARE.
MAX DEPREE

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

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tions this edition.

Next edition—June 24, 2011



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.

SASKATCHEWAN SEMINAR SERIES

We are leading a seminar series in my home community of Waterhen Lake First Nation. We had two meetings with the participants and the health coordinator of Waterhen before we even started. Some participants registered and some of the people that showed up for the meetings were unable to take it this time due to other commitments.

At the first meeting, I asked if it was possible for the trainers to receive either travel dollars or an honorarium as they were all travelling a distance to help me with the seminar series. Cecilia and Norman Opekokew were travelling an hour from Canoe Lake. Lorraine Vandall was travelling four hours from Prince Albert, and Wally Awasis was travelling four and a half hours from Saskatoon. That is quite a distance to travel! Dorothy Fiddler is the health coordinator and she said that they would adjust their budget to pay an honorarium to the trainers! I believe Waterhen Lake First Nation is the first to work with RTS in partnership to deliver this transformational work.

I want to thank Waterhen Lake First Nation for their support and commitment. I want to thank the trainers for their commitment to help deliver the seminar series. I want to thank the participants for their insights and expression. It is so awesome to see the participants transforming and taking on projects with excitement. I am greatly inspired.

One other point to touch on was that we had a seminar on the first day of the Addictions Awareness Week in November. What a surprise to find out that we were on the agenda. They had a community potluck supper to kick off the week and they did not start that supper until we were done and trainers were invited to participate in the community event. I am so very proud of my community for their support to this work.

Joanne Martell, Waterhen Lake First Nation, SK

SOMEWHERE,
SOMETHING
INCREDIBLE IS
WAITING TO BE
KNOWN.

CARL SAGAN