



# Returning to Spirit<sup>®</sup>

Residential School Reconciliation

## A Report From Marlene Peck

When landing in Calgary on Sunday morning, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009, the weather seemed to simulate my emotions; stormy, unclear and yet hopeful at arriving and experiencing a new adventure and destination in my life.

I first heard about “Returning to Spirit” back in September of 2008, when I met Dianne Ollerenshaw, Director of Regional Ministries in the Synod of Alberta and the Northwest. I had just arrived in Chetwynd, BC from Goderich, ON, for my new appointment as Lay Missionary for Chetwynd Shared Ministry in the Peace River Presbytery. Dianne had come to do a workshop for the congregation. The two of us shared a meal in order to get to know each other a bit more personally. It was during our conversation that Dianne suggested I think about participating in the Returning to Spirit 5-day workshop. When the resource and information came, I hesitated in filling out the registration; they asked some very difficult questions dealing with your personal as well as social life. I wasn’t sure I was ready - or even wanted - to deal with the issues that were brought up.

Returning to Spirit is a three-part training program. All parts consist of 5-day intensive workshops: Part I is with First Nation/Aboriginal people only; Part II is with clergy, religious communities and non-Aboriginal individuals; Part III is with both groups coming together for communication and completion. Returning to Spirit trained leaders and their teams, provide a unique model in which these various groups of people are taught ways in which to heal and reconcile with themselves in order to be able to come together for healing and reconciliation with each other. I participated in Part II and am eager to be involved with Part III.

The first morning began with 14 very nervous and timid individuals introducing themselves to the rest of the group and team members. After a bit of a history lesson on the development of the Returning to Spirit organization, the team leader shared the purpose of the workshop: “To Restore Power in Life”. He then suggested that we ask ourselves these three questions:

1. Where do I give up my power in life?
2. What keeps me from having power in my life?
3. How can personal power show up in my life?

For the next four days, we would learn how to recognize an event that happened to us between the ages of 6-12, and then work through (under the direction of the team) the training program, trying to find and live out our Spirit. We all have had events happen in our lives which we have interpreted and lived by for most of our lives. We cannot change the event but we can change our interpretation, reactions and practices following the event.

The training program allowed us tools which we could then use in discovering ourselves; create new possibilities and personal breakthroughs. This was all achieved through information provided by the

very gifted team members, through group discussions/processing, and personal exercises. This whole experience was very empowering!

By the end of the workshop, we could all feel the release and freedom in each person; we were very aware of the transformations that had taken place over the past 4 days. The morning of the final day, we were all excited and ready to share what we were willing to let go and state our “declarations” to each other. The workshop ended on the Friday afternoon with a feast and celebration of our declarations as well as group photos.

Thank you to Lori Ransom, Justice Ministries, Dianne Ollerenshaw and my congregation at Chetwynd Shared Ministries for assisting me to participate in this very unique experience. I highly recommend these workshops for anyone who feels they have lost their created self – that person who lives in the Spirit that God has placed in each and everyone of us.



Returning to Spirit  
Part II Workshop  
March 23-27<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
FCJ Christian Centre  
Calgary, Alberta  
Marlene Peck – far left (white blouse)

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

*We, the RTS Community, create a future based on choice rather than reaction to past events.*

*We shift individuals and communities from being in a condition of survival to being responsible for their present and future realities.*

*We are committed to living our lives based on these philosophies and to sharing these teachings and opportunities with others.*