

ABORIGINAL MINISTRIES IN CANADA, PART 2



**Thanks to Ruth
Magnuson and Yvonne
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contribution to this
study.**



Opening:

As you begin, I encourage you to acknowledge the Traditional Territory of the Indigenous People where you are.

Find out the name of the Indigenous People on whose territory you are meeting. Resources for this can be found at: <http://native-land.ca/>; Friendship Centres; or college/university Indigenous studies faculty. You may also contact Justice Ministries at healing@presbyterian.ca.

Say words such as: We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of the _____ . We acknowledge this territory's



significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived, and continue to live upon it, and whose practices and spiritualities were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the territory and its other inhabitants today.

Opening Prayer:

Creator God, we pray for open hearts, spirits, and minds in our time of learning today. In Jesus name, we pray, Amen.

Scriptures:

Read: Luke 24:13–35

Ministries:

Winnipeg Inner City Mission: Walking Along the Path

This morning at WICM, a foster mother sat in our offices weeping. On the weekend her house had intruders. The police and Child and Family Service (CFS) workers walked in, without ringing the doorbell or knocking at the door, and said they were going to take the children.

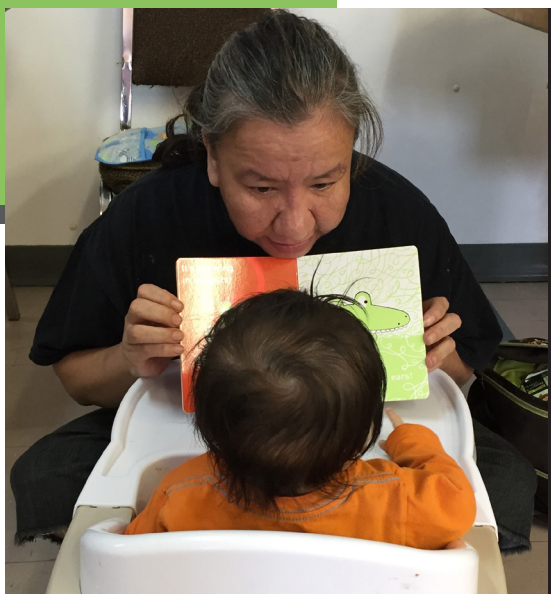
Everyone was confused. This foster mother has been caring for the children for years. She is an upstanding citizen, a volunteer in her community and her church. She advocates for the children and is ensuring they are healthy, educated, fed, and linking with the right people.

How did this happen? A revenge phone call made by someone in the community to CFS. It's that easy. I could make a phone call and be very angry and complain bitterly, and I could end your parenting career.

Thankfully, because of the adamant voices of the children insisting that they are in a safe home, and the pleas of the foster mother asking the police to check out the truth, the children were not removed. On Monday morning, visits to the child safety offices resolved the accusations.

Yet, trauma exists. Everyone is nervous. There is fear of someone coming in the door. There is the hovering threat that life can change in an instant.

I acknowledge that systems are in place to keep people safe. That's good.



The problem here is that in the Indigenous community in the north end of Winnipeg, life is tenuous. A vindictive person can ruin your life. You can be a model parent and community member, and someone who is envious or jealous can dramatically change your life. Children can be removed from caring and loving homes. Actions by officials feel like one is treated as guilty first, and truths are hardly accepted.

Our office is a safe place. A place where people can come with their trauma, their hurt, and their tears.

We don't tolerate misbehavior;

we call people out on their actions. We provide love and companionship to everyone. In this case, we wept with a mother who was experiencing great pain and true agony and blatant mistreatment. We offered to provide counselling to the family, which was accepted. We were present. The Flora House staff work with the children to ensure they are coping and get the supports they require.

The story of the Road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13–35, is frequently in my mind when we accompany our children, youth, and residents. How wonderful it feels when we can walk a long road with others. God is present in these encounters.

Many of the adults with whom we work have histories of abuse, and alcohol and drug addictions. They must be clean and sober for at least a year before entry into our program. Adults in our 1st Steps to Employment Project, who live at our residence called A Place of Hope, work very hard to stay on a positive path, and to educate or retrain themselves in order to get sustainable employment. We have several people who are taking courses to overcome personal issues with relationships or their health before they can think about employment. Everyone walks past our offices when they enter the building. We hear immediately of their successes, challenges, and disappointments. They get support and encouragement as needed.

We walk alongside the residents in their time of trial. We help them see the light in the darkness. These aren't biblical clichés or words written lightly. This is real, this is tough, this is joy filled, this is everyday life.

The National Native Ministries Council

The National Native Ministries Council (NNMC) exists to strengthen the relationship between the church and Indigenous people. Its primary areas of work include encouraging those working in Indigenous ministry to receive education in Indigenous culture and spirituality, advising the church on how to distribute funds for Indigenous ministry and to encourage the next generation of Indigenous leaders. Members of the NNMC along with the Associate Secretaries of Canadian and Justice Ministries gathered in British Columbia in January 2018.

Member ministries:

- Kenora Fellowship Centre
- Winnipeg Inner City Mission
- Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry
- Mistawasis Memorial Church
- Edmonton Urban Native Ministry
- Nazko and Dakleth Outreach Ministry
- Hummingbird Ministries
- Cedar Tree Ministry

Staff are truly stretched to perform their jobs. You might find us cleaning a floor, washing dishes, or figuring out a mechanical problem. There are three buildings, two that are very old and require major upgrades and upkeep. And A Place of Hope is now 11 years old, no longer new and needing upkeep. There is no maintenance staff. There is no secretarial staff. There is no weekend relief staff when issues arise for residents or in the buildings.

As staff, we may not see all the people who accompany us on our journey. We do appreciate the donations, the cards, the words of encouragement, and the requests when you want to know more about what we do. Then we know you are with us and our families. Some days, when we deal with so many heartbreaks,



late reports, and a toilet overflows, we find you in the cookies delivered, the cheque in the mailbox, the enquiry on the phone, and your patience to receive communication from us.

We will all continue to walk the path of life knowing that all around us is the grace-filled presence of God.

The following questions are typical of situations we encounter. How would you respond?

1. A resident was once evicted due to violating the ‘no consumption of alcohol or drugs while living at A Place of Hope’ rule. A few years later, the person returns, can prove he has been clean and sober, has one of the star residents as his friend, and he insists that he is ready to fully obey the rules and participate in the program. While listening to him during an intake interview, the staff have very mixed feelings—they love that he is turning his life around—after all, and isn’t that what we help people do? But, during the first time when he lived here, he was one of the most difficult residents ever experienced by the staff.

Would you accept him again into the program?

2. A participant in the children and youth programs at Flora House comes from a family where the parents are users of drugs, regular meals are not provided, and parenting is lacking. The child has attended the Flora House programs for a couple of years and experienced safety and support, good food, and healthy activities. She hits her teen years and starts to use bully-type behavior towards others. She wants to be there but isn’t following the respect-filled rules. As staff, you know that if she doesn’t come to Flora House, she will be on the streets and likely be taken in by gangs. Her

behavior is disrupting the healthy environment at Flora House.

What do you do?

Anamiewigummig Kenora Fellowship Centre

The Fellowship Centre is situated on the Traditional Territory of Treaty Three Anishinaabe Nation.

Kenora Fellowship Centre is a mission with





The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We strive to engage with various non-Indigenous ministries focusing on relationship building and fostering supportive programs and outreach. Our ministry interacts with predominantly Indigenous people who have been directly impacted by the effects of the Indian Residential school system including colonization.

Kenora Fellowship Centre, since its inception in 1967, has provided numerous services and various mandates all in an effort to respond to community needs. More recently, the need has been focused on housing and shelter. Many we serve have been displaced and removed from their home communities for various reasons. For over 15 years, we have operated a 21-bed emergency shelter with minimal contribution funding from the local District Services Board, and have relied heavily on donations. Part of this was also to provide food, clothing, and other basic supports such as a daily drop-in centre on a 24/7 basis. The upkeep of such an operation was not doable without adequate funding. We have had to discontinue this operation and now provide transition and room-and-board housing programs. Approximately 75–80 % of our drop-in centre patrons are considered homeless and have been for a year or more.

Currently, we are facing a shortfall for 2018 as it has been for the past number of years. Our focus has been on keeping the doors open and providing a place of safety.

Some of our other shortfalls are in the area of:

- Staffing – with the increase in usage, we need additional staff for safety reasons
- Food and supplies – we provide breakfast, lunch, and supper
- Equipment maintenance and upgrade – laundry, kitchen appliances, and mattresses
- Utilities – hydro and phone

- Training – our staff are constantly dealing with people with all kinds of issues and are in need of ongoing training in, for example, conflict resolution
- Mentorship programs – these have been very successful, however, due to inadequate resources, is not sustainable
- Healing and wellness gatherings – these provide information and awareness to patrons.

Although we have had previous fundraising coordinators, at this time however we only have a short-term Coldest Night of the Year Event coordinator. We participate in various awareness campaigns within the church. We also receive great support from the local community of Kenora through businesses and individuals.

The majority of our patrons are residential school survivors, intergeneration survivors, including those affected by the 60s scoop, and the many teens aging out of the child welfare system. One of the things we don't see at our centre are children because of the many family breakdowns and those who have been separated from their parents by the child welfare system. Recently, we have been responding to the increasing use of Opioids and the dangers of fentanyl, and the impact these abuses are having on mainly young people, and also the loss of life.

One of the highlights of our work has been with a group of very committed, strong, and inspirational elders. Together, we have coordinated reconciliation

focused events and blanket exercises. We have reached many different target groups and have been ambassadors for resetting right relations between indigenous and non indigenous people, churches, and groups. They have found a strength that far surpasses any conventional healing models as a result of their own experiences of being survivors of



the Indian Residential School, and everything that came along with that. It has been our privilege to walk with them, break bread together, listen to one another, and learn from one another.

We have engaged young men and women dealing with addiction, poverty, and poor health into our housing programs, and have seen a positive impact. We have many patrons who have lived at the fellowship centre for years. This speaks to the fact of the lack of housing and seemingly discrimination practices by many landlords. Our project Homefind address those specific issues, and we continue to operate our housing programs with best practices and have seen more positive results. We receive referrals from the courts and have provided support to many from the treaty nine communities, and it has been a great learning experience for us in dealing with them.

To keep in touch, you can find us on Facebook at Kenora Fellowship Centre.

Reflection:

1. Almost all of our Indigenous people have some history with residential schools and the 60s scoop? Even the young children have parents or grandparents who were directly affected. The legacy of the schools and the scooping of children have resulted in a few generations of dysfunction leading to drug and alcohol abuse, lack of knowledge to parent effectively, and the inability to establish trusting relationships.

What do you need to learn about the effects of generational trauma particularly on the Indigenous population?
Where and how will you seek out that information?

2. What are the REAL thoughts you have in your head when you see an Indigenous person? Name them and write them down. If these thoughts are negative,



ask yourself, “What do you need to do to reframe those thoughts into non-judgmental statements that reflect an understanding of the issues Indigenous peoples are facing?”

3. Thinking back to our passage from Luke, how do we walk with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. How do we point others to the resurrected Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the abundance of love and grace you shower upon us. Open our eyes to see you amid life’s most challenging moments. Open our hearts to extend love to those we find challenging to love, and open our ears, enabling us to hear stories of hardship and recovery. Open our minds to be willing to change our thoughts and to be willing to help freely when we can. Present God, thank you for being near, even when we cannot see. Amen.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Healing and Reconciliation Resources:

Equipping for Leadership: A guide for churches to respond to Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action provides suggestions on how to read the Calls to Action.

Reconciliation Activities for Children help children better understand the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and how they can be a part of the reconciliation journey.

A Time for Hope provides liturgies and suggestions to help leaders lift up Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights in Indigenous People in worship.

Healing and Reconciliation Seed Fund: Grants of up to \$5000 are available from The Presbyterian Church in Canada to support initiatives by Presbyterian groups that are building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

For more information on any of these resources, contact Justice Ministries, The Presbyterian Church in Canada: Carragh Erhardt at 1-800-619-7301, ext. 278 or cerhardt@presbyterian.ca