



RETURNING TO SPIRIT

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3 JUNE 10, 2009

FUNDING: CONVERSATION OF POSSIBILITIES

Our primary source of funding, through CCEPIRSS has become “stuck”. CCEPIRSS has informed us that they are not able to continue funding at the current time.

CCEPIRSS are 50 Canadian Catholic Entities Party to the Indian Residential School Settlement. They are composed of a variety of Catholic entities such as dioceses and religious orders (priests, sisters, etc) across Canada.

CCEPIRSS has been our primary funder for the last one and a half years, and we had looked forward to at least another one and half years of funding, with a potential two year extension. Combined with other funding sources, we thought that we had sufficient time to achieve financial sustainability within the initial three year timeframe.

The RTS Board, with admirable foresight, has ensured that we have a reserve fund in place that will allow us to meet our workshop commitments for the next three months at current operating costs. We are very grateful for this cushion, for without

it, we would be unable to continue to operate.

Given the disruption in our anticipated funding sources, we have developed a short-term sustainability plan which will extend these emergency funds through to the end of December 2009, and allow us to honour our commitments for scheduled workshops.

To move forward with this plan, we are looking at ways in which we can reduce our expenses and increase our revenues.

For the moment, our Trainer Development Program is on hold. We are looking at ways in which we can reduce workshop costs, perhaps by seeking more in-kind contributions.

Anthony Niiganii (our new Fund Development Director) and our Fund Development team are actively seeking to arrange emergency bridge funding as well as seeking out new funders.

We are also considering the possibility of increasing the workshop fees charged to the host communities. On average, a workshop costs

RTS \$15,000. A \$2100 deposit is paid by the host community. The difference is supported by funding from CCEPIRSS.

Finally, our efforts are also focused on developing strategies which will assist with our funding becoming unstuck. Although some might see this as a crisis which has resulted in a grim setback, we are choosing to create our future through conversations of possibilities! We are committed to maintaining our partnership with CCEPIRSS and are holding this as an opportunity to move forward rapidly and powerfully.

We will keep you apprised via the newsletter and periodic emails as to the status of our funding.

We need your help in contributing any knowledge, skills, contacts and ideas for creating sustainability. Please keep RTS and all involved in your prayers!

Encourage your family and friends to donate what they can. Tax receipts are offered!

Together we can make the impossible... possible!!!

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Funding Issue*
- *Special Event Success!*
- *Inspirational Geese Lead the Way*
- *Part 2 Workshops—Rethinking our Plan*



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FIRST ANNUAL RTS SPECIAL EVENT

On Friday May 8, our First Annual RTS Special Event was held at the Norwood Hotel in Winnipeg, MB.

About 250 people attended and a great time was held by all! If you were there, you know what we mean... If you weren't there, well, you missed something special and will want to be at the next one!

Traffic in the Silent Auction room was hot and heavy before the banquet began. Sr. Therese Cloutier had trouble keeping up with all of the eager ticket buyers who wanted to bid on items! Luckily, there were many volunteers around who were always willing to step in and lend a helping hand where needed.

The banquet was a delicious feast with lively conversation. After dinner, guests had an opportunity to put in some last minute bids on the silent auction items, as well as opportunities to visit.

It was truly inspiring to see Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal come together to create an evening of laughter, fun and intention!



Phyllis Racette and Sisters

Entertainment after dinner was provided by a variety of RTS talent, capped off with Moccasin Joe who had the entire room in stitches with his reading of the Dick & Jane stories (you had to be there)!

Finally, the much coveted Star Blanket, created by Marilyn Sinclair of Hollow Water, went to the person with the most intention... Gail Cantor!

We are most grateful to all of our volunteers who helped organize the event! We couldn't have done it without you. Many thanks as well to all of our sponsors and donors who contributed financially or with material donations.

We learned a lot from this experience, and are looking forward to our next one, which is planned for October 2009 in Saskatoon. Get your tickets early!!



Gail Cantor, RTS consultant, winner of the Star Blanket

WHETHER YOU
THINK YOU
CAN...
OR WHETHER
YOU THINK
YOU CAN'T...
EITHER WAY,
YOU ARE
RIGHT!
HENRY FORD



Marc Pizandawac &
Sr. Ann Thomson, ssa

VOLUNTEERS CORNER

Our first ever Special Event was a huge success, thanks in large part to the many volunteers who stepped forward to assist us in planning, preparing and hosting the event.

One person who deserves special mention is volunteer Elvier Brunel, who is also our Volunteer Coordinator.

Elvier stepped forward powerfully to coordinate the dif-

ferent facets of putting together the Special Event. She spent hours on the phone (ask her husband Paul!) making requests of people and inviting them to step into their greatness.

Elvier was instrumental in securing a variety of donors and funders for the Special Event, which just goes to show us, you don't need to be

in the centre of the action (Winnipeg) to make a huge difference and a huge contribution. Thank you Elvier!!!!



THE LESSON OF THE GEESE

In the fall when you see Geese heading south for the winter flying along in the "V" formation, you might be interested in knowing what science has discovered about why they fly that way.

It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Quite similar to people who are part of a team and share a common direction get where they are going quicker and easier, because they are traveling on the trust of one another and lift each other up along the way.

Whenever a Goose falls out of formation, it feels the drag and resistance of trying to go

through it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the power of the flock. If we have as much sense as a Goose, we will stay in formation and share information with those who are headed the same way that we are going.

When the lead Goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another Goose takes over. It pays to share leadership and take turns doing hard jobs.

The Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep their speed. Words of support and inspiration help energize those on the front line, helping them to keep pace in spite of the day-to-day pressures and fatigue. It is important that our honking be encouraging. Otherwise it's just - well honking!

Finally, when a Goose gets sick or is wounded by a gunshot and falls out, two Geese fall out of the formation and follow the injured one down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is either able to fly or until it is dead, and then they launch out with another formation to catch up with their group. When one of us is down, it's up to the others to stand by us in our time of trouble. If we have the sense of a Goose, we will stand by each other when things get rough. We will stay in formation with those headed where we want to go.

The next time you see a formation of Geese, remember their message that "IT IS INDEED A REWARD, A CHALLENGE AND A PRIVILEGE TO BE A CONTRIBUTING MEMBER OF A TEAM"

IF WE HAVE
NO PEACE,
IT IS BECAUSE
WE HAVE
FORGOTTEN
THAT WE
BELONG
TO EACH OTHER

BLESSED MOTHER
THERESA

PART 2 WORKSHOPS

Recently, two Part 2 workshops (one in Winnipeg and one in St. Rose du Lac) were cancelled due to a lack of participants. Combined with the cancellation of the Part 3 workshop due to an inadequate number of priests, religious and ministers, this is certainly cause for concern.

Aboriginals have a need to reconcile with representatives of the Church: bishops, priests, deacons, religious, ministers of other denominations, as well as lay representatives of the Church.

In the past, we did not have

to give much thought to organizing a Part 2 workshop, people came with a gentle invitation. Today, the situation appears very different.

For whatever reason (lack of knowledge, racism, fewer religious & priests, apathy, despair, blame), we are not drawing the same numbers of Church participants as we have in the past.

Moving forward, we are clear that we need to be much more proactive in promoting Returning to Spirit to non-Aboriginals, and particularly the Church.

We are revising our promotional material and exploring other options: articles in diocesan newspapers, promotional event centred around June 11 (anniversary of Canada's apology), June 21 (National Aboriginal Day). We are called to raise awareness, to open the eyes of people and to call them forward.

Whatever your situation, wherever you live, we ask you to promote Returning to Spirit. Speak of the transformation that is possible... for we make the impossible... possible!



RETURNING TO SPIRIT—RESIDENTIAL
SCHOOL RECONCILIATION INC.

Email: info@returningtospirit.org
www.returningtospirit.org

Calgary Office

2024 34th Avenue SW
Calgary, AB T2T 2C3
Phone—403-244-3963
Fax—403-270-3963

Winnipeg Office

548 Home St.
Winnipeg, MB R3G 1X7
Phone—204-772-1991
Fax—204-772-2051
Toll Free—1-877-772-1991

Newsletter articles are welcome!
Send to: gkjakobs@hotmail.com

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Next edition—July 31, 2009



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.

RTS SHIELD

One of the highlights of the evening was the unveiling of the new RTS Shield. The creation of this wonderful shield was inspired and lead by Elvier Brunel. It was truly a team effort with Phyllis Racette, Paul Brunel, Therese Tucker, and others all contributing (Dauphin/St. Rose du Lac area of Manitoba).

The RTS logo is a representation of the 4 colours or Man/Woman and the 4 directions. Man/Woman is standing, linked together in a circle representing reconciliation. The Red figure in front represents RTS as a First Nations organization, and First Nations people

leading the way in reconciliation. The circle is the drum which represents the heart-beat of the spirit of reconciliation. Meaning is based on Medicine Wheel teachings. Logo was designed by Myra Beaulieu, Marc Pizandawatc's wife.

The shield is composed of elk hide (painted by Therese Tucker), within a frame of willow branches (gathered by Paul Brunel and shaped by John Tucker). The pelican feathers come from the lakes near Dauphin.

The leather strips hanging from the shield have bead-work on them (courtesy of Phyllis & Larry Racette). The beads are the four colours

(red, white, black, yellow) and as one moves closer to the centre of the shield, the beads come closer together, symbolizing the re-union of all races in the future (near future!).



GIVING UP IS
NOT THE
ANSWER...

NEITHER IS
GIVING IN...

NEALE DONALD
WALSCH