



# RETURNING TO SPIRIT

OCTOBER 11, 2008 - JANUARY 31, 2009

## A LIFE OF POSSIBILITIES!

While away at training for Returning to Spirit it occurred to me that while being away from my community there was something going on back home. It's like a fire, an energy source that is there to give you support, comfort, guidance, peace, vision and so many doors to possibilities about what we are up to in life.

I pondered realizing that my community members are fulfilling areas of their lives that they never would have even thought about. I am aware that their actions are being at the effect of their lives causing breakthroughs and openings for communication not only for themselves but everyone else around them. This feels great!

I know that when I return home I am excited to find out what has happened and what they are up to now. Then I am automatically thrown into thinking about what we are up to together.

In the past my thinking was one of "things are not going to change" or "they're just going to sit and wait" or even "things are going to get worse". Not now. Where did that thinking go? What has altered? What has shifted in me?

It has come to my understanding that all I put into my life, family, work, community I get back. I get it back with a feeling that makes me excited to listen for what is happening and I can't wait to talk to someone to find out more. I'm not talking about gossip about people or anything, but about what people have been working on or what great things have occurred.

Being immersed as a trainer in Returning to Spirit, I sometimes forget and when I stop to ponder there is so much that gives me this kind of excitement. Being with my team, preparing for the next community, generating and developing ideas for our

community, sharing with my family, talking to organizations, and on and on it goes.

Much has transformed for me and around me that I can only be thankful for. I am in awe of it all. I am now watching leadership grow, possibilities discussed, people stepping in to take responsibility to lead something and in my community it comes with boisterous laughter.

I am supported by my community, the RTS trainer body and my family. I can only keep giving to the source that gives me strength, inspiration, joy and fulfillment. I feel solid in this and continue to practice speaking to acknowledge and at times uncover the greatness that lies within all that are around me. Thank you all so much. I look forward to dancing and singing with you all.



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*I opened up more about myself and my past. I was too ashamed and scared to talk about any residential school days. I did not really trust the church people. Doing a workshop with them sure made a difference. Now, I know they are just people like us, they are not special. I was skeptical about coming, but I feel at peace, worthiness, useful, one with my higher power.*

*Yes. I certainly would recommend this workshop to others. To my relatives, friends, some are already asking me about the workshop. I'll only tell some things about this workshop. If only more people would take this workshop we'd have better communities.*

*Art Pierre, Tachie, BC (Reconciliation, October 2008)*

## CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE

“Aboriginal children will be speaking the hurt of Residential School even though they have never experienced Residential School.”

That statement hit me like a tonne of bricks. Is this the legacy I want for my children? A legacy of resentment, anger and hurt; to witness the continuation of suffering, loss of identity, all in frustration?

When I first attended a Returning to Spirit five-day program in my community I was amazed.

What I experienced was beyond any healing I could have ever imagined. My spirit was deeply touched and truly awakened.

It was then that I realized that the truth I was living was one which was keeping my family and I stuck in the past, not

only my past but the past hurts of my entire community.

I made a declaration to contribute to moving my family and my community forward, creating ambition and inspiration among everyone I met.

Returning to Spirit recognizes that healing can not take place alone, true healing comes from expression of oneself in the world with the intention of moving forward.

For myself, I began to live out my declaration immediately. Instead of sitting idly by, defeated by the belief that Residential School stripped our people of their language, we focused our energy on preserving the language.

In September 2006 our

local school initiated the first Anishanabae immersion program in the province. This program will ensure that our young children will speak and understand our grandparents' first language.

We have incorporated our Elders and fluent Anishanabae community members into the program, to ensure that our children know who they are and how loved they are by all.

When asked why I became a trainer for the Returning to Spirit program the answer is simple: for my children, and my grandchildren to come.

This work brings people to life, just as it has for me.

THE ROAD OF LIFE  
TWISTS AND  
TURNS AND NO  
TWO DIRECTIONS  
ARE EVER THE  
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FROM THE JOUR-  
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DESTINATION.  
DON WILLIAMS JR

## TDP 2009 EXPERIENCE...



Blankets, drums and eagle feathers given to newly certified trainers.

This process has disrupted me in a stop-dead-in-your-tracks life altering way... It has saved my life... and given me the wake-up call I so desperately needed. *Lillian Seymour*

I have realized that I am called to lead in my greatness, to lead others to their greatness. I can no longer play small. *Gigi Jakobs*

I am not the same person I was when I arrived here on Saturday... When I go home, my family and my community will also benefit from what has happened here. *Lisa Raven*

My personal transformation continues... It is in doing this work in my own life that I will be powerful for others' lives. *Tarianne DeYonker*

## ELDERS FIND PEACE IN PRINCE GEORGE, BC

This past month RTS took another step in creating the future powerfully for ourselves and the communities that we contribute to.

In Prince George, BC, Marc Pizandawac along with a team: Dennis Chartrand, Robyn Hall, Lisa Raven and Lillian Seymour delivered the Being at Peace version of the five day workshop to a group of 18 elders from the Fort St. James area of Northern BC.

Being at Peace is a condensed version of the workshop designed in consideration of the physical abilities of the elderly.

What an amazing opportunity it was to be present to the courage and willingness that these elders displayed in transcending 60-70 years of suffering and story and moving to a place of peace and acceptance with life.

The results that were produced were especially powerful because the transformation that we witnessed will have ripple effects in their community for their children, grandchildren, great grand-

children, and for those in the community that look to them as leaders.

It has been said that as we heal our ancestors also heal. We truly believe that somewhere our great grandparents are at peace as well.

Another first in Prince George, was delivering the workshop to a blind person. As we created the workshop together with this amazing lady, we had an opportunity to witness someone experience the workshop in a way we never imagined. Not only was she actively participating in the workshop but she provided leadership to all the participants and inspiration to the trainers.

The Elders from Ft. St. James discovered how they have tried to forget experiences that impacted their lives. In the large group, one Elder shared, "We never forget any of those things. We just never talk about them and have never had anyone like Marc to help us with this stuff in our days."

The Elders recognized how

past hurts, pains, and experiences of suffering continue to be a part of their lives, families and communities. This discovery empowered them to shift that stuff out of the way to create space for their love, joy and greatness as Elders to come forward.

One other highlight was the Elders' discovery of forgiveness. When we express forgiveness to someone and there is still resentment, anger, revenge, hate; then we are simply doing forgiveness, not being forgiveness. The workshop allowed the Elders to free themselves from resentment by accepting and letting go of what they have been remembering and holding onto for so many years. They were able to just laugh, breathe, relax and be at peace, thereby creating space for something new to exist!

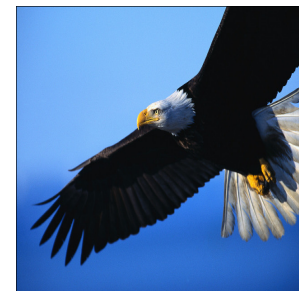
We would like to recognize and thank our coaches, Lea Boutin, Anne Thompson and Anne Lewans for helping us during the workshop process!



*I have been to a lot of workshops and this was the best one I attended. I was able to understand. It was so powerful. I could understand the way Marc explained and it really helped me to see what I was carrying all along. It was good honestly – freely freeing. I didn't realize the burden I was carrying I let it go. I feel free.*

*Yes, I would like to get together with this group in a potlatch supper in 6 months. I would recommend to all elders, friends and family. I belong to the elder's society in my community. I will be recommending this workshop to them.*

*Angeline Lee, Fort St. James B.C. Prince George Part I—Sept 08*



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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.

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*I was going through life struggling, making several attempts, to deal with the past, but with no real success. This workshop has opened my eyes to new possibilities. I discovered the model of forgiveness I had learned and lived by all my life did not exist. How do you achieve something that does not exist, this workshop has provided me with new possibilities and most importantly, the ability to forgive.*

*I would recommend the workshop to: School Principals, Foster Parents, Social Workers  
Dennis Kuyp Waterhen, MB (Dauphin Part 2—Sept 08)*

*I have felt a transformation slowly take place within me. Best way to describe it would be like peeling the skins off of an onion bit by bit until you get to the part of the onion that makes you cry—or makes you real-- Yes it has made a difference for me in how I will see myself and become more aware of my falling back into the past and dragging it with me. Becoming aware of that I feel I will be able to move more easily ahead. I am leaving here today feeling very good about myself and anxious to move more easily ahead. I am leaving here today feeling very good about myself and anxious to move ahead knowing I have the support of a coach going with me on my journey.*

*I would recommend the workshop to friends, to young adults.  
Marilyn Delaurier, Ste Rose du Lac, MB (Dauphin Part 2—Sept 08)*