

NETWORKS & CLUSTERS

2024
REPORTS

NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL




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NORTHERN SPIRIT
REGIONAL COUNCIL





Being Good Relations Network Leadership Group for Chinook Winds & Northern Spirit Regions

Annual Report 2024

- Highlights:**
- Interconnect Central Alberta Spiritual Circle: a new urban Indigenous outreach
 - 2023 Events: “Resources for Reconciliation” Webinar; National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering; Samson Cree Powwow
 - In-Person Event Planned for Sept.13-15, 2024
 - Book recommendations, getting involved, & more!
- Key Links:**
- [BGRN webpage](#)
 - email jgraham@united-church.ca to subscribe to the network’s newsletters
 - subscribe to GC’s [monthly Living into Right Relations newsletter](#)
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The Being Good Relations Network of Chinook Winds and Northern Spirit Regional Councils connects those who are committed to living out the United Church apologies and responding to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Calls to the Church of the Indigenous Church, and the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It involves building relationships with Indigenous communities of faith, and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit organizations in our communities, provinces, and territories.

The BGRN Leadership Group strives to support ‘witnesses’ and communities of faith in unlearning and learning, conversation, advocacy, taking action and spiritual practices on the journey of truth and reconciliation. We continue to discuss how the BGRN can be developed and nurtured, and the role, membership, and accountability of the Leadership Group.

We pay particular attention to TRC Call to Action #59, which states: *“We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church’s role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary”*.

Leadership Group Zoom meetings

The Leadership Group met solely via Zoom, as we continued to recover from pandemic malaise, and to clarify what the purpose of our group was and why we would meet in person. While there are 25 people on the invitation list, an average of 11 people have attended 6 zoom meetings held since last March 26, 2023 - on June 25, Aug.30, Nov. 6 and in 2024 Jan.8, Feb. 12, March 11.

Rev. Cecile Fausak has continued to facilitate the Group's meetings, and Sharon Woodhouse has been a faithful notetaker. We are grateful for the attendance of Indigenous staff Rev. Tony Snow, and Charlene Burns whenever they are able, and to Julie Graham for Zoom hosting and newsletter preparation. We were pleased to welcome to the group, Rev. Kimberly Roy from Edson who is appointed to the National Indigenous Council representing the urban Indigenous community.

Survey of Communities of Faith

During Feb./March 2023, a survey was sent to all communities of faith through the regional newsletters. There were only 11 surveys returned (out of about 180 congregations), which is not enough to base any conclusions on. We know that there is much more happening than was reported. In some places, the originally identified witnesses (in about 2015-16) are still strong. In others, they seem to have disengaged, or the work is being carried on by others with whom we are not connected. Yet many other places have never identified a witness or committed to the journey of reconciliation. We committed to making personal contact as able to help us gain a better sense of steps being taken, stumbling blocks, and the needs to begin and sustain the journey.

“Resources for Reconciliation” Webinar April 22, 2023

We are grateful to the following people who graciously agreed to share about some resource or activity that was a success in their community:

- Mary Shillington, McKillop, Lethbridge – attending a powwow
- Mary Shearer, Grace UC (Edmonton), formerly Ralph Connor Memorial (Canmore) – the Ally Tool Kit prepared by Chinook Winds, and the street education done in Canmore
- Don Fraser, St. Andrew's, Lacombe – value of display table and bulletin board
- Shauna Kennedy, McDougall, Calgary and Gloria Snow – congregation painting a wall Reconciliation Mural in May (<https://www.mcdunited.com/reconciliation-mural>)
- Mary Card, United in the Park, Sherwood Park – book studies, connecting with Beaver Hill Biosphere knowledge keepers

22 attended and were inspired. Unfortunately, the webinar did not get recorded.

Remembering the Children Society

There was the largest turnout on June 11 Remembering the Children Day in Red Deer. A team of Indigenous students at Victoria School of the Arts in Edmonton has produced a documentary called “Remembering the Children: The Red Deer Indian Industrial School” which was shown at the Central Alberta Film Festival in October, and in many other film festivals around the world since. Co-director Chris Anderson was guest speaker at the Society's November Annual General Meeting at which time Lyle Keewatin-Richards and Rev. Ross Smillie were acclaimed as President and Vice-President of the Society, respectively. The Society is focusing on an educational and commemorative role now.

National Indigenous Spiritual Gathering (NISG)

The NISG of the United Church was held in Edmonton July 27-30, 2024. Several Edmonton area churches provided snack bags that were gratefully received upon delegates' arrival at the airport. Several members of the group were also able to observe various parts of the proceedings and were particularly impressed by the youth participation. Moderator Lansdowne was the opening keynote speaker, and Carol Many Chief serving in southern Alberta was ordained.

Remit #1 Establishing a National Autonomous Indigenous Church

The deadline for each community of faith to vote on Remit #1 is March 31. There have been many resources prepared and shared to help people understand its intent. Submissions of votes on the remit have been very slow, and we are very concerned that all communities of faith vote, as a non-vote is counted as a 'no' vote. It has been a sad eye opener as to how little the wider church knows about the Indigenous church in its midst.

Interconnect Central Alberta Spiritual Circle

The Circle, a new urban Indigenous outreach, has held monthly gatherings in Edmonton out of the former Beverly UC, and as of November, began to hold monthly potlucks and sharing/teaching circles in Red Deer as well, from the Family Heritage Services offices. United Church members in the area have been invited and attended each gathering and assisted with the purchase of orange t-shirts to be sold as a fundraiser. The Red Deer Circle held a well-attended event on Sept. 30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE)

Preparations are well underway for the implementation of the revised KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE) and delivery framework involving Indigenous partner organizations. The release is scheduled for late this spring. <https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/>

KAIROS Prairies North Region

The Decolonizing Group hosted an excellent webinar on May 30, 2023 called "Legislating Broken Promises: Past and Present" about the Natural Resources Transfer Act which defies the relationship envisioned by treaties, particularly in conjunction with the Alberta Sovereignty Act. Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7rQuIE-Rek>. The annual hybrid meeting of the KPN Region was held Oct.28 on the theme of climate justice and "Energy for Change."

Samson Cree Powwow

UC members from Drayton Valley, Rimbey, and Lacombe attended the Samson Cree Powwow on August 12, enjoying the Grand Entry, speeches by the Lt. Governor and Chief Wilton Littlechild, the vendors, and the intertribal dances and dance contests. The color, sound, movement, and welcome are amazing.

Memoirs Published, and Launched at Hillhurst United, Calgary

Group member Sandra Hayes-Gardiner has launched her book "Crossing the River: An Unsettling Memoir" in The Pas, MB and in Calgary in January – her account of facing her racism

and white privilege. Stephen Kakfwi from Yellowknife launched “Stoneface: A Defiant Dene” – a residential school survivor, a songwriter, and former NWT premier. Another good read is by UC member Heather Menzies: “Meeting my Treaty Kin.”

We decided that we would not hold another book study, but would have a webinar based on a film or video which focuses on reconciliation, becoming friends and allies.

In-Person Event Planned for Sept.13-15, 2024

After much soul-searching at our November and January meetings, it was decided to hold an in-person gathering for the Leadership Group and endeavouring to invite a matching number of Indigenous people who are willing to build relationships with us and take steps towards reconciliation. An ad hoc planning group was struck, chaired by Johanna Pritchard (McKillop). The gathering will be held Sept.13-15, 2024 at Rundle’s Mission on Pigeon Lake. Funding will largely come from the designated Living into Right Relations Fund carried over from the Alberta and Northwest Conference dissolution.

Clusters

Rev. Tony Snow continues to host a monthly Tuesday Indigenous Ministries Circle online hour as an opportunity for those in Chinook Winds region to learn about resources and upcoming events, and connect with each other. Thanks to Shauna Kennedy, folks in Calgary churches have been convening about every 2 months; and Johanna Pritchard has been working in the Lethbridge area with the Kanai Nation.

Thanks to Mary Shearer, people in Edmonton and surrounding churches have also been coming together to support the Central Alberta Spiritual Circle and each other.

Resources, E-newsletters, Webpage, Facebook groups

We continue to make posts to the private and public Facebook pages of upcoming events, campaigns, and resources, although the inability to post news items is making the pages less useful. You can contact jgraham@united-church.ca to subscribe to the BGRN periodic e-newsletters. There is a [BGRN webpage](#). You can also [subscribe to the monthly Living into Right Relations newsletter](#) from the desk of General Council Reconciliation and Indigenous Justice. Grants for communities of faith are available from the [Justice & Reconciliation Fund](#) for projects to bring people together for learning and healing.

If you have any questions, suggestions, comments, or want to get more involved, please contact us:

On behalf of those on the journey of reconciliation,

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Saskatoon (Northern Spirit)





Rural Ministry Network of the United Church of Canada

Annual Report 2024

- Highlights:**
- A National, grassroots initiative for Rural Ministry in the United Church of Canada made by and for rural church members
 - CiRCLe M, a prairies ecumenical centre, is hosting a conference, *Experiencing the Rural Culture of the Alberta Foothills*, June 18-21.
 - Tech Resources for rural ministries & for scarce budgets!
 - Quarterly Workshops on UCRMN topics
- Key Links:**
- Rural Ministry Network website: ucrmn.ca
 - If you have an interest in finding out more, or to volunteer, please email us at info@UCRMN.ca
- 

The United Church Rural Ministry Network (UCRMN) is a national network, that connects electronically sharing stories and news of rural communities across Canada (and around the world), by networking with lay and clergy leaders of rural communities of faith. Find us on our website ucrmn.ca.

Let me walk with you through some of the resources on the UCRMN website. Peter Chynoweth (Cochrane, AB) is the web minder. The 'Network' connection includes a partner Atlantic Canada network called Rural Roots Through the Holy which has sponsored conferences in the Maritimes for 3 years. In the Prairies is highlighted the ecumenical Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry (CiRCLe M) which has connections to Saskatoon Theological Union. CiRCLe M is hosting a conference, *Experiencing the Rural Culture of the Alberta Foothills*, June 18-21.

Then there are 'Resources'. I would like to recommend to all 'Tech Resources'. Martin Dawson, from Cornwall, PEI, and web minder Peter Chynoweth write thoughtfully, with humour and matters of ethical consideration of computers. They discuss the use of inexpensive software, like the free Jitsi meet instead of Zoom, refurbishing old and tired computers using open source software – in short, 'tech for scarce budgets' with an eye to keeping our tech out of landfills.

Next comes practical and helpful information on Collaborative Ministry, ways for congregations and communities of faith to work in partnership with others.

Then there are interviews that Martin hosts: With Peter on Open Software as an Ethical Alternative; with George Bott on Rural Connect; with Catherine Smith on her views of rural ministry and initiatives in the Maritimes; with Catherine Christie and Eric Skillings on the founding and workings of UCRMN. (These interviews are also found on Short-Wave Radio stations, a huge love of Martin's).

The next area is Workshops, with information about the quarterly Zoom workshops that UCRMN has hosted through the years. During this Regional Council year, 2023-24, workshops have been: on April 18 - Social Media in the Rural Church, facilitated by United Church Digital Team, Cara Czech, Stephen Fetter and Aaron Gallogos; Feb. 15 – Life Long Learning facilitated by St. Andrew’s College staff, Dr. Bernon Lee and Shawn Sanford Beck; Nov. 16 – Pastoral Care to the Rural Church, led by Kathy Douglas of Antler River Watershed; Sept. 21 – further discussions on Collaborative Ministry; June 22 - Radically Welcoming and Rural, the opportunities of Diversity in the Rural Church.

Then there is ENews, with an archive of all the past ENews, from 2020 to 2024. We print 9 editions of UCRMN ENews during the year. Events happening throughout the Church are publicized, advertising from Regions and committees, the regular column on Tech Advice, a regular column from Joyce Sasse’s Gleanings of a Prairie Pastor, reports from Conferences, and most importantly, stories from congregations of community action and ministries. We love to have stories shared. If you have something to tell, send an article (about 300 to 500 words) to editor@UCRMN.ca.

There are over 400 members of UCRMN across the country and in most Regional Councils. As a Network, UCRMN asks for financial support from each Regional Council. We thank those who have given support from their Networking funds. Our suggestion is \$300 from each RC - UCRMN wishes to support all the Regional Councils in their rural ministries. (70% of United Church congregations across the country are in rural or small towns, therefore a relevant cost to each Regional Council.)

UCRMN members are taking part in the “Rural Townhall” by Edge Network for Ministry Development, to hear peoples’ thoughts about what is going on in rural churches, and how rural ministries can be supported.

We are a grassroots initiative for Rural Ministry in the United Church of Canada. Our goal is to connect the many Rural Ministry initiatives across Canada.

Respectfully submitted by UCRMN Board:

Catherine Christie, President UCRMN, Abbey, SK, Living Skies RC

Eric Skillings, Secretary/Treasurer UCRMN, Merlin, ON, Antler River Watershed RC

Shelley Roberts, Vice President UCRMN, Lanark ON, Eastern Ontario Outaouais RC

Donna Mann, Officer UCRMN, Elora ON, Western Ontario Waterways RC

Yvonne Terry, Officer UCRMN, Milestone SK, Living Skies RC



Western Intercultural Ministry Network of the United Church of Canada

Report for the Annual Meetings of the Western Regions – 2023-2024

*(Prairie to Pine, Living Skies, Northern Spirit, Chinook Winds, Pacific Mountain
Regional Councils, and the Indigenous Church)*

- Highlights:**
- The Network held its first in person Network Conference since 2019 in October 2023, around the theme *Daring Justice: Intercultural and Decolonizing Lenses on Truth and Reconciliation*.
 - Coffee/Chai time series will continue in 2024 in September and November
- Key Links:**
- For more information and intercultural ministries news: <https://northernspiritr.ca/programs/intercultural-ministry/>
 - Sign up for updates from the WICMN [here!](#)

The Western Intercultural Network is a relatively ‘young’ network of communities in the United Church of Canada committed to a fully inclusive and intercultural church, covering the five Western Regional Councils.

The network holds gatherings, educational events and online conversations that focus on intercultural discussions and dialogue. Network members are engaging in and promoting action in their regions towards living out the UCC’s vision of being an intercultural church ([Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](https://www.united-church.ca)). An executive composed of representatives from the five Western Regional Councils of the United Church offers us leadership.

Our vision of becoming an intercultural United Church encompasses:

- Racialized people and communities, which includes ethnic churches within the United Church, racialized lay leaders, and ministry personnel, and more.
- Indigenous people and communities, within the United Church and beyond, of all traditions.
- People with disabilities.
- LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit people and communities.
- The privileged, yet broken, who are seeking wholeness and justice.

We are each worthy individuals and numerous cultural groups, and richer for our diversity. And we are at the same time engaged in a common pursuit of caring for each other and the planet. We honour our identities, and the spaces where they intersect. Our ministry includes courageous (and awkward!) conversations about our diversity, and about the social privilege and history that hinder right relationships. We believe the Good News of Jesus Christ calls us into such conversations, right relationship, and mutual transformation.

2023-2024 Activities

* The Network held its first in person Network Conference since 2019 from October 19 – 21, 2023 at Star of the North Retreat Centre in St Albert AB, Treaty Six. The event was attended by approximately 30 persons. The group enjoyed the opportunity to connect in person with others from across the five western regions as well as one person from Ontario, around the theme ***Daring Justice: Intercultural and Decolonizing Lenses on Truth and Reconciliation***. We are grateful for the engagement of these presenters in making the event a success with their topic focus areas:

- Russel & Charlene Burns: Protocol and Cultural Awareness
- MiYeon Kim: “Magpie, You Bring the Good News: Interculturality and Creativity in Ministry”
- Becca Whitla: “Singing and Praying Justly”
- Lloyd Nyarota:”Toward a Better Society: The Church’s Mission and Ministry of Reconciliation: A study from Zimbabwe discussed in a Canadian Context”
- Chris Pullenayegem: “Hiding in Plain Sight: the Impact of Immigration”
- Murray Pruden: “The Act of Storytelling - Collective Street and Community Theatre, “Approaching Intercultural & Decolonizing Lenses on Truth and Reconciliation”



* Throughout the past year the Executive continued discussions on how well the network is addressing its Mandate and TOR. The discussions confirm that education on intercultural vision is key work of the network. This education focus is delivered through continuing Coffee Chai events and in person events, when possible.

* The network did not have its usual Coffee Chai sessions in the past year, choosing to focus on delivering this first face-to-face event since 2019.

* The network sees broadening its involvement in other UCC intercultural and anti-racism work as key. Members of the network have done so in various ways, including contributions of written reflections to the 40 Days on Engagement on Anti-Racism series.

* The Executive has been asked from time to time throughout the year to disseminate information to the network about opportunities to serve on UCC committees or working groups and to encourage persons in the network to discern their involvement and submit nominations to these groups.

* Since June 2023 the WIMN Executive has been liaising with Emo Yango, Identity and Mission Network Coordinator at GCO, and responding to invitations to participate, along with other ethno-cultural networks within the UCC, in discussions that contribute to the strategic plan development. Specifically WIMN and other ethno-cultural networks have been asked to discern what a long-term national support would look like for these networks. These discussions included meetings of the network executive with Emo Yango, as well as participation of representatives from WIMN in online and a face-to-face discussion in Toronto in early October 2023 on this topic. WIMN has a unique voice at the table as the group is the only intercultural network that is formed across several Regions. The network is happy to contribute to this work. One outcome of these discussions is that moving forward, ethno-cultural network leads will meet online quarterly and there are plans in place to meet once per year (in October) in person.

Annual Meeting

WIMN hosted its Annual meeting on October 20, 2023 at Star of the North Retreat Centre in St Albert AB, Treaty Six, in conjunction with its Network Conference.

At the meeting some edits to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the network were approved. The updated TOR can be reviewed [here](#).

The members of the Executive that guided the Network's activities for 2022-23 chose to remain involved and to offer their gifts and stewardship for the work of the network for another year. Thank you!

The Executive for 2023-24 comprises:

Co-Chairs: Kathy Yamashita (Chinook Winds) and Deborah Richards (Pacific Mountain)

Secretary: Rev. Chelsea Masterman (Northern Spirit)

Pacific Mountain: Alwin Maben (past chair)

Chinook Winds: Rev. Dr. OhWang Kwon

Northern Spirit: Dorcas Muketha

Living Skies: Mathias Ross, Salesi Takau

Prairie to Pine: Damber Khadka, Bill Millar

Staff support: Julie Graham (Living Skies, Prairie to Pine and Northern Spirit Regions), Chris Mah Poy (Pacific Mountain and Chinook Winds Region)

The Executive has been meeting monthly for 90 minutes. In early 2024 we changed this schedule and will now meet bi-monthly for 60 minutes, with other planning discussions for events occurring as needed in between meetings. This provides an opportunity for us to connect about activities in our regions.

Looking forward

The Executive will continue to build on its ongoing discussions on how the Network will engage in supporting and living out the call within our regions to be an Intercultural Church. The Network is also continuing to engage with other Ethnocultural groups within the UCC via the Ethnocultural Network Leads group.

Upcoming Events

Coffee/Chai time series will continue in 2024 in September and November (in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting).

Contact Us

If you would like to be contacted about WIMN events you can [sign up for occasional updates here](#); you can unsubscribe at any time, and we don't share your information with anyone else.

Respectfully Submitted by

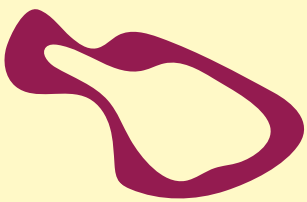
Kathy Yamashita and Deborah Richards

Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Executive of the Western Intercultural Ministries Network

March 25, 2024





Women of the United Church

President's Report for Chinook Winds and Northern Spirit Regions March 2024

- Highlights:**
- 2023 AGM was held at FCJ Centre, Edmonton with the theme “*We are One: A Look at Bias and Racism*”
 - 2024 AGM will be held at the Providence Centre, Edmonton, May 9 to 11 2024, theme “*For the Beauty of the Earth: Caring for Creation*”
- Key Links:**
- UCW updates: <https://northernspiritr.c.ca/programs/united-church-women/>
 - [February EBanner Newsletter](#)



Women of the UC: Chinook Winds & Northern Spirit are continuing with Hope. Over the past year, several UCW units have closed due to aging members, they are not able to carry on as a UCW unit anymore. However, they are still active within their Communities of Faith, living out the purpose of “Christian witness, fellowship, and service. Closing services for the units that close are conducted, so their work and service throughout all the years is not forgotten. Several UCWs are still active and managing to keep going. We are working towards finding ways to encourage new, younger women to join UCW. NUCW recently passed a motion to offer UCW Individual Memberships which are available for women who are not able to attend a local UCW group or who do not have a local UCW group available to them. This has helped those members whose units have closed to still be a part of the UCW.

Throughout 2023, two Full Executive, and five Sub-Executive meetings were held. The theme for the October Zoom Full-Executive meeting was - “For the Beauty of the Earth: Caring for Creation. (This Theme will also be our theme for our 2024 AGM). The guest speaker at the October Full Executive meeting was Rev Trevor Potter, a Certified Forest Therapy Guide. His message was informative and enlightening – one of his Quotes was: “if we want to care of Creation, the first step is to be in a relationship with Creation, so Creation can teach us” – end quote. Our 2023 AGM was held at FCJ Centre, Edmonton. The theme was “We are One: A Look at Bias and Racism”. Our guest speaker was Adele Halliday. We had a series of presentations, discussions, videos and group activities. We were encouraged to consider and discuss what we can do to dismantle unjust power, and ‘move to a place for all’.

Last September, four of our Executive attended the National UCW AGM in Mississauga. The Moderator and the UCC General Secretary spoke to us and encouraged us to “stay the course”, keep our UCWs going and to remember “Where there is Hope, there is Faith”. Our own, Barbara Davison was installed as our new National UCW President. Barbara’s message to us was “Lead not only by word, but by action”. The new NUCW five-year project, “The Healing Fund”, was chosen at that meeting. As of January 31/24, UCW has contributed \$28,383.79.

Our 2024 AGM will be held at the Providence Centre, Edmonton from 9th to 11 May 2024. Our Theme is “For the Beauty of the Earth: Caring for Creation”. Our guest speakers are Dr Jenna Butler, essayist, poet, author; she has done work in the environmental humanities; Alison Brooks-Starks and Judi Chaytors, speaking on eco-therapeutic practices; and Salwa Kadri, from the Al Rashid Mosque, Edmonton, she will be speaking to us about their women’s programs and their inner city work in Edmonton.

Looking forward with Hope and Faith.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eleanore Tribe, President
Women of the UC: Chinook Winds & Northern Spirit



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Northern Spirit Regional Council
of the United Church of Canada

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