

## **Minute for Right Relations**

May 2014

*The Memory Project – “Words of action and sincerity”.*

Memories fade over time. People get older and priorities shift. What seemed important long ago may not seem relevant today. Does this sound familiar?

As the United Church of Canada discerns a new configuration for the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there will be hard decisions of what to let go and what to carry forward into the future life of the church.

The Apology that the church made to First Nations Peoples in 1986 has been described as a pivotal moment in our shared history. The words that were offered by then Moderator Robert Smith in the Sudbury Laurentian University parking lot continue to inform our identity as Canada’s largest Protestant denomination. Two years after the apology was made, Edith Memnook, on behalf of the First Nations UCC members replied that they “hoped and prayed that the Apology is not symbolic but that these are words of action and sincerity.”

As a way to honour and remember and carry forward the “words of action and sincerity” the Manitou Conference Right Relations Home Group has committed to preserving the stories of some of the participants in the 1986 Apology. Working alongside Laurentian University film studio director Dr. Hoi Chu and Huntington University Librarian Dr. Natasha Gerolami, key participants in the Apology are being interviewed and print materials collected for the Huntington library for future research and study, lest we forget. The work of the Memory Project is ongoing and anyone who was present at the 1986 Apology who wish to write down their own memories for safe keeping is encouraged to do so and send them along to the Huntingdon library.

National Aboriginal Day falls on a Sunday in 2014. In many congregations our worship will reflect our troubled relationship with First Peoples and our longing for justice and reconciliation. A good place to begin might be offering the words offered in 1986... “Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here...” And as the words are offered cast in your mind the image of a church gathered around a sacred fire on a warm August night ... a drum reminding them of the heartbeat of Mother Earth and the longing for a different common life “so that our people’s may be blessed and God’s creation healed.” May it be so.

Elizabeth Frazer along with the Memory Project Steering Committee

Dr. Hoi Chu -Faculty of Humanities and Social Services- Laurentian University

Carol Germa \_ Manitou Conference Right Relations Home Group

Dr. Natasha Gerolami – Librarian - Huntington University

Gillian Schell – Manitou Intentional Learning Community

Rev Will Kunder – Executive Secretary – Manitou Conference