

## Native American Ministry Supplemental Report

**This report was prepared by the Native American Consulting Committee in continuing response to the following referral: *2002 Referral: Item 11:02, Report: A Comprehensive Strategy for Ministries with Native Americans: 2002 Supplemental Recommendations of the General Assembly Special Task Force on Native American Ministries, Recommendation 4: Request that a report on implementation of the recommended strategies be presented to the 219th General Assembly (2007), in coordination with the Native American Consulting Committee and appropriate General Assembly entities. The report should include consideration of the policies set out in the UPCUSA, Native American Ministry Churchwide Policy Statement, 191st General Assembly (1979) (Minutes, 1979, Part I, pp. 91, 401-4).***

### Background

Previous reports deriving from this referral include a report on the Native American Churchwide Consultation, held in Albuquerque, NM, April 22-24, 2005, and a report from the Office of Native American Congregational Enhancement, which focused on pertinent statistics regarding Native Americans from both the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the 2000 Census; both reports were presented to the 217th General Assembly (2006).

The *Churchwide Policy Statement for Native American Ministry* adopted by the 191st General Assembly (1979) of the United Presbyterian Church (USA) (*Minutes, 1979, Part 1, pp. 91-401-4*) is the current PC(USA) mandate for Native American Ministries. It continues to be an important guide for Native American ministries, for its policy directions are basic and achievable. Another critical document, *Comprehensive Strategy for Ministry with Native Americans*, adopted by the 212th General Assembly (2000), developed strategies to support and supplement this policy. Under current PC(USA) policy, the Native American Consulting Committee is the primary consultative body on Native American ministries in the PC(USA). The NACC periodically reviews the 1979 Churchwide Policy statement to identify progress being made in the areas identified in that report and those that provide continuing challenges. This report represents the NACC's continuing effort to assist the PC(USA) in implementing and supporting this policy.

The 1979 policy statement identified ten critical areas that needed to be addressed by the church as it went forward in ministry with Native Americans. They are:

- 1) **Mutuality in Mission:** The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will seek to understand Native American culture and respect the philosophy, values and heritage of Native Americans in order that Presbyterians may learn from Native American lifestyles and benefit from fellowship with them.
- 2) **Preparation for Native American Ministry:** Native American ministerial candidates and non-Native American pastors engaged in ministries with Native Americans must be oriented to Native American culture, heritage, history and religious thought.

- 3) Leadership: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to a ministry that is trained, ordained and installed according to certain prescribed standards. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will work toward the provision of a competent ministry in every Native American congregation.
- 4) Continuing Education: Continuing education opportunities are important to Native Americans in the professional ministry. Cooperative efforts by national agencies, governing bodies, and church education institutions should be undertaken to develop special programs designed to address specific and current concerns in Native American communities.
- 5) Pastoral Support: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) commits itself to the principle of adequate financial compensation and benefits for pastors and their families serving Native American congregations.
- 6) Lay Leadership: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through its presbyteries will provide resources to train elders and other lay leader for witness and service in both church and community.
- 7) Facilities, Buildings and Land: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will encourage the use of criteria set for constructing and maintaining church buildings, facilities, land and equipment utilized in Native American ministries that conform to the highest possible standards for promotion of their ministries.
- 8) National Agency, Council and Committee Relations: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will promote and effect through the General Assembly Committee on Nominations the membership of Native Americans on agencies, councils and committees at the national level.
- 9) Ecumenical Relationships: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will support and promote ecumenical participation and development of endeavors among Native Americans, particularly on the reservation and in urban areas where denominational differences impede Christian witness.
- 10) Secular Relationships: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will affirm, assist, and be an advocate for the efforts of Native American people for the betterment of Native American life, both on and off the reservation.

Since then, the 212th General Assembly (2000) adopted a *Comprehensive Strategy* developed by a Special Task Force on Native American Ministries, which recommended the addition of three more areas.

They are:

11) Urban Ministries: As more and more American Indian people move from reservations and many move to cities, urban ministry with American Indians become critically important to the church.

12) Youth Ministry: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will assist and support Native American Youth Ministries in developing programs which will encourage Native American youth to learn about, develop skills in, and deepen a commitment to Indian ministry.

13) Economics: The Native American Consulting Committee will advocate and promote Native American economic development on reservations and in urban areas through appropriate bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The basis for these areas of concern lies in the history of Native American ministries within various Presbyterian bodies now represented as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). For a more complete version of this history, see Appendix A at the end of this report or “Summary of the Historic Relationship between the Presbyterian Church and Native American Peoples” at [www.pcusa.org/nativeamerican](http://www.pcusa.org/nativeamerican) (click on Reports and Policies).

Prior to the 1970s, Native American ministries in the Presbyterian Church functioned through either a “Foreign Missions” approach (in which missionaries were sent to evangelize the non-Christian Natives on the American frontier) or a “Home Missions” approach (in which ministries and their properties were coordinated and funded through a centralized national board). In the early 1970s, however, through a major restructuring of the denominational offices, Native churches were moved from the umbrella of the Board of National Missions to being part of the presbyteries and synods in which they were physically located. Thus approximately 100 congregations, for many of whom “the Presbyterian Church” was represented by a national missions field staff person, experienced an abrupt transition. To be Presbyterian suddenly meant being part of new, unfamiliar, and often uncertain, relationships with presbyteries with whom they had few, if any, prior dealings and vice versa.

In 1969, as this reorganization was being anticipated, the General Assembly provided seed money to be used for projects on Indian reservations. An ad hoc committee, the Indian Consulting Panel, was created to review proposals for the use of those funds. It soon became apparent, however, that a permanent consultative body was needed.

The Native American Consulting Committee was formally established in 1977, with authority to evaluate and recommend programs seeking national funding and to provide counsel to the General Assembly agencies and synods on matters affecting Native peoples. The 1983 Reunion resulted in a total of 109 Native congregations in the newly formed Presbyterian Church (USA).

#### Office for Native American Congregational Support (NACS)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy and commitment supports the principle of self-determination for Native American congregations. However, as is often the case with small

congregations throughout the denomination, Native congregations are reliant upon partnerships within and beyond the denomination in order to function and survive. The office for Native American Congregational Support (NACS), as part of the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women ministry area within the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC), is the "connection" between Native ministries and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The purpose of the office for Native American Congregational Support is to enable the PC(USA) to respond to Native American congregational issues and to enable Native American Presbyterians to participate actively and effectively within the PC(USA) at all levels. The office serves as the voice of these congregations and provides a sounding board for their concerns. It is also the link to critical information such as leadership development opportunities. The office is a key partner as presbyteries and synods strive to support Native American ministries within their bounds. It also serves as an important source of information and orientation for national and middle governing body staff, in the PC(USA) as well as other denominations, particularly as these bodies experience restructuring and staff transitions. The reliance of Native congregations and pastors on the national office and its associate staff person cannot be overstated.

### Native American Consulting Committee

Working closely with the NACS office, the Native American Consulting Committee (NACC) is the other critical link in sustaining Presbyterian commitment to Native American ministries and implementing churchwide policies and strategies in this area.

NACC began as a consulting body during the 1960s-1970s transition from the top-down model, through which the Board of National Missions had jurisdiction over Native congregations and ministries, to the current model in which Native ministries are part of presbyteries and synods based on geography. (The Presbytery of Dakota, a non-geographical presbytery, which serves Native congregations in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Montana, is an exception.)

The concept was one of consultation; decisions would not be made *about* Native people without their presence and their participation. Over time, NACC has become the voice of Native people within the denomination, as well as the voice of the denomination with regard to matters of importance to Native people, their congregations and communities. The concept of consultation is so important that when other racial ethnic advocacy groups took the name *caucus*, Native American representation within the PC(USA) chose to retain the Consulting Committee title.

Funding for many areas of church life has diminished in recent years. Support for the NACC is no exception. We now do most of our work by email and conference call, with one face-to-face meeting a year. As our members are from diverse parts of the country, we are able, however, to provide consultation to presbyteries and synods close to our own base. This ability to travel, to meet and dialogue with Native congregations and their presbyteries, makes a critical difference in sustaining vital ministry and enhancing the congregational revitalization process.

## Areas Needing Particular Focus at This Time

Several of the strategies highlighted in the *Comprehensive Strategy* paper (2000) are of particular importance at this time and require particular attention from the church, Native and non-Native alike. First and foremost is the need for a broad-based consultation on Native American ministry through which the many areas of concern can be addressed and discussed, and new vision for implementing the strategies can be developed and communicated. Plans for this consultation are underway.

## Plans for a Churchwide Consultation on Native American Ministry

Native Americans work through relationship, and meeting together is critical to our being able to learn from the past in order to envision the future. One of the important ways this has happened in the past was through “Eight Synod” consultations, which brought together Native American clergy and leaders, as well as middle governing body staff and leadership, from throughout the synods where Native American congregations are located. Though initially held every three years, the last such consultation was held in 2005. A report on this consultation was prepared for the 217th General Assembly (2006).

It is critical that another consultation be held soon, with an even broader complement of participation. Given the increasing numbers of non-reservation Indians, the next consultation must include persons from presbyteries and urban areas with strong non-reservation Native populations. There are persons who have expressed interest and willingness to engage in Native American ministry even though they do not live in a presbytery that currently engages in Native American ministry. And there are institutions and agencies that have offered to help resource Native congregations. Through such broad participation we can better generate continuing vision for Native American ministry through the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The consultation will provide opportunity for conversation and dialogue in all the areas highlighted by the 2000 paper. It will also provide an opportunity to educate and strategize in the areas that are of special importance to us at this point, namely Urban and Off-Reservation Ministry, Youth Ministry and Leadership Development, Preparation for Ministry and Congregational Leadership Development, and Economic Development. A consultation is a critical tool by which implementation of the strategies for Native American ministry in the PC(USA) could be carried into the next decade.

We plan to hold a churchwide consultation no later than 2012.

## Urban and Off-Reservation Ministries

Of the nearly 2.5 million American Indians (2000 census) in the United States, over half (65%) live in metropolitan areas. Less than a third reside on reservations and trust lands. Since World War II, many Native people have moved to large cities. This initially was in response to the federal government's Indian Relocation Program; now Native people move to cities in search of education, economic opportunity, and social mobility, as do persons from other racial ethnic

backgrounds. Some Indian people mingle and intermarry with other Native people and non-Indians, making a good adjustment to city life. Despite the distance, many maintain strong ties with their families and their reservation communities and look to retirement as a time to return to the reservation and once again have closer relationship with family, tribal friends, and the reservation congregation that formed them in the faith. For a large number, however, the urban setting is a hostile environment marked by discrimination, employment problems, family difficulties and health concerns. Most Natives do not affiliate with Euro-American churches because they do not feel comfortable in these churches or welcomed by them.

Native American ministries in urban areas provide the spiritual base necessary for people to deal with the issues of daily life. One off-reservation Native American church is Central Presbyterian Church in Phoenix, Arizona, which has historically served Native people. In other cities, Native ministries are nurtured within existing Presbyterian churches. This is the case in Albuquerque and the Los Angeles area. In Anchorage, the newly chartered Anchor Presbyterian Church serves Native people in the surrounding area. In Spokane, a Native ministry is working towards having its first ordained pastor. NACC is involved in ongoing consultation with presbyteries who have generated and/or hope to generate off-reservation ministries.

We lift up for special commendation these urban Indian congregations for their leadership in serving the social and spiritual needs of Native people, often across tribal lines. As with other Native ministry, they are built on relationship, and they invite partnerships with other congregations and individual friends. Visit, participate and learn: urban Indian congregations seek your partnership.

In areas where there currently is no off-reservation Native ministry, NACC is available to assist presbyteries in exploring ways existing congregations might extend outreach and welcome to Native people, either through the formation of a Native fellowship or through the development of a multicultural congregation that would include Native people.

### Youth Ministry and Leadership Development

Fostering youth work is important to the life of the church regardless of the setting. In the context of Native American ministry, it is especially critical. Native American youth ministry has evolved over the years to the current model of the American Indian Youth Council (AIYC), which was formed in 1994. The council brings together a group of eight youth representing the eight synods with Native American ministries within their bounds. AIYC is supported by two to four adults who serve as advisors as well as the staff of the Native American Congregational Support office. Every three years a new council is organized with new representatives from the eight synods. Each newly-formed council participates in an organizational meeting with a focus on developing leadership skills; it also represents Native American youth at PC(USA) gatherings in order to increase their experience of organized conferences. In their third year, Council members plan, organize and implement a national conference directed toward youth from Native American churches. Through these events, Native youth find connection with

others like themselves, which strengthens and encourages them to continue their faith journey despite their physical isolation from one another.

The Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Strategy Report, adopted by the 210th General Assembly (1998), recognized the need to give emphasis to Native American youth work and included it in its recommendations. NACC supports this strategy and is supported by it.

### Leadership Development and Preparation for Native American Ministry

The number of Native American congregations, chapels and ministries within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) fluctuates as churches are closed and new urban fellowships begin. The number, however, remains about 109, spread over 20 presbyteries and eight synods.

The 2004 Session Annual Statistical Report indicated a Native American membership of more than 10,000 within the denomination (1133 congregations have one or more Native Americans, and 97 congregations have 50% or more Native American membership). The year of organization for these congregations ranged from 1640 to 2002.

A key concern, however, is that very few Native ministries can sustain a full-time installed pastor, and the membership in many of the congregations is less than 50. On average, worship attendance is about 25 persons, and the average operating income is less than \$27,000.

Native American congregations are rarely led by ordained ministers. Congregations that are led by Native ordained ministers are even rarer. Of the forty persons identified as Native American clergy within the denomination, one-third serves as pastor in a congregation, one-third serves in other capacities within the church, and one-third is retired from active service.

Part of the issue is that ordained clergy are reluctant to serve on isolated reservations or are unwilling or unable to accept the financial package available from these congregations. With assistance from presbytery, synod or mission partnership grants, some Native Churches have been able to provide at least presbytery-minimum salaries, but these are the exception.

Ironically, as “missions” of the national church years ago, Native churches more often had the benefit of full-time ordained leadership than is now the case. The transition of Native ministries, from “missions” to self-determining congregations within presbyteries, put the onus on the congregations to provide salary support, despite the demographics that made this virtually impossible. Recruitment of more Native Americans for the ministry is certainly needed, but the larger problem is that of providing them with a livable wage upon ordination and call. For that, partnership through presbyteries and synods will continue to be essential.

In order to enhance the training, equipping and development of leadership for Native American ministries, NACC works with presbyteries and synods to identify and nurture potential candidates for both ordained and lay leadership in the church.

The future of the Presbyterian Church (USA) lies in its ability to develop and sustain racial ethnic and multicultural congregations. This is dependent on the identification of potential candidates, the availability of culturally-sensitive curricula and learning environments, and the development of scholarship assistance. At the national level, the office for Preparation for Ministry and the office for Church Leadership Connection, particularly through its Racial Ethnic Referral Program, have been exceptionally helpful in providing information and making referrals as needed. We note the continued need for watchfulness in this key area when Native American candidates are engaged in seminary studies and preparation for ministry.

NACC provides ongoing consultation with presbyteries and synods regarding their key role as a resource for continuing education for ordained clergy as well as leadership development for congregations in such areas as Christian education, stewardship, and Clerk of Session and treasurer training. While distance and cost are problems, assuring the participation of Native Americans in such programs is essential in order to meet the leadership development needs of Native congregations. Training programs that are either on-site or on-line are critical to meeting the needs of many Native congregations that are far removed from other churches and have limited funds to address leadership development needs. The Joint Session of the six Nez Perce Presbyterian churches in Idaho has been able to secure funding that will bring Native American church leaders and presbytery staff to them to conduct elder training.

The Commissioned Lay Pastor program is an opportunity to meet both the needs of Native congregations, which are often hard-pressed to support even a part-time pastor, and the hopes of people who feel called to ministry even as they retire from careers in other fields. Native Americans frequently dream of and plan on returning to their reservation homes upon retirement. They also see retirement as an opportunity to serve the church in new ways. Non-Native church leaders also see retirement as an opportunity to serve the church in new ways, including time with Native American ministry.

A highly recommended new resource is available for both interested individuals and presbyteries that may be able to provide pastoral support to Native congregations through the Commissioned Lay Pastor program. It is: *Commissioned Lay Pastors in the Presbyterian Church* (PDS 72-213-03-003) \$7.50. It contains a brief history of the development of the CLP program in the PC(USA) and provides sample curricula as well as information on mentoring, examination procedures, and issues facing racial ethnic congregations that often lead them to utilize a Commissioned Lay Pastor.

Internet-based courses, such as those offered to prepare Commissioned Lay Pastors through the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, allow students to remain in their communities and serve their churches while undertaking their training. In conjunction with the Presbytery of Grand Canyon, Cook Native American Ministries has developed a program for Native

American CLP candidates. This program has also been utilized by non-Presbyterian candidates and non-Natives who need orientation to Native culture, heritage and religiosity before serving in a Native American ministry. The continuation of these programs is essential.

NACC affirms the continuation of specialized curriculum for the training of Commissioned Lay Pastors (Native and non-Native alike) to serve Native American congregations and the continued exploration of an agreed-upon source for all such training.

### Economic Development

Native people are the indigenous peoples of the land now known as the Americas. They are an ancient people who have lived and evolved in these lands over many centuries. The “discovery” of these lands by Europeans and the westward expansion of Euro-Americans into Indian lands, however, forced Native people onto smaller and smaller portions of their historic lands with little access to employment or other means of economic development.

The primary economic development strategy of tribal organizations in recent years has been centered on the development of casino-centered resorts, which cater to the entertainment and recreation interests and demands of nearby populations. Some of these enterprises do well and provide significant income to tribal organizations for needed infrastructure and direct payment to members of the tribe. Others do not. Despite the large roles that casinos play in the life of many tribes, some tribal organizations have taken steps to explore other economic development options, such as expanded agriculture, clean energy development, and selling reservation water rights to nearby water-starved urban areas. Presbyterian General Assemblies have recognized that gaming is a tribal sovereignty issue, and Native congregations represent a variety of opinions and responses to casinos as a means to economic development in their communities. For the long-term welfare of Native communities and Presbyterian congregations located on tribal land, NACC supports and encourages the church’s involvement in the exploration and support of alternative strategies for economic development.

The Self Development of People Fund (SDOP) is a means through which Native people and other groups can organize a project and seek support through existing Presbyterian resources at the presbytery, synod or national level. Funds become available annually through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. While SDOP is ideally suited to serve small scale projects that might well emerge on reservations or among non-reservation Native people in urban areas, it is not well known among Native congregations. Native people are underrepresented among SDOP decision makers at all levels of the church as well as among the applicants for and recipients of Self Development funds.

The NACC will continue to consult with the office for SDOP, to develop strategies to increase awareness of and access to SDOP resources by Native American communities and organizations, and with presbyteries and synods with Native populations about the need to undertake vigorous education and outreach to congregations and other organizations for whom SDOP may be of assistance.

A critical resource to help the Presbyterian Church (USA) bring its mission priorities and its financial strategies together is the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee. As the church recommits to Native American ministry, we are called to explore ways that the economic resources of the denomination may be utilized to enhance the economic development of reservation communities through clean energy and the development of sustainable resources that are consistent with Native people's connection with and commitment to the land.

The NACC will continue to pursue this question, in consultation with the Office for Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI), with the goal of creating a conversation that would enhance clean energy development and other appropriate industries for Native American lands and lay the groundwork for church partnership in such endeavors.

### Property Concerns

Many of the reservation churches were built during the time of Euro-American westward expansion, well over 100 years ago, and in many cases the last major maintenance on the buildings was done under the Board of National Missions (pre-1973). Reservation churches have few financial resources, and the cost of repairs can be prohibitive. While not the case in all situations, most Native churches are built on tribal land, and if the congregation ceases to exist, the building, by law, reverts to the tribe. Some tribes have been responsive to the needs of reservation congregations, and some congregations have been able to do fundraising, both locally and through "children" of the congregation now living in urban areas.

Presbyteries too have a significant role v/v the properties of Native churches. They are often the source of mission connections that can help provide assistance and/or direct contributions of labor and materials, whether to help with ongoing maintenance or to respond to a crisis situation when a building becomes unusable as a result of age or natural disaster such as wind, flooding or a fire. NACC celebrates as well the significant trend toward broad partnership in response to these situations, with non-Presbyterian church groups as well as tribal and other secular organizations. NACC has been engaged with Dakota Presbytery, among others, in the ongoing inventory of Native church properties and the issues they present.

### Recent Developments in Native American Ministry

While there are many challenges in Native American ministry, NACC is pleased to report that there are also many positive signs that Native American ministry is being revitalized, through consultation and collaboration between appropriate governing body staff and members of the Native American constituency, in keeping with the Comprehensive Strategy paper (2000). Here are some examples:

A. The Laguna congregation in the Presbytery of Santa Fe began a program of teaching children how to do traditional pottery painting; the program enrolled as many adults as children! This is a small step in overcoming the past in which the church was negative about preserving and

maintaining the culture and traditions of the people. While the congregation remains very small, the average age has dropped dramatically from over-60 to more than half now being under age 40. The congregation is seeing new life with young adults coming into membership and several who attend but have not yet become members.

B. The Ute Mountain Ute congregation in Colorado is a joint ministry of the presbytery of Western Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church. Two years ago, vandals broke into the church and started a fire that caused major damage to the sanctuary. Fortunately, the damage was covered by insurance, held by the presbytery, and the payout was sufficient to allow them to do a major rehabilitation of the interior space. As a result, they now have a new sanctuary, kitchen and restrooms – improvements to the building that were needed prior to the fire but would not have been possible, given financial constraints. The church also did local fundraising, and the Tribal Council provided assistance as well. “The church has always been here; it is the church for the community,” said the Council. “It needs to continue.” Increasingly, partnership is able to go beyond the connections within the Presbyterian Church to include community members and tribal organizations.

C. The North Fork Presbyterian Church on the Nez Perce reservation in Idaho experienced a fire on Christmas Eve in 2008. This too brought people from throughout the area, both churches and civic organizations, together. The new building was dedicated in September 2009, a testament to the spirit of rebirth that can come alive in the face of disaster, even in a community where there has been a long history of discrimination and racism against Native people.

D. On the Navajo reservation in Arizona, the Leupp Presbyterian church was located on a flood plain and faced serious damage from seasonal rains. Deciding that their future depended on moving to higher ground, the church raised the necessary funds and then proceeded to construct a new sanctuary and fellowship hall with their own skills and labor.

E. In Sells, AZ, vandals destroyed the pulpit of the Papago Presbyterian Church when it was being used at the outdoor chapel during the annual camp meeting in September 2008. An appeal to the Presbytery de Cristo resulted in a carpenter in one of the congregations donating the materials and his skilled labor to construct a beautiful new pulpit that is now in place in the church.

F. La Mesa Presbyterian Church in Albuquerque called a Native pastor to focus her ministry on developing both a Native fellowship to meet the spiritual needs of off-reservation Native people in Albuquerque and an outreach and organizing project to address their critical social needs. Through community-oriented potlucks, a focus on the behavioral health needs of Native families has emerged. A formal group has been organized to represent off-reservation Natives in the state Local Collaboratives system that addresses health issues and wellness. A member of the fellowship has stepped forward to address the needs of Native American women who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence. Many urban Native Americans’ experience of church is one of judgment; this ministry is centered on letting people know that “somebody cares.”

G. Church of the Indian Fellowship (Olympia Presbytery), which continues ministry begun by missionaries in 1876, is now in its eighth year with a called Native pastor. They are in their third year of having a ministry to children, and a Vacation Bible School attracted over 35 children. In their final year of support through PC(USA) Mission Partnership Funds, they have negotiated partial funding for the church's programs through the Puyallup Tribe. All this is in part due to the extension of the redevelopment period beyond the traditional five year period.

H. In response to the call for new patterns of connection, the Presbytery of Western New York has formed a Strategy Team for Native American Ministry to assist the three Native congregations in that presbytery. Worship leadership is currently shared by a Native who is training to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor, other CLPs in the presbytery, and elders of the Native congregations. Indian Nations Presbytery in Oklahoma has formed a committee on Native American ministry. Presbytery de Cristo created a mentoring team to support a new pastor and assist in leadership development for session members and others in the congregation. It continues to be available to assist as the congregation goes through an upcoming leadership transition in 2010.

I. A variety of new partnerships have emerged between Native American congregations and their presbyteries, neighboring congregations of non-Presbyterian denominations, and congregations and presbyteries in other parts of the country. Many of these are centered on one-time mission trips, but some on ongoing, with significant degrees of mutuality and two-way exchanges. Increasingly, mission work groups are undergoing orientation to the culture of Native communities before undertaking the trip. University of Dubuque Theological Seminary faculty have provided immersion experiences for some groups planning mission trips to Native communities.

J. Trinity Church in Chinle, AZ installed a new pastor in November 2008, soon after an arson fire destroyed the communion table, baptismal font and part of the sanctuary. With the insurance money and the assistance of mission volunteers, they were able to remodel the sanctuary and other rooms. In the process they also were able to deal with other property issues such as demolishing an old manse. The process of rebuilding the sanctuary provided an opportunity to think about God's call to them as a Navajo congregation, and they decided to use symbols that have significance in both Christian and Navajo culture, such as mountains and eagles. There is also discussion about developing a community garden on the church grounds.

K. There have been several instances where presbyteries have created commissions to consider the future of Native congregations. In more than one case, a NACC representative raised the question of how many members of decision making committee had been to the reservation and had met the people they were making decisions about, the decision making was put on hold until the committee could go to the churches and meet the people. In most cases, the results of these conversations have been very positive, leading to the issues being resolved and funding being continued. They have also led to the Native congregations becoming more involved in the life of the presbytery.

L. In the Synod of Alaska/Northwest, two important developments have been made possible through the synod's Self Development of People fund. The Makah Tribe was seeking ways to restore their lost skills and renew the connection with their traditional crafts. To do so, however, they needed to know if the necessary natural materials were still available. A grant from the synod's SDOP fund made an inventory of these materials possible. The Haida Heritage Group wished to make their own ceremonial regalia, but the cost of even the basic materials was prohibitive for this island-based congregational group. They applied to the SDOP committee and were given a grant that permitted members of the group to make two sets each, one for themselves and one to sell. These stories demonstrate how new patterns of connection within the church have opened pathways for Native American ministries through access to existing funds.

## V. Conclusion

Since the last meeting of the General Assembly, the United States has gone through a cataclysmic economic crisis. The church as a part of this country and its economy has been deeply affected. Congregations are struggling; presbyteries are struggling; the national structures are struggling. For many in the church, this is a new experience, but Native American ministries have functioned on limited funds for decades. We have learned to be faithful in ways that do not depend on large budgets. We have learned to be flexible and creative. We honor relationship and value community life, however small the community may become. Perhaps Native American ministries have wisdom that can be shared with the wider church in these hard times.

However, as the Presbyterian Church at all levels learns to live with fewer financial resources, it must remember and retain its commitments, including the commitment to Native American ministry. Native American Presbyterians must retain our place at the table. While our numbers may be small, our voice is necessary, and it must continue to be present. Together we are the body of Christ, and working in partnership, we are members one of another.

## Appendix 1

### Brief Historical Summary

There has been a Presbyterian presence in Native communities and reservations in the United States since the late 1600s. When the first presbytery in this country was formed in 1706, it is believed that there were 37 Indian Protestant ministers in Eastern America. A major portion of the *Comprehensive Strategy* paper adopted by the 212th General Assembly (2000) was devoted to a “Summary of the Historic Relationship Between the Presbyterian Church and Native American Peoples” ([pcusa.org/nativeamerican](http://pcusa.org/nativeamerican), click on “Reports and Policies”). While the history is complex as well as long, one thing is clear: Presbyterians have had a long connection to Native American ministry, and Native Americans have long identified as Presbyterians.

Evangelization of Indians was initially treated in the Presbyterian Church, and other early American denominations, as a matter of “foreign missions.” An American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (“the American Board”) was established in 1810, and the United Foreign Missionary Society (Presbyterian, Reformed, and Associate Reformed) was organized in 1816. The two merged in 1826. The Presbyterian Church transferred “Indian missions” to its Home Mission Board in 1883. Throughout the nineteenth century, the geographic expansion of Presbyterian mission work often coincided with the movement of Euro-Americans to Native American lands. Missionaries frequently served dual roles, as agents of the gospel and as agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with responsibilities to supervise reservation communities. Church and government cooperated as well in the management of “Indian schools,” which were designed to “Christianize and civilize the Indians” through a curriculum aimed at breaking the connection between Indian children and their tribal roots, including their language.

A distinguishing mark of American evangelism was its insistence on individual salvation. The conversion and reformation of individuals, it was felt, would correct the evils of society. This emphasis on individualism was in direct conflict with the principles of communal life and the strong emphasis on relationship within Native communities. The church’s approach was to work for the individuation of the Indians and to break the cultural bonds to tribal life. Many Native congregations still reflect both their roots in the evangelical period and the church’s negation of tribal culture and traditions.

In the early twentieth century, sweeping change in federal Indian policy came about. The Indian Reorganization Act, passed in 1934, offered protection for the land base of tribes and permitted tribes to set up legal structures designed to aid in self-government. Many tribes adopted a constitutional form of government. A new approach, based in the social sciences, encouraged the recognition and affirmation of Indian culture, language and heritage.

In the period following World War II, Presbyterian General Assemblies consistently took positions supportive of Native American land rights and other issues affecting Native peoples. By 1983, both Presbyterian bodies that came together to form the Presbyterian Church (USA)

supported the concepts of tribal sovereignty and self-determination, as well as the freedom for Native Americans to practice their traditional religion.

Structurally, however, Native American ministries in the Presbyterian Church functioned through a “Home Missions” approach well into the twentieth century. Through a major restructuring of the denominational offices, which was fully realized in the early 1970s, Native churches were moved from the umbrella of the Board of National Missions to being part of the presbyteries and synods in which they were physically located. Thus approximately 100 congregations, for many of whom “the Presbyterian Church” was represented by a national missions field staff person, experienced an abrupt transition. To be Presbyterian suddenly meant being part of new, unfamiliar, and often uncertain, relationships with presbyteries with whom they had few, if any, prior dealings, and vice versa.

In 1969, as this reorganization was being anticipated, the General Assembly provided seed money to be used for projects on Indian reservations. An ad hoc committee, the Indian Consulting Panel, was created to review proposals for the use of those funds. It soon became apparent, however, that a permanent consultative body was needed.

The Native American Consulting Committee was formally established in 1977, with authority to evaluate and recommend programs seeking national funding and to provide counsel to the General Assembly agencies and synods on matters affecting Native peoples. The 1983 Reunion resulted in a total of 109 Native congregations in the newly formed Presbyterian Church (USA).