

MINUTES: MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE - November 6-7, 1991.

CALL OF MEETING

The Executive of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario met at the call of the President, Janet Buckley, in Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, MB. The President declared the meeting open at 9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

The following persons were present for all or part of the meeting:
Conference Officers: Janet Buckley, President; Terry Hidichuk, Past-President; Dianne Cooper, Executive Secretary; John Hogman, President-Elect; Douglas Einarson, Treasurer.

Council Representatives: Marion Fulton, Jackie Stark (Stewardship); Jeri Bjornson, Colin Peterson (Ministry & Personnel); Marg Franklin, Bev Ward (Worship & Education); Garry Loewen, Glenn Nicholls (Evangelism & Social Action).

Presbytery Representatives: Alistair Riddell (Birtle); Joyce Marsh (Brandon); David Sparks, Allan McDowell (Cambrian); Bob Stark, Don Compton (Carman); Alan Armstrong (Northland); Don Ross, Catharina Allan (Portage); Bob Burton, Baldur Schaldemose (Selkirk); Bob Hamlin, Ken Todd (Winnipeg).

General Council Representatives: Glenna Beauchamp, Al Beveridge.

Staff Representative: Joan McConnell.

Corresponding Members: Janet Silman, Norman Velnes, Ted Dodd (Conference Staff).

Guests: Margaret McPherson, Beverly Ridd (University of Winnipeg, Board of Regents); Doug McMurtry, Judy Delorme (Residential Schools Task Group); Allan Saunders (Annual Meeting Planning Cte.).

Recording Secretary: Ethel Campbell.

Regrets: Jack Ballantine-Dickson (Birtle); Myrna Livingston (Northland); Harvey Hurren (Brandon).

WELCOMING AND OPENING WORSHIP

The meeting opened with a communion service led by Bob Hamlin. Janet welcomed everyone and people were asked to introduce themselves and the Presbytery they represent.

AGENDA

The printed agenda was revised and items added.

Glenn Nicholls raised a point of order concerning the meeting of the Sub-Executive which would happen immediately after the rise of the Executive meeting and the fact that business raised at that meeting would not be dealt with by this Executive, when perhaps it should. The President explained the Sub-Executive was to meet with Helen Maupin, a consultant called in to deal with staff issues. It was clarified that the terms of reference as per the '83 ROP, stated that staffing concerns were under the oversight of the Sub-Executive.

Concern was also expressed that it seemed more and more business is being handled by the Sub-Executive rather than the Executive.

Motion: McDowell/Franklin, that the present Terms of Reference from the '83 ROP be circulated during this meeting. Carried.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS TASK GROUP REPORT:

Doug McMurtry and Judy Delorme were welcomed to report.

Doug gave a review of the committee's work:

- Almost one year since the formation of the task group.
- Group started with little knowledge of abuse in residential schools, other than reports in the media.
- The United Church had three schools, Norway House, Brandon and Portage la Prairie. They opened at the turn of the century and closed by 1970 and we have been unable to locate the records.
- Many native people have been in schools and have vivid memories of their experiences.
- The committee has consulted with native church people, the All Native Circle Conference, Prof. Jim Miller (Saskatchewan), Manitoba Chiefs, Keewatin Presbytery and students at the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre.
- In all cases, people have been willing to tell their stories, and for the most part these have been painful stories.
- Have heard at least 25 stories, and are humbled at the trust and surprised by the willingness of people to tell their stories, some of which were told for the first time.
- The stories they heard were of three kinds of abuse:
 - sexual abuse - heard very little
 - physical abuse - heard much of this, including inadequate diet, slapping, beating, locking students in dorms and rooms.
 - cultural abuse - most insidious. Children taken at age 4 for 10 months a year, some not allowed to go home, kept away for 6-7 years, punished for speaking their own language, cut off from family ties, forced to learn a foreign culture.
- Have held workshops and gatherings.
- Heard from Prof. Jean Friesen historical facts that confirmed the deliberate policy of the government and church to break the native culture.
- Report regularly to the Manitoba Chiefs who have proposed a joint response.
- Have a liaison with the national task group through Al Beveridge.

Judy shared some stories and concerns:

- Her mother attended Birtle Residential school from age 4 to 16 without coming home for 10 years. She lost her language and her family.
- She is thankful the United Church is doing something.
- As a native person it is very hard to hear these stories.
- These stories are never heard in our public schools.
- Native people did not grow up in families, grew up in "prisons".
- She has worked in a youth centre and children there have much more freedom in these lock-up centres than did Indian children whose only "crime" was being Indian.
- There is a lot of anger.
- Children were hungry which led to stealing food. Judy told the story of an 11 year old being thrown out of a school for this and left hundreds of miles from home, alone.