



### **For Immediate Release**

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#### **Smith-Moran to tell of witnessing reconciliation for native peoples of Canada**

On August 19, 2010, the Rev. Dr. Barbara Smith-Moran will speak about her experiences volunteering with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Process. The free event will be hosted by Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Concord Police Department from 4-6 p.m. and will be open to the general public upon RSVP to [info@c4rj.com](mailto:info@c4rj.com) or 978.318.3447. Smith-Moran is a long-time volunteer with C4RJ, resident in Concord, and pastor at Grace Episcopal Church in Everett.

The Truth and Reconciliation Process addressed harms done to Indian, Inuit, and Métis people who were forced as children to attend culture-repressing and sometimes abusive boarding schools over the course of almost 100 years. The gatherings used the "circle" process often used in restorative justice, and were held in Winnipeg in June as part of the legal settlement between the Canadian government and the survivors of the bygone educational policy toward aboriginal people. Survivors were invited to speak the painful truth about the sexual, cultural, physical and spiritual abuse that went on in the schools. The schools' practices left a tragic legacy of family disruption, loss of identity, violence, alcoholism, suicides, and fractured and lost parenting skills.

Several things were common experiences for all the children, no matter which school they attended: their native clothing and moccasins were immediately exchanged for European-style clothing and shoes; their hair was cut short; they were forbidden to speak with siblings; they were strapped or whipped for speaking their native language. One man spoke in a sharing circle about learning to fight at school. The boys were angry all the time. Smith-Moran reports this man saying, "The fight wasn't over till someone lay bloodied on the ground." He taught himself never to cry. He saw rapes in the chapel. Every night, someone would come to the dormitory and take a boy away for sex. He would lie in fear wondering, "Will it be me? Will it be me?" He said that after graduation, he became a drunk, a bootlegger, and a drug-lord.

The sharing circles were filmed for news coverage and for the Canadian national archives. The option of giving private testimony was available for those who didn't want to speak in a public venue. In the sharing circles, the speakers were not asked any questions, there was no cross-talk or interruptions, and no speaker was asked to prove anything.

"We are delighted to have Barbara come speak to us about her time in Winnipeg," said C4RJ Executive Director Jennifer Larson Sawin. "This was a wrenching piece of Canadian history. We have a lot to learn about how they stepped up to do right by generations of people who were harmed."

About 5,000 people attended the meetings in Winnipeg, with perhaps 500 finding the courage to share their stories, many for the first time. Because the churches of Canada administered the boarding schools, they are also parties in this restorative justice process.

C4RJ is a nonprofit partnership of community and police that offers restorative justice as a complement to the criminal justice system, providing victims of crime the opportunity to be heard and understood. Offenders are held accountable for their actions in constructive ways. Community members offer support for both. Restorative justice asks questions not always posed in the traditional justice system, such as: "What harm has occurred to the victim and the community?" and "How will this harm be repaired and by whom?" C4RJ employs a "circle" process in which offenders, victims, community members, volunteers and a police officer discuss harms done and then develop restitution agreements.

C4RJ currently partners with the communities of Acton, Ayer, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Everett, Groton, Littleton, and Westford.

For more information regarding restorative justice, visit [www.c4rj.com](http://www.c4rj.com) or call 978.318.3447.

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To arrange a press interview with Barbara Smith-Moran and/or to RSVP to the August 19<sup>th</sup> event, please contact [info@c4rj.com](mailto:info@c4rj.com) or call, 978.318.3447.