

PWRDF WORK IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

In response to a series of articles that have recently appeared in The Globe & Mail and The Toronto Star, about First Nations communities, particularly in Northern Ontario, and questions from our constituents, we are providing some information on the work we have been doing, and shall continue to do in First Nations Communities

The goal of PWRDF's Canadian Development Program is to build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust with Indigenous peoples, in order to build stronger, healthier and more self-reliant communities. PWRDF supports a variety of Indigenous initiatives that promote woman and youth empowerment, Indigenous languages and cultural revitalization, promotion of traditional knowledge, networking and inter-Indigenous partnerships. The average number of partners has been of 12 and they are located in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Alberta and British Columbia.

- In Ontario in particular, PWRDF partners with Mohawk communities and Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. In particular, these project activities include:
 - Strengthening culture and traditions
 - Empowering youth
 - Promoting spiritual awareness
 - Promoting healing: suicide crisis and sexual abuse
 - Creating youth councils to provide appropriate counseling to youth & suicide prevention
 - Provide services and programs that include HIV/AIDS education, outreach and prevention, support and counseling for all Indigenous people who are living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS
- PWRDF, as part of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives has been working on a draft statement commemorating the 20th anniversary of "A New Covenant". The statement acknowledges the Churches' role in the oppression and colonization of Aboriginal peoples and seeks to contribute to the process of rectifying historical injustices by advocating for genuine reconciliation and solidarity in the struggle for recognition and guarantee of basic Aboriginal rights.
- The President and Executive Director of PWRDF has strongly objected in a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada expressing its disappointment to learn of Canada's decision to be one of only two states to vote against the Declaration at the UN Human Rights Council of its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In November 2006, PWRDF sent out this letter to its constituents urging individuals and parishes to write to their own members of Parliament.
- In addition, in November, 2006 the Board and Executive of PWRDF sent a letter to Minister Beverly J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women expressing their concern about the decision of Department of Canadian Heritage to remove \$160 million from the fiscal framework that was set aside for First Nations languages and culture. The letter stressed that it is the federal government's fiduciary obligation to First Nations to protect revitalize and maintain Aboriginal languages and that adequate resources must be provided to ensure that First Nation people have the right to be educated in First Nations languages.
- The Anglican Church of Canada has recently appointed a National Indigenous Bishop.

For additional information about the work of PWRDF and KAIROS, please see the following website links:

www.pwrdf.org/our-work/canadian-development-program

www.pwrdf.org/stories/indigenous-stories

www.pwrdf.org/fileadmin/fe/files/Regional_Profile_-_Indigen_Nov_04.pdf

www.kairoscanada.org/e/aboriginal/index.asp