

This Week's Reconciliation Story:



Imagine you are a United Church minister. A minister who has faced up to seven funerals in one month. A minister who needs to give counselling to grieving families for those funerals. Imagine that the deaths are young people, suicides, individuals who gave up hope. And imagine that you are the only person who can give comfort and care to those in need.

If you are a minister in the far north of Manitoba or Ontario, that can be your reality. Northern Indigenous communities are facing an ongoing state of emergency and their ministers are the only ones available who can offer care, comfort, and guidance in these situations.

In just one community, Norway House Cree Nation (Kinosao Sipi), with a population of 10,000, the emergency is very real. Olive Flett is a retired ordained minister in this community, and she is dealing with an increasing number of deaths, funerals, and counselling. She is retired but is still very busy helping those in need. For Olive there is no way to get away, to rest.

Lawrence Moore is an ordained minister, with the majority of this community as his congregation. Lawrence is dealing with increasing numbers of deaths and miscarriages. He tells of seven funerals in one month, followed by five the next. Add to this the counselling, support, and working through the grief that goes along with these tragedies.

Grant Queskekapow, an ordained minister for 37 years, is seeing increasing drug and alcohol use as people deal with trauma and mental health issues. He says that when he first started as a minister, he buried mostly older people, and now he is burying more young people. This saddens him greatly.

To view videos of these minister's sharing their stories please visit: <https://united-church.ca/stories/pastors-retreat>

All three ministers are from only one community among many. In the face of this ongoing crisis, we are asking you to be part of creating a time and a place for these ministers to retreat to. This October, the Indigenous Ministries and Justice unit of The United Church of Canada is seeking to host a retreat for 12 Ministers from Northern Manitoba and Ontario who need it most. The retreat will take place at the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre and will offer three days of respite, training, and spiritual healing that is so desperately needed.

To bring ministers together from these northern communities is not easy and it is expensive. We are asking you to support this initiative with a gift today. We are working to secure a matching gift from the Healing Fund so every gift you give will be doubled.

Every gift to this initiative is vital. Please give today.
<https://united-church.ca/donate/2024npr>