



**Mennonite
Church**
Canada

Witness

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Celebration Story

We invite you to share the following story with your congregation from Neill and Edith von Gunten, co-directors of the Native Ministries Office, Mennonite Church Canada. It should take about 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.

Cross Lake, Manitoba – Celebrating the Church Family

Standing in front of the congregation of **Living Word Church** of Cross Lake, MB on Sunday evening, May 28, 2006, marked an exciting milestone in the life of Native Ministries of Mennonite Church Canada and the Cross Lake congregation. Neill and Edith von Gunten, Co-Directors of the Native Ministry program, were in the Cree community of northern Manitoba to present the congregation with the title to the land on which a church building sits. The completion of their newly-constructed church building and the congregation joining Mennonite Church Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada in February 2006 were two additional milestones to celebrate.

The journey of the Cree and Mennonite peoples walking together began in the early 1940's with the relationships that helped to form the Mennonite Pioneer Mission (the forerunner of Mennonite Church Canada, Native Ministry). Since then, Jeremiah Ross and now Lorna Mclvor, have been called as volunteer pastors from within the Cross Lake Cree community. The congregation has thrived because of community involvement and because of encouragement and assistance received during special events such as Vacation Bible school sessions.

Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Manitoba partnered with the Cross Lake Congregation to raise funds and find labourers for replacing the church building. The job was accomplished in the fall of 2005 and the congregation is thankful for all the support they have been given by fellow brothers and sisters

in the Lord across Canada. Their decision to become members of Mennonite Church Manitoba, and thus Mennonite Church Canada, demonstrates the strong, on-going relationship they have had with the Mennonite Church in these 50 plus years of relating to each other.

We celebrate the many years of faithful witness the local Christians have been to their community in spite of the social problems and upheaval around them, including the heavy social and emotional impact made by the flooding of their traditional land base for the large Jenpeg hydroelectric dam project in the 1970s. This small congregation has weathered many difficult times over the years, but it continues to reach out to its community and baptize new believers so that God's healing and hope will flow through them into the world.



Above: Cross Lake children with their Sunday school materials.



Left: The exterior of the new Cross Lake Church