

The Rev. Mary Fontaine (B.A, M.Div.)

Mary Fontaine is Nehiyaw (Cree) from Mistawasis Nehiywak, Saskatchewan, where she grew up attending the Mistawasis Presbyterian Church with her family.

Mary has a B.A. in Native Studies from the University of Alberta (1995) and an M.Div. from the Vancouver School of Theology (2003). She was on the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2010-2017). She convenes the National Indigenous Ministries Council of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and serves on the Special Committee re Listening, Confession and Associations.

Mary's mother trusted in Jesus Christ and was grateful for the culture and language he gave to her people. Her father made her aware of the suffering of Indigenous people and urged her to get an education to seek healing for them. The revelation of Indigenous history in Canada through her Native Studies degree was heartbreaking but the truth brought understanding and healing. Mary's grandfather (a pipe carrier) modelled what it meant to be a humble follower of the Circle. He taught that the main purpose of life was to learn how to love. Her spiritual parents taught Mary spiritual discernment, and spiritual and emotional healing through prayer and the Word of God. She learned to facilitate healing circles, through an integrated program developed by a team of Cree elders and psychologists.

Mary is the Founding Director of Hummingbird Ministries (2005), an Indigenous-led healing and reconciliation ministry. Through healing circles and the performing arts, Hummingbird educates the public and raises the profile of Indigenous people, especially for Indigenous children. Mary writes plays and narrated stories expressed through dance performances by the children. Hummingbird's annual events provide opportunities for reconciliation, bringing many cultures, faiths and classes of people together with Indigenous people. Mary preaches at local churches and special occasions such as the 2019 General Assembly.

In spite of legislation which tried to extinguish Indigenous ways, Mary was given an honour song and her Indigenous name, Hummingbird. The Holy Spirit found a way to give her a drum song of thanksgiving, for the gifts of prayer, song and dance and the gifts of the hummingbird. The song and the name changed Mary's life leading her to VST's Native Ministries Program, and eventually to Hummingbird Ministries.

Mary discerns the Spirit at work in Indigenous wisdom and spirituality and sees how this can enhance the church she loves, in various ways including relationship-building and care of the earth. She hopes in the Indigenous vision (similar to Revelation), that one day, the nations will gather beneath the tree of peace and learn to love and live in harmony with one another.