

The Upper New York CONAM met virtually for much of the past year due to the pandemic. We held our first in-person meeting on Saturday, June 26, at Thom White Wold Fassett's home and returned to Zoom meetings on September 18.

Needless to say, it has been a difficult year. Our three Native churches were closed with Hogansburg UMC and Four Corners UMC opening in late summer. Onondaga Nation UMC remains closed until the Chiefs feel it is safe to reopen. The pastors serving all three churches left their appointments in 2021. Four Corners and Hogansburg are adjusting to newly appointed ministers. Onondaga Nation has not had a pastor since January 1, 2021 and is awaiting an appointment. All three churches lost many loved ones during the pandemic. Our CONAM also lost Don Washburn, a well loved committee member.

Kae Wilbert retired as chair and is now an emeritus member on the committee. Present leadership includes: Sharon Schmit, Chair; Brooke Conklin, Administrative Assistant; Blenda Smith, Treasurer; and Marilyn Anderson, Secretary. Committee members who had been listed as Emeritus were able to change to regular membership at Charge Conference in 2021.

Each year the UNY Committee on Native American Ministries presents the Four Directions Humanitarian Award to honor one or more individuals for their dedication to native ministries. This year we chose to honor four individuals who retired after years of tireless service. Three of these individuals were pastors retiring or leaving the three Native American churches in the Upper NY Conference: David Rood, from Four Corners UMC, located on the Cattaraugus Territory; Mark Garrow, from Hogansburg UMC, located on the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation at Akwesasnee; and Roselynn Kingsbury from Onondaga Nation UMC, located on the Onondaga Nation Indian Territory. Kae Wilbert was honored for her many years as chair of the UNY CONAM.

UNY CONAM endorsed the position paper on full inclusion developed by NEJNAMC. An article appeared in the Conference e-news. A letter containing a reminder to include a name designating a Local Church Representative to Native Ministries on charge conference forms was sent to all the Districts for distribution to churches. The mail chimp list used to communicate with the local church reps is being updated, as is our website. The Native American Outreach Transportation Program (NAOT) on the Onondaga Nation has continued to operate during the pandemic as it was identified as an essential service. Since Annual Conference was virtual this year, we did not have our usual information table. The May, 2021, issue of the Advocate included two articles on native ministries in Upper New York (<https://issuu.com/uppernewyork/docs/advocatevol13issue1>).

UNYCONAM supported a letter from the Native American International Caucus to the Council of Bishops calling for a "Day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children" on October 6. Our CONAM worked with the UNY Conference to create a five week series of articles to review the charges from the Act of Repentance and inform members of the history and ongoing trauma caused by Indian Boarding Schools. Churches in the Conference were called to recognize Sunday, October 10, as a Day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children and to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day on that day.

Native American Ministry Funds (NAMS) supported our three Native American Churches to help preserve buildings and fund ongoing ministries and programs. NAMS funds were also used to support the NAOT program and an AA conference attendance. Grant applications for NAMS funds were reduced in 2021 due to the pandemic and will be offered in October with the hope that churches and communities will begin to plan programs as buildings open.

Submitted by:  
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