



Residential Schools Update

The United Church of Canada



L'Église Unie du Canada

"The United Church of Canada is committed to working to create a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples that starts in confession for past wrongs and, it is the church's hope, ends in the shared joy of walking together in a healed and renewed creation."

The United Church of Canada Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (November 1993)

January 2012

TRC Third National Event Held in Halifax, Nova Scotia

"It's All About Love"

The theme of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission event on October 26–29, 2011, was "Love." Reflecting on the theme as one of the seven sacred teachings, Commissioner Marie Wilson affirmed that although former students of residential school may not have received love from those they expected it, needed it, or had a right to it from, "you were love in that place." She celebrated how students had protected the younger ones, cuddled them when they were crying, shared stolen food with them, and offered friendship to strangers who became family. Throughout the event, many were seen comforting those who had difficulty sharing their stories and listening to the stories. Resolution Health Support Workers were especially evident. Honorary Witness Shelagh Rogers hosted the "Dialogue on Resilience" and Justice Sinclair urged former students to inspire their children by sharing "how they survived."



Moderator Mardi Tindal (far right) joined the platform of dignitaries at the opening ceremonies.

© 2012

The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd) Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca>. Any copy must include this notice.

Nora Bernard Honoured

There was one residential school in the Maritimes. It was located at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, and operated by The Archdiocese of Halifax, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and the Sisters of Charity. In the 1990s, the late Nora Bernard, a determined woman with an unforgettable smile and a former student of that school, began to gather other survivors to talk about their experiences. They were the first to launch a class action lawsuit concerning their treatment in a residential school.

The evening prior to the opening of the TRC event, family members and fellow survivors paid tribute to Nora at the Halifax Convention Centre, acknowledging Nora's dedication to justice for her people, and pledged to continue her work.

In 2000, when the Association for Survivors of Shubenacadie was struggling to meet, to build the database of former students, and to provide healing support, the United Church Healing Fund granted them \$27,300.

Expressions of Reconciliation

At each national TRC event, time is set aside for "expressions of reconciliation" from individuals and groups. Symbols of these gestures are placed in the Bentwood box for permanent inclusion in the TRC archives in the National Research Centre. Several expressions involved United Church participation. Russell Daye and Kathryn Fournier (on the left below), who co-chair the national Living into Right Relations task group, and Moderator Mardi Tindal described the genesis of the right relations program and the creation of home groups across the church that are working on building relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Together with the TRC Commissioners, they presented a broken chalice that has become a powerful symbol of the brokenness of our relationships, while embodying the hope of newness of life.



United Church minister Aileen Urquhart and survivor Garnet Angeconeb, representing the Sioux Lookout Community Coalition for Healing and Reconciliation, presented the publication *Starting to Talk: A Guide for Communities on Healing and Reconciliation from the Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*. For copies of the handbook, call 807-737-1501 or download from the Sioux Lookout website (www.slarc.ca).

KAIROS Board members Henriette Thompson, Stephen Allen, and Jennifer Henry (left to right) presented a banner from the Roll with the Declaration Campaign, June 2011.



A Greater Focus on Public Education and Knowledge Sharing

This national TRC event included three education initiatives not undertaken previously. About 600 high school students attended the event taking in archival exhibits, films, and informational talks.

Five theological students from the Atlantic School of Theology took the opportunity to enroll in a credit course, including 18 hours attendance at the TRC event and four seminars with Adjunct Professor Russell Daye.

Professor Jennifer Llewellyn of Dalhousie University and Dr. Jane McMillan of St. Mary's University organized academic workshops, titled Mobilization Pathways to Reconciliation in Education. Over the course of the event, seven Indigenous Knowledge Mobilization Circles were conducted on such topics as Aboriginal Student Advisors Consortium, Research Ethics, Governance, Language, Knowledge and Rights, Health and Wellness, and Justice and Law.

TRC Regional Event Planned for Victoria, British Columbia

The TRC will hold a Regional Event on Vancouver Island on April 13-14, 2012, at the Victoria Conference Centre and Fairmont Empress Hotel. This event will be in addition to the TRC National Event scheduled for Vancouver in September of 2013. Lynne Crawshaw, a United Church member active in Aboriginal Neighbours, is serving on the planning team for the Victoria event, which will be preceded by four community hearings on the island in Port Hardy (February 27-28), Campbell River (March 1-2), Port Alberni (March 26-27), and Duncan (March 29-30). More information is at www.trc.ca.

TRC Fourth National Event in Saskatoon, June 21–24, 2012

The ashes from the sacred fire at the Atlantic TRC event were placed in a basket with ashes from previous events, and given to representatives from Saskatchewan (below: Eugene Arcand of the TRC Survivors' Advisory Committee on the far right). Justice Sinclair observed that this basket of ashes is becoming a symbol of Canadian unity.



The Saskatchewan Regional Working Group and sub-committees on Programs and Logistics, which include representatives of Saskatchewan Conference and ANCC, are working on plans for the event, which will be held at the Prairielands in Saskatoon, June 21–24, 2012.

In advance of the Saskatchewan national event, the TRC will hold a number of community hearings around the province that are open to the public. They are excellent opportunities to learn first-hand about the residential school experience.

Regina: January 16–18
Prince Albert: January 31–February 2
Stony Rapids: February 16–17
North Battleford: April 30–May 1
Île-à-la-Crosse: May 5
Buffalo Narrows: May 17–18

Key First Nation: January 20–22
Pelican Narrows: February 13–14
Onion Lake: April 3–5
Beauval: May 3–4
Fort Qu'Appelle: May 14–15
La Ronge: June 5–7

“What Is Reconciliation?”

Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has asked all parties to the Agreement to respond to the question “What is reconciliation?” and to offer expressions of reconciliation at the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The November 2011 meeting of the Executive of the General Council explored this question with the purpose of building a common understanding of “reconciliation.” After the session, the Executive adopted a motion recommending The United Church of Canada engage the question “What is reconciliation?” using the same process. The two-hour process was given a trial run at the fall meeting of the Committee of Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools.

Returning to Spirit Workshops

Three United Church groups are sponsoring Returning to Spirit workshops early in 2012, including the Five Oaks Education Centre, the Regina Native Outreach Ministry, and the Alberta and Northwest Conference Living into Right Relations home group (workshops in St. Albert and Edmonton). Go to www.returningtospirit.org for dates and registration contacts, as well as an eight-minute video outlining this program of healing and reconciliation. Elder Elise Charland from Cold Lake First Nation and Co-Executive Director Anne Taylor showed the video at the Atlantic TRC national event.

The Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools has renewed its decision to support 10 Aboriginal and 10 non-Aboriginal persons in 2012 to attend the program. The grant covers the registration fee, meals, and accommodation.

Remembering the Children Society Formed

The inaugural general meeting of the Remembering the Children Society was held November 22, 2011, in Edmonton to elect the first Board of Directors for the Remembering the Children Society. The society has evolved from a working group that had as its focus the recovery and commemoration of the cemetery associated with the Red Deer Industrial School.

The objectives of the society are to

1. support the reclamation and preservation of Indian Residential School cemeteries and history in Alberta,
2. research missing children and unmarked burials,
3. commemorate and remember the children who attended Indian Residential Schools in Alberta, and died at the schools, and were buried in school cemeteries,
4. create public awareness and educate about residential school history,
5. assist other groups with similar objectives,
6. facilitate reconciliation between and within Indigenous families, communities, churches, governments, and Canadians.

The society has published a set of guidelines for any others who may want to initiate similar projects.

Contact Us irs@united-church.ca

Questions, concerns, or comments? We'd like to hear from you!

James Scott

General Council Officer:
Residential Schools
1-800-268-3781 ext. 2032

John Bird

Program Coordinator:
Aboriginal Justice & Right Relations
1-800-268-3781 ext. 4045

Cecile Fausak

Liaison Minister: Residential Schools
647-688-1149 office cell (AB-based)

David MacDonald

Special Advisor
416-686-5449

This update is available on the United Church website:
www.united-church.ca/communications/newsletters/residential-schools-update

Published quarterly by the Committee on Indigenous Justice and Residential Schools.