

- **2008:** The Diocese of Toronto, along with the Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada, helps to establish the Toronto Urban Native Ministry to provide spiritual and pastoral care for urban Indigenous peoples and to facilitate the reconciliation process between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples
- **2010:** General Synod votes to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery – an ideology that ignored the existence of Aboriginal peoples as the original inhabitants of North America and belittled Aboriginal spiritual traditions – as “fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and our understanding of the inherent rights that individuals and peoples have received from God” (“Resolution A086 R1”, carried at the 2010 General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, <http://archive.anglican.ca/gs2010/resolutions/a086/>)

“I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God.”

- *Michael Peers, former Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, “Apology to Native Peoples”*

Vestry Motion for 2016

We, the vestry of _____ [name of parish] commit ourselves to work to implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. As part of this effort, we call on the Governments of Canada and Ontario to address the recommendations which the Commission’s final report directs toward them. In particular, we affirm the Government of Canada’s commitment to establish a public inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and will continue to advocate for ongoing action on this issue. We also call on the Government of Ontario, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, residential school survivors, and the churches, to develop an age-appropriate, mandatory curriculum on residential schools and the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada for all grade levels.

Additional Resources

- Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, “Executive Summary” and “Calls to Action” (<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>)
- KAIROS Canada, “Education for Reconciliation Action Tool Kit” (<http://www.kairoscanada.org/product/education-for-reconciliation-action-toolkit/>)
- Former Primate Michael Peers, “Apology to Native People” (<http://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology/>)
- Host a KAIROS Blanket Exercise Workshop in your parish! (<http://kairosblanketexercise.org/>)



Social Justice Vestry Motion 2016: Answering the Call for Reconciliation

In June of 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released their final report, bringing the formal TRC process to a close. True reconciliation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada is an ongoing process requiring significant effort and long-term commitment, and must continue for many years to come. One of the TRC’s Calls to Action urges churches “to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church’s role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary” (“#59”, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).

As part of our efforts to respond to this call, this year’s social justice vestry motion commits parishes to carry out reflection and study within their congregations as well as advocating for the federal and provincial governments to implement key elements of the TRC’s recommendations. We hope that your parish will join us in undertaking this work by passing the motion below and committing to continue working towards reconciliation at every level of the church and in all parts of the country. This booklet provides some background material and links to additional resources to help your parish discern how to take up this call.

Residential Schools

Between 1876 and 1996 the Canadian government and several Christian denominations, including the Anglican Church of Canada, worked together to operate at least 139 different residential schools for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children across the country, although there were also a number of schools in operation well before 1876. It is estimated that at least 150,000 students attended these schools across regions and denominations. Between 1820 and 1969 the Anglican Church of Canada actively administered about three dozen residential schools across Canada. In almost all cases, these schools were operated far from the home communities of the students, leaving them isolated from their families, spiritual leaders, and ancestral territories. Students were forcibly removed from their families and were regularly forbidden from speaking their respective languages at the schools and practicing their spiritual traditions. In addition, many students experienced physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, suffered neglect, and were forcibly converted to Christianity. From the 1960s through the

1980s, in what has come to be known as the Sixties Scoop, as many as 20,000 Aboriginal children in residential schools were placed in foster care with or adopted by primarily white Canadian families without cause and against the wishes of their parents. (Margaret Philip, “The Land of the Lost Children”, *The Globe and Mail*, December 21, 2002, Page F4, <http://www.fact.on.ca/news/news0212/gm021221a.htm>). These tragic events were just some elements of a systemic national program to undermine Aboriginal governments, ignore Aboriginal rights and treaties, and assimilate Aboriginal peoples into the dominant Canadian culture.

“For churches, demonstrating long-term commitment requires atoning for actions within the residential schools, respecting Indigenous spirituality, and supporting Indigenous peoples’ struggles for justice and equity.”

- *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

Intergenerational Trauma

The impacts of the residential school system have been long-lasting and far-reaching. Students returning from schools after many years had often lost their ability speak in the languages of their people, leaving some of them alienated from their families and communities. Many students never returned home at all, having been caught up in the Sixties Scoop or having died while at the schools, resulting in traumatic experiences for parents, siblings, and community leaders which had far-reaching effects.

Many of the students who did return home had experienced significant abuse and neglect which was sometimes passed on to their own children or their partners. Others developed addictions as a method of coping with their experiences. Survivors raised in primarily institutional settings often had little exposure to caring and supportive parenting and thus found themselves raising families of their own without the experiences and skills needed to build a healthy family life. The children and grandchildren of residential school survivors have shared their stories of the intergenerational impact of these institutions in Indigenous communities across the country.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

In May 2006 the Government of Canada, the leaders of five national Aboriginal organizations, leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada, United Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church of Canada, and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement which acknowledged the harm of the residential school system,

established a compensation fund, and set aside funding for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada on Indian Residential Schools (IRS) that was launched in June of 2008 with a mandate to:

- acknowledge Residential School experiences, impacts and consequences;
- provide a holistic, culturally appropriate and safe setting for former students, their families and communities as they come forward to the Commission;
- witness, support, promote and facilitate truth and reconciliation events
- promote awareness and public education of Canadians about the IRS system
- create as complete an historical record as possible of the IRS system and legacy, to be preserved and made accessible to the public for future study and use;
- produce and submit a report including recommendations to the Government of Canada concerning the IRS system and experience

After holding public hearings across the country, the TRC collected more than 6200 statements from residential school survivors documenting their experiences of abuse, neglect, and cultural genocide. In June 2015 the TRC released the final report of its findings, including 94 Calls to Action directed to various levels of government, Church denominations that operated schools, and other key stakeholders implicated in the residential school system and its legacy. This year’s Vestry Motion addresses two significant Calls to Action by advocating for government action on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (#41) and an educational curriculum on residential schools and the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada (#63 and #64).

Reconciliation and the Anglican Church

After closing its last residential school in 1969, the Anglican Church of Canada has moved toward a new relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada that recognizes the historic wrongs of the church and embraces a new partnership built on solidarity, equality and respect. Some key elements of Anglican efforts towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples include:

- **1993:** Primate Michael Peers issued an “Apology to Native People” on behalf of the Anglican Church
- **2005:** The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples began the search for a National Indigenous Anglican Bishop. The Right Reverend Mark MacDonald was called to be the first to serve in this position and was installed at General Synod in 2007
- **2006:** The Anglican Church of Canada signs on to the IRS Settlement Agreement