

Residential Schools: Truth and Reconciliation Update #2

May 18, 2010

This is the second of occasional updates on the work of the Anglican Church of Canada as it takes its part in healing and reconciliation between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. These updates are written by Archdeacon Jim Boyles, consultant on residential schools.

TRC First National Event—Winnipeg, June 16-19

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), headed by Justice Murray Sinclair, is organizing this four-day event at the Forks in Winnipeg. They are inviting all people who have an interest to attend:

For the survivors—*this is your time.*

For the churches—*this is your time, first to listen, and also to tell your truth.*

For all Canadians—*this is the history you've never heard. Come and learn.*

This event will focus on the residential schools in the Manitoba and northern Ontario region.

The Anglican Church administered five schools in this region: Elkhorn, Mackay (The Pas), Mackay (Dauphin), Pelican Lake (Sioux Lookout, Ont.), and Shingwauk (Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.).

In support of this event, Anglicans will be doing several things:

- Sponsoring some survivors with travel and accommodation support for them to attend the event

- Hosting along with the other churches a reception and lunch on the first day immediately after the opening ceremonies
- Providing an archival display of materials from the relevant schools, including photos of the schools and many of their students
- Having representatives present to listen to the stories of survivors, when invited

Both the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, and the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Mark MacDonald, will be participating in the event.

Settlement Agreement—Common Experience Payment

Under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, Aboriginal students who attended the residential schools can apply for this payment, which is based on the number of years they attended. Each student receives \$10,000 for their first year, and an additional \$3,000 for each additional year. To March 15, 99,756 claims have been received and almost all have been processed. The average payment was \$20,534. A total of \$1.8 billion has been set aside by the federal government to pay these amounts, and so far \$1.6 billion has been expended. The application deadline is September 19, 2011, although it is likely that most applications have been received by now.

Of the total claims received and decided, 2,709 have filed an appeal. A National Administration Committee under the Agreement have approved in whole or in part 256 and denied 625. Others are pending.

Equipping Ambassadors of Reconciliation

Last November, representatives from the Anglican, United, and Presbyterian churches gathered to train volunteers who will assist their churches in understanding and participating in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work. They learned about the church-run schools, the efforts at healing and the creation and role of the commission. They were encouraged and commissioned to engage and support the whole church in this enterprise of learning, listening and reconciling.

Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples need to encounter one another, dialogue, tell stories and share reflections. These ambassadors were sent back to their churches to facilitate these encounters wherever possible.

Attendees from the Diocese of Toronto have met since the event to strategize their outreach to various parishes and groups in the diocese. They have spent time adding to their understanding with further education events including time with Bishop Mark MacDonald, the Reverend Andrew Wesley, and visiting Council Fire.

It is hoped that two or three more "Equipping" conferences will be held in the coming years.

National Aboriginal Day of Prayer—June 21

A motion will be presented to General Synod in Halifax in June to officially add to the church calendar the National Aboriginal Day of Prayer, to be observed on June 21. In 1971 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada declared June 21 as a "National Indian Day of Prayer". On June 13, 1996, Governor General Romeo Leblanc declared June 21 National Aboriginal Day.

If the motion passes, the day will be listed as a major feast, and propers have been prepared for use on this day.

Another Opportunity for Prayer

June 13, the Sunday before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's event in Winnipeg, is an opportunity to pray for the commission and the event, and for truth and reconciliation in our nation. Materials are being prepared ecumenically for this Sunday and will be made available shortly.

Commissioner Sinclair Addresses UN Body

On April 27, Commissioner Murray Sinclair addressed the 9th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as it met in New York. He told the story of the Canadian experience with residential schools. He said,

“That history is something that we all must teach our children and grandchildren. That history must be offered in classrooms across the country. We call for these things so that in a few generations, in place of disruption, dysfunction and disrespect, we will see a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous Canadians and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect”.

Commissioner Sinclair also proposed an international roundtable on truth commissions to be spearheaded by his Canadian commission. He also supported the call for an International Decade of Reconciliation. His full address to the UN [available online](#) [PDF].

General Synod Archives

The General Synod Archives has a large collection of over 5,000 photos of the Indian Residential Schools collected by the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada (MSCC) and private individuals documenting the students, staff, buildings, farms and locations. Most of the MSCC photos are now digitized, and will be on display at the various national events organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Survivors will have a chance to identify themselves, their classmates and teachers.

The General Synod Archives are open and available to assist survivors find information about the schools they attended.

Commissioner Marie Wilson

Marie Wilson is a fluently bilingual, professional who has lived and worked in cross-cultural environments for almost forty years, both internationally, and in several parts of Canada, including the North. Throughout that time, Ms. Wilson has dealt effectively with Aboriginal, church, and political organizations at the operational, executive, and political levels.

For 25 years she worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in radio and television.

Before becoming a commissioner, she served as a senior manager (vice president of operations) in a public crown corporation, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Ms. Wilson holds a bachelor's degree with honours in French language and literature and a master's degree in journalism from the University of Western Ontario.

For more information [email Henriette Thompson](#), director of Partnerships, or call her at (416) 924-9299 x 213.