

Residential Schools: Truth and Reconciliation

Update #1 May 10, 2010

The first 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 the Ven. Jim Boyles, consultant on residential schools.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

1. TRC opens new head office in Winnipeg

On April 8, 2010, on the 15th floor of an office tower near Portage and Main in Winnipeg, chief commissioner Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission welcomed a packed crowd to the commission's new facilities.

Earlier, Commissioner Sinclair said the move from Ottawa to Winnipeg brings the TRC closer to the majority of residential school survivors, who live in western and northern Canada. Furthermore, most of the schools themselves were located in the west and the north. Finally, by locating in Winnipeg, Sinclair said the commission is underscoring its independence from the Government of Canada.

Representatives of the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, the federal government and the churches brought greetings and expressed hope that the commission's mandate of seeking the truth about the residential school era in Canada, and in promoting reconciliation, would be successful. Henriette Thompson, director of Partnerships spoke on behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada. Bishop Don Phillips of the host Diocese of Rupert's Land was present.

2. TRC First National Event to be held in June in Winnipeg

An Invitation

**All Anglicans are invited to attend the
First National Truth and Reconciliation Event
Winnipeg – the Forks
June 16 – 19, 2010**

Plans are underway for the first of seven national events sponsored by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be held at the Forks, Winnipeg, June 16-19. It will be an opportunity for Aboriginal people, including survivors of the schools and non-Aboriginal people, including church members to meet and talk together. It is a major undertaking, and

the Anglican Church of Canada is involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its planning.

The four churches—Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United—will sponsor a reception and lunch for survivors immediately after the opening ceremonies on Wednesday June 16. The churches will also have archival exhibits where survivors and their families from the schools in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario can view materials and photographs of the schools they or their family members attended.

Settlement Agreement

Originally the Anglican bodies were to raise \$25 million and share in payments to survivors who were abused in the schools. The Anglican portion was 30%. The final Agreement, however, meant that this amount was reduced to \$16 million and was redirected to healing programs through the Anglican Healing Fund. Under the original agreement approximately \$6.7 million was paid out to survivors. General Synod and the dioceses have raised the total of \$16 million, and in fact, some dioceses which had oversubscribed received refunds.

At the end of 2009 the Anglican fund has \$5.1 million on hand, and is transferring approximately \$400,000 each year to the healing fund. The healing fund itself had \$1.9 million on hand.

The federal government meanwhile is paying for all approved common experience claims and independent assessment awards.

Document Commitment

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement provides that the signing parties (which in our case include all dioceses and General Synod) will make available “all relevant documents” to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although there have been press reports that the churches have been uncooperative in this regard, the churches have been waiting for directions from the commission as to how to provide these documents. It now seems that the commission will send researchers to the major archives to assess the materials, indicate what is relevant, and work with the archivists to have the materials scanned (at the commission’s cost as provided for in the agreement).

The General Synod Archives remains open and is assisting survivors who need materials to substantiate their claims of attendance at a particular school.

Aboriginal Healing Foundation

There was great disappointment when the recent federal budget failed to include any renewed funding of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The foundation was established in 1998 with a mandate to provide support to local healing programs and projects across the country and was funded by an initial grant of \$350 million. Its five-year mandate was extended in 2003 but has now ended, meaning that its work is being wound down. Its current 134 projects will end, and this important healing initiative will be lost. In spite of loud voices raised by Aboriginal and church groups, the government is unmoved. A special parliamentary debate was held on March 31, but the decision stands.

Commissioner Murray Sinclair

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair was appointed Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba in March of 1988 and to the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba in January 2001. He was Manitoba's first Aboriginal judge.

Justice Sinclair was born and raised in the Selkirk area north of Winnipeg. He was called to the Manitoba Bar in 1980. In the course of his legal practice, Justice Sinclair practiced primarily in the fields of civil and criminal litigation and Aboriginal law. He represented a cross-section of clients but by the time of his appointment, was known for his representation of Aboriginal people and his knowledge of Aboriginal legal issues.

Justice Sinclair was appointed co-commissioner of Manitoba's Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. He now serves as chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, along with Marie Wilson and Wilton Littlechild.

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