

schools, and has permitted many Catholic nuns and priests to maintain that the allegations against their colleagues are false. A statement of regret that children were harmed in the schools is a far cry from a full and proper apology that takes responsibility for the harms that occurred.

The Commission notes that in 2010, Pope Benedict XVI responded to the issue of the abuse of children in Ireland differently and more clearly when he issued a pastoral letter, a public statement that was distributed through the churches to all Catholics in Ireland. He acknowledged that the church had failed to address the issue of child abuse in Catholic institutions. He said:

Only by examining carefully the many elements that gave rise to the present crisis can a clear-sighted diagnosis of its causes be undertaken and effective remedies be found. Certainly, among the contributing factors we can include: inadequate procedures for determining the suitability of candidates for the priesthood and the religious life; insufficient human, moral, intellectual and spiritual formation in seminaries and novitiates; a tendency in society to favour the clergy and other authority figures; and a misplaced concern for the reputation of the Church and the avoidance of scandal, resulting in failure to apply existing canonical penalties and to safeguard the dignity of every person. Urgent action is required to address these factors, which have had such tragic consequences in the lives of victims and their families.⁷³

He directly addressed those who were abused as children by church clergy:

You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry. I know that nothing can undo the wrong you have endured. Your trust has been betrayed and your dignity has been violated. Many of you found that, when you were courageous enough to speak of what happened to you, no one would listen. Those of you who were abused in residential institutions must have felt that there was no escape for your sufferings. It is understandable that you find it hard to forgive or be reconciled with the Church. In her name, I openly express the shame and remorse that we all feel. At the same time, I ask you not to lose hope.... Speaking to you as a pastor concerned for the good of all God's children, I humbly ask you to consider what I have said ... [and that] you will be able to find reconciliation, deep inner healing and peace.⁷⁴

In Canada, for more than a century, thousands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were subjected to spiritual, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in Catholic-run residential schools. Other than a small private audience with Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, the Vatican has remained silent on the Roman Catholic Church's involvement in the Canadian residential school system. During the Commission's hearings, many Survivors told us that they knew that the Pope had apologized to Survivors of Catholic-run schools in Ireland. They wondered why no similar apology had been extended to them. They said: "I did not hear the Pope say to me, 'I am sorry.' Those words are very important to me ... but he didn't say that to the First Nations people."⁷⁵