

was true for both non-Aboriginal witnesses and Aboriginal witnesses whose own families had been impacted by the schools but who may have had few opportunities to learn more about the residential schools themselves, especially in those many families where no one was yet willing or able to talk about it.

At the 2011 Northern National Event in Inuvik, Therese Boullard, then the director of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission, told us,

We need to have an accurate record of history.... As long as there are some that are in denial of what really happened, as long as we don't have the full picture of what happened, we really can't move forward in that spirit of reconciliation.... I want to acknowledge these stories as gifts, a hand towards reconciliation. I think it's amazing that after all that has passed, after all that you've experienced, that you would be willing to share your pain with the rest of Canada in this spirit of openness and reconciliation and in this faith that the government of Canada and non-Aboriginal Canadians will receive them in a way that will lead to a better relationship in the future. That you have that faith to share your stories in that spirit is amazing and it's humbling and it's inspiring and I just want to thank Survivors for that.²⁰⁴

At the 2010 Manitoba National Event, Ginelle Giacomini, a high school history teacher from Winnipeg who served as a private statement gatherer at the event, said,

I was talking to a few students before I came this week to do this, and they said, "Well, what do you mean there are Survivors? That was a long time ago. That was hundreds of years ago." To them, this is a page in a history book.... So, I'm so blessed to have spent the past week sitting down one-on-one with Survivors and listening to their stories. And I have heard horrific things and the emotions. It's been very hard to hear. But what every single person I've spoken to has said is that "we are strong." And the strength is one thing that I'll carry with me when I leave. You carry on, and that's something that I want to bring back to my classrooms, is the strength of everyone that I spoke to and their stories. And it is so important for high school students, and all students in Canada, to be talking about this a lot more than they are. I just want to thank everyone involved for doing this, for educating me. I have a history degree in Canadian history. I learned more in the past five days about Canada than I have in three years of that degree.²⁰⁵

The Commission's seven National Events, by all accounts, provided a respectful space for public dialogue. Over 150,000 Canadians came out to participate in them and in some 300 smaller-scale Community Events. One of the most common words used in describing them was "transformational." It will be up to others to determine their long-term effectiveness, and to judge this model's potential in terms of ongoing public education. However, as Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, we are both confident and convinced that public dialogue is critical to the reconciliation process.