staff also varied. Some were remorseful while others were defensive. Some were proud of their students and their own efforts to support them while others were critical of their own school and government authorities for their lack of attention, care, and resources. The stories of government and church officials involved acknowledgement, apology, and promises not to repeat history. Some non-Aboriginal Canadians expressed outrage at what had happened in the schools and shared their feelings of guilt and shame that they had not known this. Others denied or minimized the destructive impacts of residential schools. These conflicting stories, based on different experiences, locations, time periods, and perspectives, all feed into a national historical narrative.

Developing this narrative through public dialogue can strengthen civic capacity for accountability and so do justice to victims, not just in the legal sense, but also in terms of restoring human dignity, nurturing mutual respect, and supporting healing. As citizens use ceremony and testimony to remember, witness, and commemorate, they learn how to put the principles of accountability, justice, and reconciliation into everyday practice. They become active agents in the truth and reconciliation process.

Participants at Commission events learned from the Survivors themselves by interacting directly with them. Survivors, whose memories are still alive, demonstrated in the most powerful and compelling terms that by sitting together in Sharing Circles, people gain a much deeper knowledge and understanding of what happened in the residential schools than can ever be acquired at a distance by studying books, reading newspapers, or watching television reports.

For Indigenous peoples, stories and teachings are rooted in relationships. Through stories, knowledge and understanding about what happened and why are acquired, validated, and shared with others. Writing about her work with Survivors from her own community, social work scholar Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Anne Thomas) said,

> I never dreamed of learning to listen in such a powerful way. Storytelling, despite all the struggles, enabled me to respect and honour the Ancestors and the storytellers while at the same time sharing tragic, traumatic, inhumanely unbelievable truths that our people had lived. It was this level of integrity that was essential to storytelling.... When we make personal what we teach ... we touch people in a different and more profound way.[190]

At a Community Hearing in St. Paul, Alberta, in January 2011, Charles Cardinal explained that although he did not want to remember his residential school experiences, he came forward because "we've got to let other people hear our voices." When he was asked how, given the history of the residential schools, Canada could be a better place, he replied that we must "listen to the people."[191] When asked the same question in Beausejour, Manitoba, Laurie McDonald said that Canada must begin by "doing exactly what is happening now ... governments ... [have got to know] that they can never, ever, ever do this again."[192] In Ottawa, Survivor Victoria Grant-Boucher said,