

was, you will at least when you leave here today, have a bit more of the story and you may judge for yourselves. I hope you will judge with kindness, understanding, and generosity of spirit....

[My father] did so many things, coached the teams, blew the whistle or shot off the starting pistol at the sports days. Twelve o'clock at midnight, on the coldest of winter days, he would be out on the rink that he had constructed behind the school, flooding it so that the children could skate. He devoted his life to the service of his church, his God, and those that he thought had been marginalized, oppressed.... It is a terrible shame there were not more like him. When we leave today, though, let's remember that when you have a system like the residential school, there are the individuals within the system, some of whom are good, decent, loving, caring people, and some of whom are blind, intolerant, predatory.... My father worked within the system trying to make it a better one.¹⁹⁹

TRC Honorary Witnesses

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission describes "reconciliation" as an ongoing individual and collective process involving all the people of Canada. To help ensure that reconciliation will indeed be ongoing, even after the TRC's own official work is done, the Commissioners decided early on a public education and advocacy strategy to engage high-profile supporters, each willing to foster the continuing work of public education and dialogue. We called upon more than seventy of them across the country and internationally, and inducted them as Honorary Witnesses in a public ceremony at each of the National Events. Together, they represent accomplished and influential leaders from all walks of life, now serving as ambassadors in educating the broader public about why reconciliation is necessary. Most of them, including some who had worked with Aboriginal people in the past, frankly admitted to their own prior gaps in knowledge and understanding of the residential schools system and its continuing legacy. They now encourage the broader Canadian public to do what they have done: to learn and to be transformed in understanding and in commitment to societal change.

Speaking at the Saskatchewan National Event, TRC Honorary Witness and a former member of parliament, the Honourable Tina Keeper, who is also a member of the Norway House Cree Nation, talked about the importance of honouring individual, family, and community relationships and memory, her own emotional involvement in the ratification of the Settlement Agreement, and the struggles surrounding Canada's apology. She underscored the strong contributions that Aboriginal peoples have to make to national healing and reconciliation.

Yesterday was an incredible opportunity for me personally to let the tears flow, and they flowed all day long. And I didn't do that when I was in the House of Commons.