

the Indian in the child.' Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country."<sup>666</sup>

The prime minister was joined by the leaders of the other parties represented in the Canadian House of Commons. The Liberal leader of the opposition, the Honourable Stéphane Dion, recognized that the government's policy had "destroyed the fabric of family in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Parents and children were made to feel worthless. Parents and grandparents were given no choice. Their children were stolen from them."<sup>667</sup> The Bloc Québécois leader, the Honourable Gilles Duceppe, asked Canadians to "picture a small village, a small community. Now picture all of its children, gone. No more children between seven and sixteen playing in the lanes or the woods, filling the hearts of their elders with their laughter and joy."<sup>668</sup> The New Democratic Party leader, the Honourable Jack Layton, called on Canadians to help

reverse the horrific and shameful statistics afflicting Aboriginal populations, now: the high rates of poverty, suicide, the poor or having no education, overcrowding, crumbling housing, and unsafe drinking water. Let us make sure that all survivors of the residential schools receive the recognition and compensation that is due to them.<sup>669</sup>

In his response, Phil Fontaine, then National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said the apology marked a new dawn in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada. He also called attention to the "brave survivors," who, by "the telling of their painful stories, have stripped white supremacy of its authority and legitimacy. The irresistibility of speaking truth to power is real."<sup>670</sup> National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Patrick Brazeau spoke of how the resiliency, courage, and strength of residential school Survivors had inspired all Aboriginal people.<sup>671</sup> Mary Simon, President of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, said, in tackling the hard work that remained to be done, "Let us now join forces with the common goal of working together to ensure that this apology opens the door to a new chapter in our lives as aboriginal peoples and in our place in Canada."<sup>672</sup> Clem Chartier, President of the Métis National Council, noted that he had attended a residential school, and pointed out that many issues regarding the relationship between Métis people and residential schools still were not resolved. He said, "I also feel deeply conflicted, because there is still misunderstanding about the situation of the Métis Nation, our history and our contemporary situation."<sup>673</sup> Beverley Jacobs, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, spoke of how Aboriginal communities were recovering their traditions. "Now we have our language still, we have our ceremonies, we have our elders, and we have to revitalize those ceremonies and the respect for our people not only within Canadian society but even within our own peoples."<sup>674</sup>

The Settlement Agreement and the formal apology by Prime Minister Stephen Harper represent the culmination of years of political struggle, changes in societal attitudes, court decisions, and negotiation. Through it all, the Survivors kept the issue alive.