

Call to Action

- 58) We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims of abuse and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.

Survivors' responses to church apologies

Survivors made many statements to the Commission about Canada's apology, but the same cannot be said for their response to church apologies. It is striking that although Survivors told us a great deal about how churches have affected their lives, and how, as adults, they may or may not practise Christianity, they seldom mentioned the churches' apologies or healing and reconciliation activities. This was the case even though they heard church representatives offer apologies at the TRC's National Events. Their engagement with the churches was often more informal and personal. Survivors who visited the churches' archival displays in the TRC's Learning Places picked up copies of the apologies and talked directly with church representatives. They also had conversations with church representatives in the Churches Listening Areas and in public Sharing Circles.⁷⁶

When the late Alvin Dixon, Chair of the United Church of Canada's Indian Residential School Survivors Committee, spoke to the Commission at the Northern National Event in Inuvik in 2011, he expressed what many other Survivors may have thought about all of the churches' apologies. He said,

The apologies don't come readily. They don't come easily. And when we heard the apology in 1986, those of us First Nations members of the United Church didn't accept the apology but we agreed to receive it and watch and wait and work with the United Church to put some flesh, to put some substance to that apology. And we all believed that apologies should be words of action, words of sincerity that should mean something.... Our task is to make sure that the United Church lives up to that apology in meaningful ways....

You know, our work is just beginning and we're going to hold the church's feet to the fire, other churches and Canada to make sure that this whole exercise of healing goes on for as long as it takes for us to recover from the impacts of our experiences in those residential schools.

The other issue that comes up that we are addressing is having our native spiritual practice condemned initially not just by the United Church but all churches ... well, we now have our church supporting Native spiritual gatherings and we're going to