

the story of their contribution to Canada, and the values that are inherent in those communities is much better known.²⁰²

Joe Clark's observations reinforce this Commission's view that learning happens in a different manner when life stories are shared and witnessed in ways that connect knowledge, understanding, and human relationships. He pinpointed a key challenge to reconciliation: how to bridge the divides between those who have been part of the residential school experience and those who have not, and between those who have participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proceedings and those who have not.

The former minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the late Honourable Andy Scott, was inducted as an Honorary Witness at the 2012 Atlantic National Event in Halifax. He then served to welcome new inductees to the Honorary Witness circle at the Saskatchewan National Event, and to reflect on his experience. His comments reinforce the Commission's conviction that relationship-based learning and ways of remembering lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the links between the Survivors' experiences and community memory and our collective responsibility and need to re-envision Canada's national history, identity, and future. He told us,

When I was invited to become an Honorary Witness, I thought I was prepared, having been involved in the Settlement process and having already met and heard from Survivors. I was not. In Halifax, I heard about not knowing what it meant to be loved, not knowing how to love. I heard about simply wanting to be believed that it happened, 'just like I said.' ... We heard about a deliberate effort to disconnect young children from who they are. We heard about a sense of betrayal by authority—government, community, and church. We heard about severe punishment for speaking one's language, living one's spirituality, seeking out one's siblings. We heard about forced feeding, physical and sexual abuse. And we heard about deaths. We heard about forgiving as a way to move on and we heard from those who felt that they would never be able to forgive. I could not and cannot imagine being taken away to a strange place as a five- or a six-year-old, never knowing why or for how long. Perhaps I remember most poignantly Ruth, who said simply, "I never thought I'd talk about this, and now I don't think I'll ever stop. But Canada is big. I'll need some help."

Reconciliation is about Survivors speaking about their experiences, being heard and being believed, but it's also about a national shared history. As Canadians, we must be part of reconciling what we have done collectively with who we believe we are. To do that with integrity and to restore our honour, we must all know the history so we can reunite these different Canadas.²⁰³

The Commission also heard from a variety of other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal witnesses from many walks of life. Some were there on behalf of their institution or organization. Some had close personal or professional ties to Aboriginal people, and others had none. Many said that the experience opened their eyes and was powerfully transformative. They commented on how much they had learned by listening to Survivors' life stories. This