

Greeting Colleagues of Kamloops-Okanagan Presbytery,

Attached please find a Minute for Reconciliation, offered to you like a Minute for Mission with the hope it will be read at Sunday worship.

Thank you to the folks in Kamloops who have done some excellent work preparing their community for these Hearings. I do know that for some congregations the issue of Residential Schools may seem distant, or not relevant to them. The relationship between First Nations and Canada, and Christians in particular, has been twisted and broken by Residential Schools. In the Truth and Reconciliation hearings we are offered an opportunity to be part of a healing process.

A nurse did not cause injury, yet is key to healing. A rape counsellor did not commit the crime, yet is key to healing. Even if your congregations reject any notion of involvement they can still be part of the healing process. This is a unique opportunity for us to be part of a historic moment. As Jenny Carter put it, here is a time for turning toward one another.

Our Presbytery covers a very large territory and so I understand that attending the hearings may be out of the question for some, yet understanding, compassion and prayer are also important parts of healing.

I hope that you will encourage your congregations to be part of the "turning" that these hearings offer.

Kathy Hogman  
TRC Educator,  
BC Conference

## Minute for Reconciliation - Kathy's Story

1995 Port Alberni, BC. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be in a position like I found myself in Port Alberni. I arrived fresh from a small rural pastoral charge in Saskatchewan to the eye of a hurricane. Just before I arrived that summer, Arthur Plint was convicted of sexual assault on Children at the "Alberni Indian Residential School". On the advice of its lawyers, the United Church of Canada, who administered the school, refused to acknowledge responsibility for the tragedy. As the lawsuits mounted, they feared the United Church may be sued out of existence.

I found myself in a state of shock. I had been blissfully unaware of Residential Schools and their impact on First Nations throughout Western Canada. I did not know the United Church had any involvement in them, now I had a steep learning curve facing me. Some of the members of my congregation had worked at the school, some had worked at other Indian Residential Schools, some had attended the school. We came together to pool our knowledge and resources, we invited people to tell their stories. We spent a year in study, and prayer. Our sense of shock and denial led to a growing realization that something had to be done. Someone had to face the pain, the anger, and the tragedy of Indian Residential Schools. "Someone had to do something."

Children stolen from their families and communities as young as 5 years old. Language destroyed, spirituality demonized, culture shattered, lack of food and medical care standard. This is horrible enough, but then to face physical and sexual abuse on top of all of that - in a United Church run school!!! "Someone had to do something,"

It didn't take long to realize that we were the "someone" and the "something" was to apologize. Everything we knew as Christians went in to that apology. Our understandings of God, sin and grace, forgiveness and reconciliation, death and resurrection were woven into the words and the spirit of the Apology. We knew that it would not "make everything better", we knew it would not wipe out 150 years of suffering, and we knew we had to do this, that God was calling us to do this.

In May of 1997 we stood in the gym of the former Residential School on Mission Road and presented an apology from our congregation to over 600 members of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations. It was the most powerful spiritual experience of my life. An extraordinary moment, it was a moment of turning toward one another with God as witness. It was a beginning.

We are still "beginning", still finding ways to turn toward one another. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission offers us ways of beginning. There we can bear witness to the courage and love of God by our presence, by being Christ for our sisters and brothers in pain, we can continue the "beginning" of healing, reconciliation, of birthing a new relationship between peoples.

Please attend the Truth And Reconciliation Hearings. For Kamloops-Okanagan Presbytery the Hearing is in Kamloops, Location: Tk'emlups te Secwepemc- Kamloops BC Moccasin Square Gardens Date: May 28 & 29, 2013 Time: 8 - 4 pm each day. If there are no hearings close to you invite Reconciliation Canada to an event in your community. The National Event in Vancouver is open to everyone, September 19-21. Organize a bus, contact a local congregation for billeting. Come and bear witness.