

An invitation from the Primate and National Indigenous Anglican Bishop:

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which has addressed the sad legacy of the Indian Residential Schools will hold its final event, the closing ceremonies of its six-year tenure, in Ottawa for four days commencing on Sunday, May 31st

The daily themes are as follows:

- Day 1 "We are all in this together";
- Day 2, "We still have lots to learn";
- Day 3, "Reconciliation means respect and change";
- Day 4, "This ending is only the beginning".

In the spirit of the 4th-day theme, we are calling our Church into "22 Days" of prayer and renewal in our commitments to healing and reconciliation among all people – the Indigenous Peoples of this land and all others who have come and settled and also call it home. These 22 Days will take us to the National Aboriginal Day of Prayer, on Sunday, June 21st.

Inspired by a conversation among a number of Cathedral Deans in dioceses where the TRC held National Events, and with the support of a number of General Synod staff, this call is heartily endorsed by the national House of Bishops.

Together we are calling the Church to take time in each of these 22 Days.

- **to listen to the story of a survivor of Residential Schools.**

These stories are on a specially created 22 Days website (22days.ca). The telling and hearing of stories has been at the very heart of all the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Gatherings – stories of loneliness and abuse, trauma and shame, struggle and courage, resilience and hope. Each story you hear is accompanied by a prayer by which you can hold the emotions and hopes of the story-teller and those of your own before God.

- **to pray for all those affected by the long shadows of Residential Schools.**

Pray for all who still suffer the memory of being stripped of their dignity, name, language, and culture. Pray for all who suffered physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Pray for those who struggle with addictions and thoughts of suicide. Pray for those caught up in domestic violence. Pray for missing and murdered aboriginal women. Pray for all who perpetuate racial hatred that they might experience a conversion of mind and change of heart. Pray for all who work amidst the suffering of indigenous peoples on reserves and in the downtown core of so many cities in the country.

- **to ring church bells for the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls.**

In cathedrals and churches across Canada to ring bells for each of the 1017 indigenous women and girls murdered between 1980 and 2012 and for the 164 indigenous women and girls classified by the RCMP as missing in suspicious circumstances, 1181 in total. To ring bells in

solidarity with the Indigenous peoples in their cry for justice and for a special commission. Bells could be rung on National Aboriginal Day; 11 days out of the 22 days: or every day for 22 days.

• to consider our steadfastness on the long journey to reconciliation in this country.

Mr. Justice Murray Sinclair, the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has said that just as it took several generations to bring about the existing patterns of broken relations with Indigenous Peoples, it will take several to restore and nurture right relations based on mutual respect. He has reminded the churches of our special responsibility in this work. In part his words acknowledge work done to date and in part they constitute a charge to continue that work with unwavering resolve.

• to consider our commitment as a Church to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in their cry for justice.

The issues are many – from inadequate housing to prohibitory expensive nutritious food and lack of clean running water, from a need for increased police and protection services to the enhancement of comprehensive health care, from equal funding for public education to free, prior, and informed consent with respect to resource extraction. How are we standing with Indigenous Peoples? With whom are we speaking to address the crisis that is consuming so many indigenous communities?

• to post your own stories of learning and witness to the call to renewed relations with The First Peoples of this land.

They can be posted to the 22 Days Website wall. I encourage you to plaster it!

One story that will be posted early is the creation of the Primate's Commission on Discovery, Reconciliation and Justice. It is charged with helping our Church to understand the doctrine of discovery, a doctrine that deeply influenced the colonial agenda, including a federal government policy of assimilating Indigenous Peoples through the Indian Residential Schools. The Commission is charged with helping our Church to embrace more fully the work of reconciliation entrusted to us through the Gospel of Christ. It is charged with helping our Church in its work of advocacy in the long struggle for justice for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada.

In these 22 Days between the Closing Event for Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and National Aboriginal Day, we invite one and all to join us in labouring for that for which we pray, saying

*In speaking and hearing and acting upon the Truth
may we as individuals and as a nation
meet the hope of a new beginning.
Great Creator God
who desires that all creation live in harmony and peace,
Remembering the Children
we dare to dream of a Path of Reconciliation
where apology from the heart leads to healing of the heart*

*and the chance of restoring the circle,
where justice walks with all,
where respect leads to true partnership,
where the power to change comes from each heart.
Hear our prayer of hope,
and guide this country of Canada
on a new and different path. Amen.*

– Prayer from “Remembering the Children” Church Leaders Tour, March 2008

Fred. J. Hiltz
Archbishop and Primate

Mark L. MacDonald
National Indigenous Anglican Bishop