



BACKGROUND ON THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF CANADA INTERIM REPORT

On February 24, 2012, the TRC Commissioners tabled a 40-page Interim Report with 20 recommendations. This Interim Report includes information on the activities of the Commission from its appointment until June 30, 2011.

The following is a brief summary of the Interim Report's Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions.

Summary of Findings

Through its work, the Commission has reached certain conclusions about the residential school system. The Commission has concluded that:

- Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal children.
- Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal families.
- Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal culture.
- Residential schools constituted an assault on self-governing and self-sustaining Aboriginal nations.
- The impacts of the residential school system were immediate, and have been ongoing since the earliest years of the schools.
- Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies, and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.
- It will take time and commitment to reverse this legacy. The schools operated in Canada for well over a century. In the same way, the reconciliation process will have to span generations. It will take time to re-establish respect.
- Effective reconciliation will see Aboriginal people regaining their sense of self-respect, and the development of relations of mutual respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.
- In future reports, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be making specific recommendations as to how reconciliation can be furthered.



Summary of Recommendations

The Commission is making recommendations in the following five areas:

- **The operation of the Commission:** These include recommendations addressing the need to provide the Commission, and agencies such as Health Canada which are involved in the Commission’s activities, with the necessary resources to complete its mandated work.
- This includes not only funding, but timely access to documents.
- **Education:** These include recommendations regarding materials on residential schools in the public-school system, public education about residential schools, and support for the promotion of the heritage of Aboriginal people in Canada.
- This includes providing greater publicity to the “Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools.”
- **Support for survivors:** These include early childhood and parenting programs, establishment of a sustainable, mental health and wellness healing centres—including northern centres.
- Measures to ensure that the legitimate concerns of former students who feel unfairly left out of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.
- Restoring funding to the Aboriginal Health Foundation.
- Providing accrediting to the training of Health Canada’s community cultural and traditional knowledge healing team members, as demonstrated through their intensive practical work in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other Settlement Agreement provisions.
- **Reconciliation:** This involves the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and all parties to the Settlement Agreement, undertaking to meet and explore the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a framework for working towards ongoing reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
- **Commemoration:** This involves governments, educational institutions, and churches consult, design, announce, and publicly unveil residential school commemorations before the completion of the Commission’s mandate.



Conclusions

The report makes three closing observations.

The Residential School story has heroes.

The work of truth telling, healing, and reconciliation was commenced well over two decades ago by the people who, as children, had been victimized by this system. They continue to do the heavy labour of sharing their stories, and, by so doing, educating their children, their communities, and their country.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission cannot itself achieve reconciliation.

Reconciliation implies relationship. The residential schools badly damaged relationships within Aboriginal families and communities, between Aboriginal peoples and churches, between Aboriginal peoples and the government, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples within Canadian society.

The TRC Commissioners believe these relationships can and must be repaired.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement is a positive step in this process since it formally recognized the need to come to terms with the past. The process of reconciliation will require the passionate commitment of individuals and the genuine engagement of society.

There are people today who are living with the direct impacts of the schools: the survivors and their families. Specific attention will have to be paid to their needs.

The conflicts that have arisen within communities as a result of the school system must be recognized and addressed. Churches have to define their role in this process as Aboriginal people reclaim what is of value to them.

Reconciliation also will require changes in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the government of Canada. The federal government, along with the provincial governments, historically has taken a social welfare approach to its dealings with Aboriginal people. This approach fails to recognize the unique legal status of Aboriginal peoples as the original peoples of this country. Without that recognition, we run the risk of continuing the assimilationist policies and the social harms that were integral to the residential schools.



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There is no reason for anyone who wants to contribute to the reconciliation process to wait until the publication of the Commission's final reports.

There is an opportunity now for Canadians to engage in this work, to make their own contributions to reconciliation, and to create new truths about our country. As then Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine observed when he accepted Canada's apology in June 2008, "Together we can achieve the greatness our country deserves." Our challenge and opportunity will be to work together to achieve that greatness.