



Truth and Reconciliation Report

To redress the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation, in its final report the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called on governments, educational and religious institutions, civil society groups and all Canadians to take action on the 94 Calls to Action it identified. On December 15, 2015, the Prime Minister reiterated the Government of Canada's commitment to implement the recommendations of the commission.

The following is a summary of the historical perspective and the recommendations related to churches:

A National & Historical Perspective on Truth and Reconciliation

Churches were already involved in schooling of Indigenous children through their own missionary efforts before confederation and before any government residential school system.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada managed several residential schools prior to church union and still operated two of the schools for most of the 20th century.

As a whole, the country of Canada has promulgated numerous harms, including the pass system, systematic discrimination, poor police protection (for example, missing women and children), fraudulent treaty dealings and out-right stealing of land from Indigenous peoples, but it is the wide-spread abuses in the residential school system that have become a central focus of healing and reconciliation.

These harms have been perpetrated for generations, largely hidden, seemingly sanctioned by government and condoned by society, causing untold hardship to indigenous people, culture and prosperity.

What is reconciliation?

For some, "reconciliation" is a misnomer in that there has never been a "conciliatory" relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that could now be re-established. Rather, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) approaches the issue as:

- Coming to terms with events of the past;
- Overcoming conflicts; and
- Establishing respectful and healthy relations going forward.

What can we do?

Of the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Report calls to action that include support for everything from child welfare to education, language, culture, health, justice and missing children information, there are four specifically addressed to churches found in Calls to Action 58 to 61:

1. Apologize.
2. Educate congregations on the church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools and why apologies are necessary.
3. Educate congregations and clergy, in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders and survivors, regarding understanding, sensitivity and respect for Indigenous spirituality.
4. Collaborate with Indigenous organizations to establish sustainable local initiatives such as:
 - i. Community-controlled healing and reconciliation projects.
 - ii. Community-controlled culture and language revitalization projects.
 - iii. Community-controlled education and relationship-building projects.
 - iv. Regional dialogues for Indigenous spiritual leaders and youth to discuss Indigenous spirituality, self-determination, and reconciliation.

As cited from:

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524494530110/1557511412801>



Prayer of Lament for Children Who Did Not Return from Residential Schools

Creator God of love and justice,

Comforter of those who mourn,

We turn to you acknowledging the actions of your church, our complicity in running residential schools and taking children from their families.

We have asked forgiveness and committed to work for healing and reconciliation.

But we recognize that for some, that change came too late.

We now have a first list of the names of students who died and never made it home from residential schools.

We know the list is incomplete; that there will be more names and that some names may never be known.

But you know, Loving and Healing God, their names and their stories.

For those children whose names we now know, those we do not yet know and for the intergenerational harm still present today that grew from their absence, we ask for forgiveness and pray for healing for those whose children, siblings, family and friends were taken from home but did not return.

For where there was joy, and we took it;
laughter and we stifled it
play and we turned it to tears
family and we broke it

We repent and renew our commitment to walk a new path.

We honour the children lost and hold the memory of their lives in our hearts.

Comforting God, we pray for healing in the communities and families of all who experienced residential schools, and strength for all who pursue reconciliation. Amen.



Residential Schools and the Presbyterian Church in Canada (From the PCC Website)

The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated 11 residential schools beginning in the mid 1880's through to 1969. These schools and their locations are:

- Ahousaht Residential School in British Columbia,
- Alberni Residential School in British Columbia,
- Birtle Residential School in Manitoba,
- Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, first located in Shoal Lake, Ontario and relocated to Kenora, Ontario,
- Crowstand Residential School in Saskatchewan,
- File Hills Residential School in Saskatchewan,
- Muscowpetung (later known as "Lakesend") Residential School in Saskatchewan,
- Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba,
- Regina Residential School in Saskatchewan,
- Round Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan, and
- Stoney Plain Residential School in Alberta.

In 1925 all but two of the schools that were still open were transferred to the United Church of Canada, which was established as a result of the Church Union Movement. The two schools the PCC continued to operate after 1925 were Birtle Residential School and Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School.

In addition to the trauma of being forcibly taken from their homes, families, and communities, students faced abuse, neglect, non-consensual experimentation, increased illness and death. The church has confessed its role in running the schools and is seeking a path of reconciliation with Indigenous people. But the trauma those schools caused for individuals, families and communities continues to significantly impact Indigenous people today. As a church, we are called to repentance and to action.

The PCC first formally apologized for its role in running residential schools in 1994, called our Confession. The church renewed its commitment to living out that Confession in 2019 when it also formally repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and the concept of terra nullius in response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action number 49.