

# Truth & Reconciliation

## What Friends need to know...

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), which was the outcome of a negotiated settlement to deal with the large amount of abuse claims made by residential school survivors against the government of Canada and four churches. The IRSSA was negotiated between former students, the churches and the government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations and was court-approved and implemented in 2007.

The TRC is an independent body designed to provide a space for survivors of residential schools and those affected by them to come forward and share their experiences and participate in a process of truth, healing and reconciliation. This is where the 'truth' part of the process occurs: for non-indigenous people to be present to hear the truth is an essential part of this response to addressing the wrongs committed as a result of the residential schools.



Photo: CTV News.

*Everyone spoke deeply about ways in which all were harmed by residential schools, including those of us who had never been there. I would warmly encourage anyone who has an opportunity to be part of such a circle to take it! Elaine Bishop...On Attending a TRC Event.*



Marie Wilson, TRC Commissioner.

Photo: United Church Photoshare

### Why Quakers are involved:

The Quakers were not one of the churches who ran residential schools, and are not part of the legal agreement.

However, the Government of Canada acted on behalf of ALL Canadians when they supported residential schools through policies and financing. It is therefore very important that not just signatory church members take part.

All citizens of Canada have benefited by settler invasion, occupation of Indigenous territories, and usurpation of resources and oppression of Indigenous peoples.

### What you can do...

- Inform yourself
- Volunteer
- Participate
- Educate
- Follow up

# Truth & Reconciliation

## *What Friends can do...*

### **Inform yourself:**

In order to fully engage in a process of reconciliation knowledge of the history of the Indigenous people in your area is vitally important. Some research of the local culture and language of Indigenous people is a good place to begin. Some things you may want to find out:

- a)** The history of European invasion of North America and especially Canada, and specifically what happened in your region.
- b)** Learn names, locations, histories and cultures of the Indigenous peoples in your region.
- c)** Find out whose traditional territory you live on, is it part of a Treaty?
- d)** Research local customs for Indigenous ceremonies. Check web sites. There are many First Nation web sites which are rich in information.
- e)** Find out about any Indian Residential Schools that were in your area. If there were schools, how long were they open?
- f)** If there is an organization that is holding 'the Blanket exercise', a KAIROS experiential event in your area, please consider attending, and asking others who might be interested to attend.

### **Volunteer:**

Participating in other events can help prepare one to engage with the TRC process and provide deeper understanding and additional context for further engagement. There are many opportunities to volunteer, here are a few ideas you might want to consider:

- a)** Check with local churches to determine if other churches already have a working partnership with the First Nations and other Indigenous peoples in the area. Join their groups if you can or suggest forming an ecumenical group. Vancouver Island has such a group, Aboriginal Neighbours, which is a collation of Anglican, United Church, and Quakers.
- b)** June 21 is Aboriginal Day which is celebrated in some communities. There are other days designated by different Aboriginal organizations that you can discover and participate in such as National Healing Day, May 26. Look at the web sites for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Assembly of First Nations, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
- c)** When there is a local Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in your region, plan to attend as a witness and as a citizen of Canada who has benefited by settler invasion, occupation of Indigenous territories, usurpation of resources and oppression of Indigenous peoples.

# Truth & Reconciliation

## What Friends can do...

*"We have this incredible opportunity before us to develop and nurture relations of mutual respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians"*  
**Chief Wilton Littlechild, TRC Commissioner.**

### When at the TRC...

Recognize that most there have not attended a similar event. They may be nervous, not sure what to do. Warm friendliness, asking the appropriate people how to be helpful and offering support where you see it needed are the best ways to be helpful. It is an emotional time, so offering either support or respectful distance as appears appropriate can be helpful.

Listen to your inner self. Do not over stretch your ability to deal with such painful times. Try to have support for yourself and others, to enable you to continue to be part of the reconciliation process. Hearing the truth is the start; staying connected is the next step.

### Follow up:

Engaging with First Nations people and issues is an ongoing process. What we do after participating in a public event such as a TRC Hearing matters, in terms of our continued involvement, indicates a genuine desire for reconciliation through recognition, respect and reciprocity.

**a)** Find out if the local mainline churches have manuals, programs, workshops already written and easy to adapt for the education of your Meeting.

**b)** Look for opportunities to support community events on reserves. On Vancouver Island a local reserve invited the public to an event to raise funds to replace their Big House which burned.

**c)** Invite local bands to a special feast at your Meeting House. Explain that your Meeting would like to learn some local Indigenous history, legends, and stories. Perhaps there are local traditional food gatherers who can share knowledge of natural and traditional foods. Be prepared to accept a refusal and understand that sometimes Indigenous peoples are wary of settler-do-gooders. You may be misunderstood. Be prepared to be persistent, polite and gracious. Show up at their council office in person with written invitations and get the name of a person you can contact for follow-up on acceptance.

**d)** Be faithful to the understanding that we cannot truly have reconciliation without restitution. The Indian Residential School System was an extreme violation of the human rights of Indigenous peoples. We must all engage with moving forward towards true reconciliation.



*Photo: Rob Hughes*

### TRC National Events:

Vancouver, BC -  
September 18-21,  
2013

Edmonton, Alberta -  
March 27-30, 2014