



## CANADIAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

ENVISIONING A WORLD WHERE PEACE AND JUSTICE PREVAIL

November, 2015

Dear Friend,

It was 4 am on an early June morning and I was braving rain and the chilly morning air on my way to Victoria Island behind Parliament Hill. I was up to greet the sun with Indigenous Peoples, including residential school survivors and witnesses from across Canada. This was June 1, 2015 when the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada were to be released. At dawn, our prayers and tobacco were offered to the sacred fire in a Sunrise ceremony, and with our offerings we accepted ***the challenge of reconciliation: the work of respect and change.***

In 1996 the last Indian Residential School in Canada was closed. For 126 years the Canadian government funded church-run schools to systematically assimilate Aboriginal children; to "kill the Indian in the child." Quakers were not one of the involved churches, but ***we all have a responsibility to address the legacy of Canada's attempt to wipe out Aboriginal cultures.*** We must acknowledge the gross human rights violations and the dispossession caused by residential schools if we are to build a better future.

Quakers are at the forefront of faith-based groups working towards reconciliation. The day before I was up for the Sunrise ceremony, Canadian Friends Service Committee led educational events for thousands gathered in Ottawa and watching online. We shared Friends' experiences in repudiating the doctrine of discovery – a racist claim of the superiority of Christian peoples as justification of colonial dispossession. Shockingly, the doctrine of discovery continues to influence modern day Canada! We urged other faith groups to join us in rejecting the doctrine.

Mere hours later, we convened another panel of experts on *The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Justice, Reconciliation, and Hope*. It was my honour and privilege to moderate this as part of the formal plenary sessions, in response to a request from the TRC Commissioners. ***I was moved by the presentations, the energy in the room, and the knowledge that more than 50,000 people watched online.*** The *UN Declaration* constitutes a principled framework for justice, reconciliation, healing and peace. It is the blueprint for reconciliation in Canada.

Quakers have been involved since the drafting of the *Declaration* and your support to CFSC helps to pave the way for the human rights affirmed in the

Declaration to finally become lived reality in Canada.

When I stood at the sacred fire, when I was humbled by the commitment and actions of the three TRC Commissioners, and when I felt Grace from the courage and strength of survivors as they told their stories; I knew we had to do more.

It's not enough to recognize and acknowledge the terrible legacy of residential schools in Canada. **We must engage with the 94 Calls to Action**, and I urge you to learn more about what this engagement means, by visiting our website: [www.quakerservice.ca/TRCGuide](http://www.quakerservice.ca/TRCGuide)

Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild tells us that reconciliation is a Canadian story that asks all to **"open your mind and be willing to learn, to link arms with Indigenous Peoples as we work together to heal and secure a better future."**

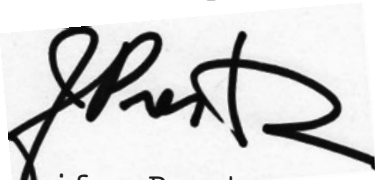
I haven't had the chance to write about the many other ways your donation creates positive change, from supporting peacebuilding to programs for mothers in prisons. We have written a **full Annual Report** and I hope you will have a look - <http://report.quakerservice.ca> (feel free to contact our office for a paper copy if you'd like one!)

There are common threads that are true of all the work that donors like you help to realize. It all arises from the same values, from the same sense of hope, regardless of the obstacles, and with the same responsiveness to where our efforts are most needed.

We build true partnerships. **We bring people together in deep dialogue**, we listen to different perspectives and needs, and we search for a shared way forward. Often, when the conditions are just right, this approach leads to **major positive shifts in our world**.

I trust you understand this, because you have a vision of a world where peace and justice prevail. Peace is not an end destination but the way we work together. **Please make a donation today to help this work continue. Thank you for your trust and vision.**

In Friendship,



Jennifer Preston  
Indigenous Rights Program Coordinator,  
Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)

**P.S. There is an urgent need for new monthly donors.** This type of giving is easy to setup online or directly from your bank account. Why not let us know how we can help you become a monthly donor?