



Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Launches first National Event

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2010, Winnipeg – Hundreds of Indian Residential School survivors, together with Aboriginal leaders, church groups, government representatives and members of the public gathered today in Winnipeg for the opening ceremonies of the first National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

“Today, we welcome Canadians to join us in honouring all survivors of residential schools who are present and with us in spirit,” stated Chief Wilton Littlechild, TRC Commissioner. “We invite you to open your hearts and minds, and affirm a genuine desire to see positive change for today and for generations to come.”

Former students and others whose lives have been fundamentally impacted by the residential schools system have come together to talk with each other and to share their experiences with the Commission at the four day National Event. Included in those conversations are the voices of former staff and other school workers who have been contacted and encouraged to come forward.

“This is a story about Canada, and Canada needs to take notice of what it is that is being said,” stated Justice Murray Sinclair, TRC Chair. “There is an unmistakable, absolute truth experienced when the person across from you summons up immeasurable courage to tell you something they may have never told anyone,” he added. It is the type of truth that causes the most stoic of us to squirm.”

The National Event is of great importance for non-aboriginal Canadians who may have had nothing whatsoever to do with the schools directly, but who have everything to gain from understanding what actually happened at them.

“We have before us an incredible opportunity to better understand and rewrite our own history,” said TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson. “We can all learn from the lessons of the past, and walk toward respectful relations for the future... for the sake of the child taken and the parent left behind.”

The four-day National Event is the first of seven to be held across Canada within five years. It is expected to draw thousands to participate in cultural exhibitions by First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups, film screenings, plays, art exhibits and musical performances.

Additional information about the TRC and the Winnipeg National Event is available at www.trc.ca, or by calling 1 (888) TRC-5554.



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established as a result of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in the 150 year history of the residential schools, and guide and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

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