



A Message from the Acting Executive Director

Welcome to the first edition of the quarterly Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Newsletter. This is our opportunity for the TRC Secretariat to keep you informed of the TRC's activities and developments.

Our staff is continuing to travel throughout Canada to participate in initiatives to promote the TRC's mandate and continue the dialogue about truth, healing and reconciliation. Over the past few months we have visited several cities and communities, including Sioux Lookout, Whitehorse, Lake Babine Nation, Toronto, Ottawa, and Winnipeg.

The selection process for members of the Indian Residential Schools Survivor Committee is underway. The 10-member Committee will serve as an advisory body to the TRC and will ensure that the voices of survivors are heard and reflected when providing advice and recommendations to the Commission.

New Chairperson and Commissioners: a selection process is underway by the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Once the new Commission is appointed, the TRC will be able to launch its mandate activities.

Updates about the Commission are also available on our new website at www.trc-cvr.ca. Please visit our website often for news about the TRC and what we are doing.

Aideen Nabigon

Statement Gathering

We are moving forward as quickly as possible to receive statements from anyone affected by the legacy of residential schools.

The Commission is currently looking at ways to ensure people can describe their experience in a safe, respectful and culturally appropriate manner. For many people, the memories will be emotionally difficult. The Commission will ensure there are appropriate health supports available at all TRC events.

The TRC appreciates the patience and understanding of Canadians, particularly survivors. We recognize that many survivors are elderly and that we need to move forward as quickly as possible to receive statements from anyone affected by the legacy of residential schools. ●

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NEWSLETTER

Indian Residential Schools

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Sacred Bentwood Box Arrives at the TRC

A Bentwood Box, commissioned by the TRC, arrived at the Commission office in Ottawa, Ontario on April 27, 2009, from Vancouver Island, British Columbia, where it was steamed and bent from a single piece of red cedar.

Carved by Coast Salish artist Luke Marston, the TRC Bentwood Box is a lasting tribute to all Indian Residential School survivors. The carved panels represent the unique cultures of former First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. The Box will travel with the TRC to its seven national events throughout Canada, once the new Commission is appointed.

The TRC Bentwood Box reflects the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and their descendants, and honours those survivors who are no longer living. The artist pays respect to his own grandmother by depicting her residential schools experiences at Kuper Island in the carvings.

As the Box travels with the Commission to different provinces and territories, offerings will be made to it to commemorate personal journeys toward healing and reconciliation. At the end of



the TRC's mandate, it will be housed in a permanent venue, which is still to be determined.

"So many of our people suffer from the abuse of residential schools," said Mr. Marston. "I feel that the purpose of this Box will change Canada forever. It was a great honour to be selected to carve this box for all the students of former residential schools."

The Bentwood Box was transferred to the TRC during a special blanket ceremony at the opening of the 5th Annual Cowichan International Aboriginal Film Festival in Duncan, British Columbia on April 16. The ceremony honoured the local artist and recognized the transfer of the sacred Box as it was prepared to begin its journeys with the TRC. ●

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On the Ground...

For the past few months, Aboriginal communities across Canada have been organizing local events and activities to reflect on what reconciliation means to them.

In Winnipeg, Métis people from across Manitoba came together at the provincial capital in February to learn more about what options are available to them in terms of moving forward from their Indian Residential Schools (IRS) experiences. Métis priorities include lobbying to include various day schools on the list of government-approved IRS schools and meeting for statement gathering.

In British Columbia this past March, community healing was the continued focus of a second gathering organized by Lake Babine First Nation. More than 150 community members come

together to discuss the impacts of residential schools. Survivors were invited to share what happened to them during their time spent in the schools. Many revealed their personal experiences for the first time in a public setting among family and community members. They spoke about impacts that continue to affect their lives to this day. Others stressed the need for healing and the importance of seeking support through family and friends, traditions, and prayer. Lake Babine is working on a healing process plan that proposes increased health supports, counselling programs and other community services.

In Sioux Lookout, the newly formed Community Coalition for Healing and Reconciliation brought together about 100 people from all parts of North-western Ontario to take part in a

discussion called "Let the Dialogue Begin: Residential Schools – From Legacy Toward Healing". Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants learned that reconciliation, for some, is a lifelong journey. The Coalition will assist in that journey by creating a community of understanding; an environment that will help to foster understanding and reconciliation.

Other events and activities relating to reconciliation will take place over the coming months. A sunrise ceremony and breakfast is planned for June 11 at the site of the former Pelican Lake Residential School in Sioux Lookout Ontario. This event will commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Government of Canada's Statement of Apology to former students of Indian residential schools. ●

Quilts for Healing

The Living Healing Quilt project, commissioned by the TRC, is a tribute to IRS survivors by IRS survivors. Coordinated by Alice Williams of Curve Lake First Nation, the project brought together Inuit, Métis and First Nation survivors, who contributed quilted squares, which were then sewn together. The three finished quilts depict the stories and experiences of former residential school students. The quilts will eventually be available for public display and we will make that information available as the project progresses.

Quilting participants have now formed the Residential School Quilts Committee, where quilters who have no links to the residential school system are adding to the quilts as a way of expressing their understanding. ●



This quilt block is from Quilt 3 – Child Prisoners. Quilt Credit: Renee Linklater.



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First anniversary of the Government of Canada's Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools

The first anniversary of the Government of Canada's Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools is June 11. Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine is calling on Canadians and communities across the country – First Nations, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal – in every reserve,

town and city to participate in a "National Day of Reconciliation". In Ottawa, the National Day of Reconciliation will begin with a sunrise ceremony at 5:30 a.m. on Victoria Island. Members of the public are welcome to participate or observe. At 11:30 am, First Nations leaders will meet with church leaders and politicians for a symbolic handshake on the

Portage Bridge, followed by a march of unity to Parliament Hill. At the Hill, children will invite everyone to participate in a Round Dance, a traditional display of friendship and goodwill. AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine will address the participants, as will other special guest speakers. ●

Spread the word about the TRC

TRC brochures, available in English and French available through our Secretariat Outreach Section. If you would like to receive copies, please contact us at :

(613) 947-4647 or (613) 947-3649,
Toll Free: 1 (866) 925-4419, Fax (613) 947-5794
Email: TRC-CVR@TRC-CVR.ca or:

Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Activities in Your Community

We are aware that many communities and organizations have begun organizing events in support of reconciliation. If you have a story about an event in which you've participated or organized, we'd like to hear about it. Please submit your stories to any of our contact points listed at the end of this newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and your community! ●

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