



Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission of Canada

trc.ca

For the child taken,
For the parent left behind.



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in 2008 to:

- tell Canadians about the history of Indian Residential Schools and the impacts it had on Aboriginal children who were sent to the schools by the Canadian government.
- guide a process of reconciliation between and within Aboriginal families, communities, churches, governments and Canadians.

The Commission is a requirement of the 2007 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, the largest Canadian class action settlement of its kind, negotiated on behalf of former students, churches, the Government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and other Aboriginal organizations.

The TRC has a five-year mandate under the direction of the Chair, Justice Murray Sinclair, and Commissioners Chief Wilton Littlechild and Marie Wilson.



Indian Residential Schools

Indian Residential Schools date back to the 1870s. The policy behind the government-funded, church-run schools was, as Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated in his June 2008 apology to former Indian Residential School (IRS) students, to “kill the Indian in the child”. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country; the last one closed in 1996.



IRS survivors from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Québec

More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were taken from their families and placed in these schools.

While some former students had positive experiences at residential schools, many suffered emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse. There are many reports of overcrowding, poor sanitation, unhealthy and limited diets among students in the schools. Aboriginal children were often punished for speaking their own language or following traditional cultural practices.

Rather than attending class, they often had to spend much of their school day performing the menial labour needed to keep the schools in operation. There are numerous examples of students running away from schools and parents raising their concerns over the operation of the schools.

Many others died while attending these schools. The unresolved trauma suffered by former students has been passed on from generation to generation.

The TRC Mandate

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been given a mandate to:

- Create an historical record of the policies and operations of the former residential schools.
- Record to the fullest extent possible, the experiences of the children who attended the schools, and what former employees and anyone else impacted by the schools can recall from their experiences.
- Complete a public report that will include recommendations to all parties to the Settlement Agreement.
- Host national events in regions across Canada to facilitate truthgathering, and to promote awareness and public education about the residential schools legacy and its impacts.
- Support a Commemoration Initiative that will fund initiatives that pay tribute to survivors.
- Support community events designed by communities to meet their unique needs.
- Establish a national research centre that will be a permanent resource for all Canadians.
- Foster a process of truth sharing and healing between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians that will encourage reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.



Mary Moonias, IRS survivor,
Muskwachees Cree Nation,
Alberta

Receiving Stories

Former residential school students, their families, communities, churches, former school employees, and anyone else affected by residential schools are encouraged to share their experiences with the TRC.

The TRC will ensure that people can describe their experiences in a safe, respectful and culturally sensitive way. Participation in any TRC activity is voluntary.

You may share your residential schools experience through a written or recorded statement, a private one-on-one interview, in a public discussion. You may choose to be alone or with any support of your choice. The TRC will accommodate anyone who wishes to express themselves through music, art, dance, or other drama formats.

There will be an opportunity to share your experiences, even after the TRC completes its mandate.

The TRC is not a legal process or a judicial body. It does not have powers to subpoena anyone and it will not cross-examine anyone.

Reconciliation

The TRC views reconciliation as an ongoing individual and collective process that will require participation from all those affected by the residential schools experience. This includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis former students, their families, communities, religious entities, former school employees, government, and the people of Canada.

The TRC hopes to guide Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

National Events

The TRC will host seven national events in different regions across Canada.

The national events will engage the Canadian public and provide education about the history of the residential schools system, the experience of former students and their families and the ongoing legacies of the institutions within communities. The national events will also be opportunities to celebrate regional diversity and honour those touched by residential schools.

The national events will be held in the following regions:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Winnipeg, MB, June 2010 | Alberta |
| Inuvik, NT, June 2011 | Saskatchewan |
| Atlantic | Quebec |
| British Columbia | |

There will be a national closing ceremony in Ottawa.

Community Events

Community events are an important aspect of our mandate. The TRC will support First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in designing their own community events. Ultimately, each community knows the right process for its people and the TRC recognizes that these events will be as diverse as the individuals and groups that will initiate them.

Commemoration Initiative

The commemoration initiative provides an opportunity to honour, educate, remember, memorialize and pay tribute to former residential school students, their families and communities. Separate project funding of \$20 million has been allocated over five years to support regional and national commemoration projects.

Once the TRC has developed a process for accepting proposals, it will invite submissions from survivors, their families, communities, groups and organizations acting on behalf of former students. The TRC will make funding recommendations to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Health Supports

The health and safety of participants is of primary importance and will be reflected in the planning and implementing of all TRC activities. The Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program will be available to participants during and after TRC events.

Emotional support will be provided through a network of Aboriginal Regional Health Support Workers. Cultural supports will be provided by Elders. Professional counselling will be delivered by Health Canada registered service providers. Health Canada will also provide assistance with transportation costs to access supports if these are not available in the community. There is a 24-hour toll-free telephone crisis line available seven days a week: **1-866-925-4419**.

The TRC will work closely with Health Canada to ensure that particular attention is given to those who are elderly, in fragile health and/or those individuals who may be vulnerable to emotional distress.



Commissioned oil on canvas painting entitled "Indian Residential School" by artist and IRS survivor Alex Janvier, Cold Lake First Nation, Alberta

MEET THE COMMISSIONERS

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair Chair

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair was born and raised in the Selkirk area north of Winnipeg. Justice Sinclair attended the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, and graduated from the University of Manitoba Faculty of Law in 1979.



He was appointed Associate Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of Manitoba in March of 1988 and to the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba in January 2001. He was Manitoba's first Aboriginal judge, and the second in Canada.

In 1988, Justice Sinclair was appointed Co-Commissioner of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba along with Court of Queen's Bench Associate Chief Justice A.C. Hamilton.

He has represented a cross section of clients and is known for his representation of Aboriginal people and his expertise in Aboriginal legal issues.

He is a recipient of a National Aboriginal Achievement Award and many other community service awards. He holds three honorary degrees for his work in the field of Aboriginal justice.

He is married to Katherine Morrisseau-Sinclair, and is the father of four children.

Marie Wilson

Commissioner

Commissioner Marie Wilson has worked in cross-cultural environments for almost forty years both internationally and across Canada, particularly in the Canadian north. Throughout her career, Commissioner Wilson has worked effectively with Aboriginal, church, and political organizations at the operational, executive, and political levels.



For 25 years, she worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in radio and television as regional and national reporter, television host, and Regional Director for northern Quebec and the Northern Territories. As an independent contractor, Ms Wilson has developed and led complex, community development initiatives with a national profile. Before becoming a Commissioner, she served as a senior manager (Vice President of Operations) with a public crown corporation, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Commissioner Wilson is fluently bilingual, holds a Bachelors Degree with Honours in French Language & Literature, and a Masters degree in Journalism from the University of Western Ontario.

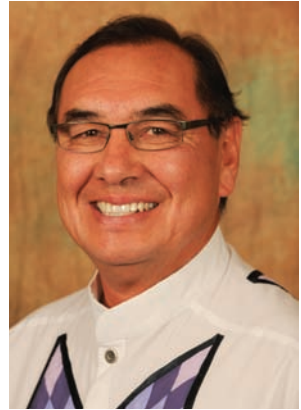
She has received a "Northerner of the Year" award from the prominent northern/national newsmagazine and a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from CBC North. She has received various awards for documentary and writing excellence. Commissioner Wilson brings a wealth of skills, experience, and a broad understanding of residential school issues that will face the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

She is married to Stephen Kakfwi, and is the proud mother of three children.

Chief Wilton Littlechild (Walking Wolf)

Commissioner

In 1976, Chief Wilton Littlechild became the first Treaty 7 First Nation person to receive a law degree from the University of Alberta. He has a Bachelor of Physical Education Degree (1967) and a Master's Degree in Physical Education (1975). In 2007, the University of Alberta bestowed a Doctor of Laws Degree upon Chief Littlechild for his outstanding achievements.



Chief Littlechild is a dedicated promoter of implementing treaties between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. As a pioneer of the global Indigenous rights movement, he has worked on both the *United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Organization of American States Draft Americas Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

In 2001, Chief Littlechild chaired the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform in Saskatchewan. The Chiefs of the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations appointed him as International Chief for Treaty 6. He was elected in 2006 as Regional Chief of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 in Alberta.

In 1988, Chief Littlechild became the first Treaty Indian ever elected as a member of the Canadian Parliament, serving for five years. Chief Littlechild has won more than fifty provincial, regional, national, and international athletic championships. He is a founder of the North American Indigenous games, and has been inducted into seven Sports Walls of Fame. Chief Littlechild is honoured to have been selected as a Torchbearer for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

He is married to Helen Peacock, and is the father of three children.

How You Can Assist the TRC

- Spread the word about the TRC. Read about us on our website at: www.trc.ca; encourage your friends, family, and neighbours to learn about this chapter in our shared history.
- Ask your child's teacher to include the legacy of Indian Residential Schools in their curriculum. The Legacy of Hope Foundation has developed an on-line classroom resource for children to learn what life at residential schools was like for former students and to hear the voices of survivors. Please see "Where are the Children?" at: www.wherearethekids.ca
- Send your thoughts and ideas to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: info@trc.ca



Inuit Children



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Contact Us

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Health Supports

A crisis line is available to provide immediate assistance 24-hours a day, seven days a week to anyone participating in TRC events.

Toll-Free: 1 (866) 925-4419

Additional information is available through the Health Canada Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/services/indiresident/irs-pi-eng.php

Photos: courtesy of Teresa Buckshot and Fred Cattroll