



TRC National Event set for Winnipeg in June 2010

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's first national event will commence in Winnipeg on June 15, 2010. It will run to June 19, 2010. The event will take place at the Forks, an historic gathering place for Aboriginal people.

The Winnipeg event is the first of seven national events TRC will hold over the next five years. Subsequent events will take place in Alberta, British Columbia, the Maritimes, Northern Canada, Quebec, and Saskatchewan.

Truth and Reconciliation Chair Justice Murray Sinclair said "this event is a first for former Indian Residential School students, and a first for Canada. My fellow Commissioners and I have made a commitment to former students that we will hear from as many of them as we are logistically and humanly able to."

The national events are part of the TRC mandate and are intended to engage and educate the Canadian public about the Indian Residential School system. They will honour those whose lives were touched by residential schools and give those individuals an opportunity to present statements to the TRC. They will also celebrate regional diversity.

For further information on the national event, please contact the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Statement gathering has begun

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has begun collecting statements directly from former residential school students and others.

In 2009, TRC representatives attended the St. Charles Garnier and St. Joseph's Residential School Reunion in Spanish, Ontario and a gathering of former residential school students organized by the Indian Residential School Survivors Society in Kamloops, British Columbia. There they recorded statements from many of the reunion participants.

In 2010, the statement gathering process will continue to expand.



Six months on the road with the TRC Commissioners

Since their appointment on July 1, 2009, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners, Justice Murray Sinclair, Chief Wilton Littlechild, and Marie Wilson have been travelling across the country, meeting individually and collectively with Canadians to discuss the ongoing Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Process. Among the many events they have attended are:

- A meeting of residential school survivors in Oromocto, New Brunswick.
- A conference in Montreal of national support workers who provide emotional health and wellness support to residential school survivors and their families.
- Meetings of residential school survivors in Sault Ste. Marie, Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island), and Spanish, Ontario.

- The relaunching of the Commission's work with a special ceremony witnessed by Governor General Michaëlle Jean in Ottawa.
- A session in Orillia, Ontario, where Canadian churches were training Ambassadors of Reconciliation.
- Community gatherings of residential school survivors in Calgary, Hobbema, and Fort McMurray, Alberta.
- A meeting of residential school survivors in Kamloops, British Columbia.
- A meeting of the Residential Schools Inter-Agency Committee in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

The Commissioners also attended and participated in the Annual General Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations in Calgary, several meetings with the leadership of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the General Assembly of the Metis National



Indian Residential School Survivor Susie Jones (left) with TRC Commissioners Chief Wilton Littlechild and Marie Wilson in front of monument dedicated to all children from Walpole Island who attended residential schools.



TRC Chairperson Justice Murray Sinclair meeting with Survivors of St. Joseph's Indian Residential School (Spanish, Ontario) and members of the Shingwauk Community Healing Strategy Project in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Top left: Barbara Caughlin, middle left: Lulubelle Tessier, Barbara Nolan, Justice Murray Sinclair, Pauline Toulouse; bottom left: Mary Beaver (Elder), Mary Hill, and Mae Smith.

Council in Vancouver, the Dene National Assembly in Lutselk'e, Northwest Territories, the triennial meeting of the General Council of the United Church of Canada in Kelowna, British Columbia, a symposium of First Nation, law enforcement, social services, and community officials in Sarnia, Ontario, and the annual meeting of

the Indigenous Bar Association in Vancouver, British Columbia.

At all meetings, the Commissioners have explained the Commission's plans for the coming years and outlined how all Canadians can participate in the work of the TRC.

Commission Chair Sinclair said, "Survivors have expressed a desire for the process to get underway, particularly once they become aware of the Commission's potential. People that we met want to share their stories with the rest of Canada."

Commissioner Littlechild said he was impressed by a project being carried out by people in the Calgary area. They were creating their own Apology Book that individuals could sign as part of a personalized apology for the residential school process. "They said that there had been a National Apology, but they wanted to apologize to their neighbours. I thought it was a significant gesture."

Commissioner Wilson said that one of the most powerful experiences of the first six months of work for her has been the sharing circles, which allow survivors to open up about their truths. "For people who are sharing their experience for the first time, the sharing circle in which the speaker has everyone's support and in which everyone is equal is very important."

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Truth and Reconciliation: some background

Residential schools for Aboriginal people in Canada date back to the 1870s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. While there is an estimated 80,000 former students living today, the ongoing impact of residential schools has been felt throughout generations and has contributed to social problems that continue to exist.

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government of Canada, delivered

a formal apology in the House of Commons to former students, their families, and communities for Canada's role in the operation of the residential schools.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement

With the support of the Assembly of First Nations and Inuit organizations, former residential school students took the federal government and the churches to court. Their cases led to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. The agreement sought to begin repairing the harm caused by residential schools. Aside from providing compensation to former students, the agreement called for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission with a budget of \$60-million over five years.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Bureau principal

1500-360 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 3Z3

Telephone: (204) 984-5885

Toll Free: 1-888-872-5554

(1-888-TRC-5554)

Fax: (204) 984-5915

email: info@trc.ca

Ottawa office

100 Sparks St. 4th Floor
Ottawa, ON

Telephone: (613) 992-8194

Fax: (613) 947-5794

Ottawa mailing address

Station B, 59 Sparks Street
PO Box 507

Ottawa, ON K1P 5P6