

Indian Residential Schools

Truth and Reconciliation Commission



Truth Healing Reconciliation



Updated: August 18, 2008



What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?

- Established on June 1, 2008, the TRC is an independent body created as a result of the court-approved Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It is not a criminal tribunal.
- The Commission hopes to guide and inspire First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and all Canadians in a process of truth, healing and reconciliation that will lead to renewed relations based on mutual understanding and respect.
- TRC will provide former students, families, communities and anyone affected by Indian Residential Schools with an opportunity to share their personal experiences.
- Participation in the TRC's activities is voluntary.
- TRC will operate for five years.





TRC Independence

- The TRC is not a federal government commission. It does not report to a Minister or to Parliament.
- Its legal authority and mandate comes from the negotiated court-approved agreement to settle legal claims that residential school survivors and others brought against Canada and major churches.
- The TRC is court-monitored and reports to the parties to the Settlement Agreement through the courts.
- Please see the TRC Mandate at:
www.residentialschoolssettlement.ca/schedule_N.pdf





Status of the TRC

- Justice Harry LaForme is Chair of the Commission. The Commissioners are Claudette Dumont-Smith, RN, BScN, MPA, and Jane Brewin Morley, Q.C.
- Commissioners are meeting with survivors and parties to the Settlement Agreement, establishing priorities, and preparing the Commission's budget.
- A 10-member chosen committee will provide advice to the Commissioners once in place by September. The *Survivor Committee* will help select *Regional Liaisons*.
- The Commission expects to begin its public activities this Fall.





Guiding Principles

- Accessible
- Representative
- Inclusive
- Voluntary
- Victim Centered
- Public/Transparent
- Educational
- Flexible
- Confidential (if requested by the former student)
- Accountable
- Holistic
- Do No Harm
- Open and Honourable Process
- Just and Fair
- Health and Safety of Participants
- Comprehensive
- Respectful





“The health and safety of participants and do no harm are fundamental principles to which we are fully committed. This will be reflected in everything that we do. We know that for some people the telling of their story can be a positive part of a personal healing journey while at the same time we know that for others it can be a painful and traumatic process.”

Claudette Dumont-Smith, RN, BScN, MPA,
TRC Commissioner
July 15, 2008
Assembly of First Nations General Assembly
Quebec City





What the TRC will achieve?

- Provide former students, their families and those affected by the residential schools system with a safe, respectful and culturally appropriate environment in which to share their experiences.
- Help to educate Canadians about the history, legacy, and intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential Schools system.
- Create an accurate and public historical record of the past and in doing so, to help fill the blank pages of Canada's history.
- Through its work, the Commission will help foster a process of healing and reconciliation that can lead to building better relations and healthier communities.





“The Commission needs to hear the whole truth about what it was like in our communities when the children were all taken away to residential schools and what happened to the grandmothers and grandfathers or the mothers and fathers or aunts and uncles when there was no children in our communities. The Commission needs to tell the before and after story about how our people never had any shame about who they were before they went to residential schools.”

Anonymous Survivor
Northwest Territories
June 2008





What will the TRC do?

- Prepare a complete historical record on the policies and operations of the schools.
- Complete a public report including recommendations to the parties of the Settlement Agreement.
- Establish a national research centre that will be a lasting resource about the Indian Residential Schools legacy.





What will the TRC do?

- Support community events designed by individual communities to meet their unique needs.
- Host seven national events in different regions across Canada to promote awareness and public education.
- Support a commemoration initiative that will provide funding for activities that honor Indian Residential School survivors and pay tribute in a lasting manner.





How will truth-sharing work?

- People will have a say about how they choose to share their stories with the TRC.
- The Commission is looking at ways to ensure people can describe their experience in a safe, respectful, and culturally appropriate manner.
- One might share his or her experience through a one-on-one interview, in a written statement, or in a public forum.
- Former students who have chosen to opt-out of the Settlement Agreement can also participate.
- For many individuals, the memories will be emotionally difficult. Regional Health Support Workers are available to provide counseling services.





“It is important that the youth in the communities are heard. They have received the brunt of the poor parenting and the loss of language and culture, and they are the ones who will have to rebuild our communities – what they have to say is really important.”

Susan Hare, Ojibway,
M'Chigeeng, Ontario. *From
Truth to Reconciliation:
Transforming the Legacy of
Residential Schools, 2008,
pg. 149*





Uniqueness of Canada's TRC

- Establishment:
 - First court-ordered TRC to be established. As such, the court will play an ongoing role in the implementation and supervision of the TRC.
- Scope:
 - Primarily centred around the legacy of the childhood experiences of former students.
 - Focus of research is over 150 years.
 - One of the longest durations ever examined.
 - Will travel from coast, to coast, to coast during its five year mandate.
 - Last Indian Residential School closed in 1996.¹³



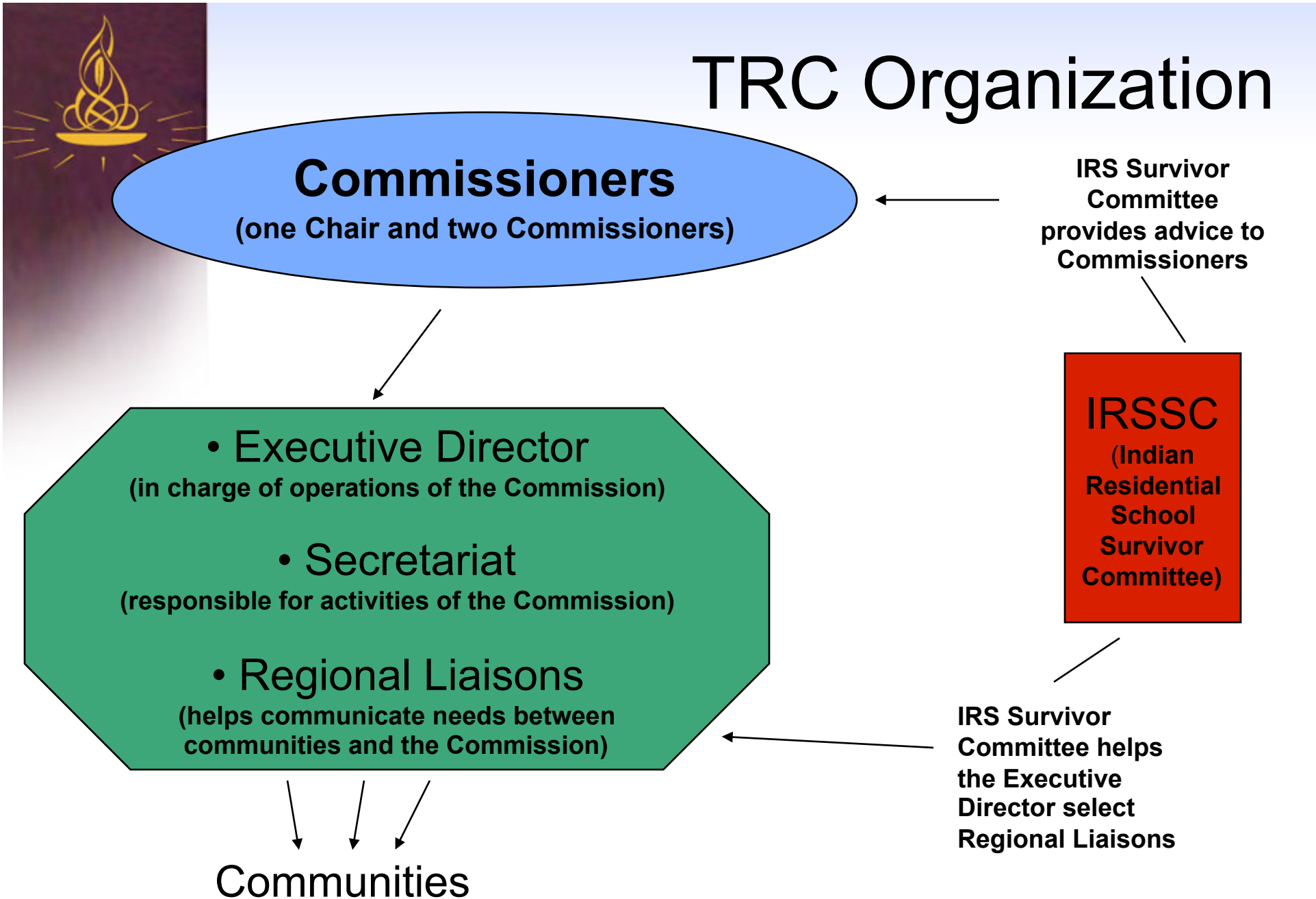


Structure & Staffing

- Commissioners: responsible for providing vision and direction to the Executive Director, and to work together to carry out the Mandate.
- Executive Director: head of the Secretariat, who reports to the Commissioners on its operations and is responsible for delivering the Mandate in line with the Commissioners' vision.
- Secretariat: main office of the Commission which provides staff and operational support.
- IRS Survivor Committee: advises the Commission and will be comprised of up to 10 representatives from Aboriginal organizations and survivor groups.
- Regional Liaisons: provide a link between the TRC and communities for the purpose of coordinating national and community events and public awareness.

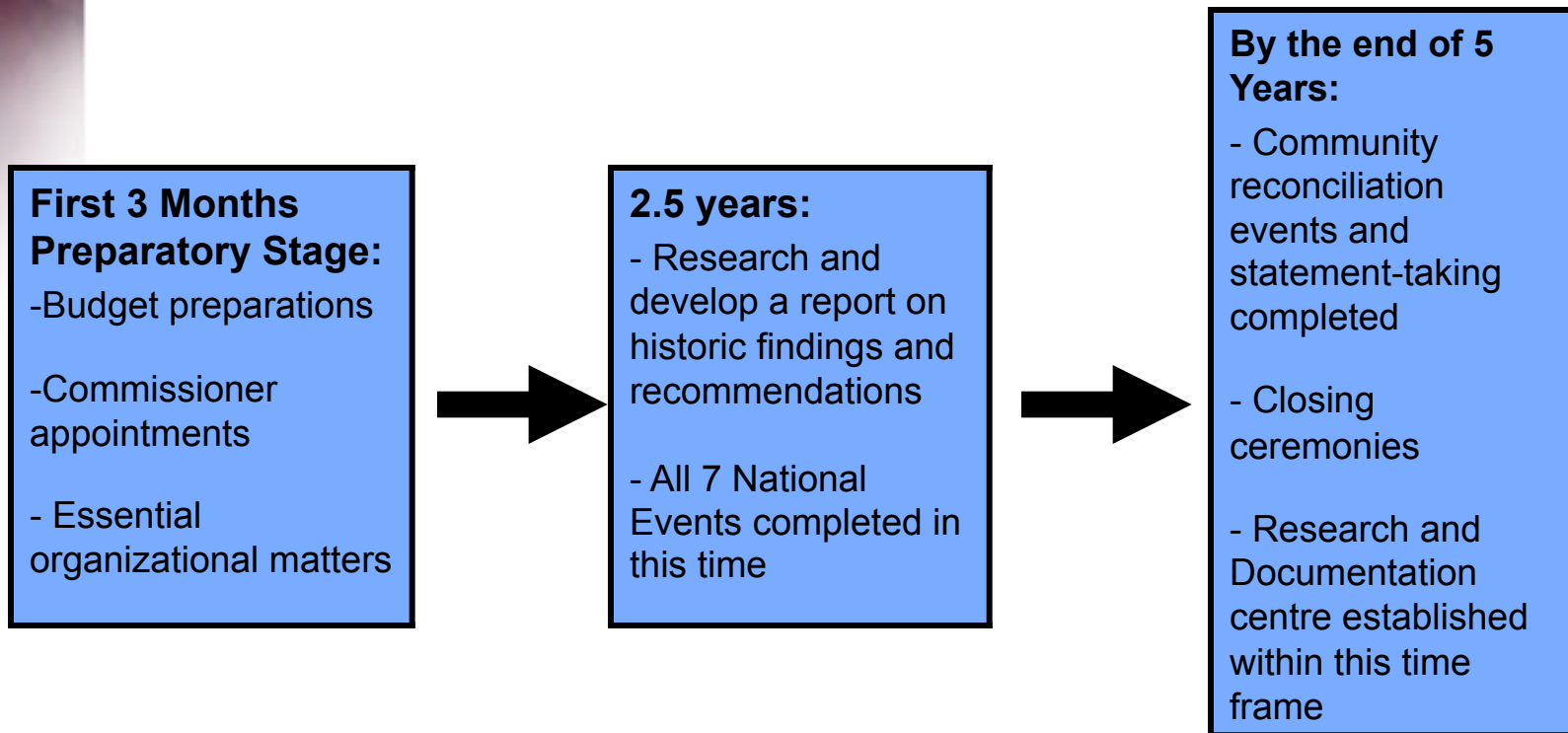


TRC Organization





Period of Operation



Reports on specific matters may be issued by the Commissioners at various points in the five year period.





“The relationship today between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals is fractured, its strained, there’s limited trust and it doesn’t work. We need to learn more about how we got there so that we can move forward into the future and rebuild these relationships. If we can get to the point where we have a better and healthier understanding and an element of truth to why these current relationships exist, then people will understand what is behind these tensions. It is our hope that once the people of Canada understand this history, that this in turn will bring about better and renewed relationships.”

Justice Harry S. LaForme
TRC Chair
May 31, 2008
The National Post





How can you support the TRC?

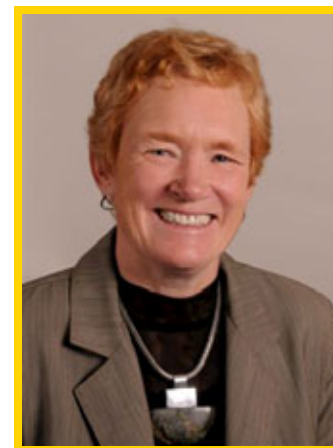
- Spread the word throughout your networks and neighbours about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- Talk to community members about what reconciliation means and what an event might look like in your community.
- Send us your thoughts and ideas.
- Check out the TRC website for updates.





“My hopes for the truth and reconciliation process are that we are able to engage the hearts of people and by engaging people’s hearts that we can bring about changes of heart in people. By doing so, we can one day have a Canada where the children who are presently living outside of their homes and away from their communities can live with their families and in healthy communities, and we can have a relationship between non-Aboriginal Canadians and Aboriginals which is a healthy one of interdependence.”

TRC Commissioner Jane Brewin Morley, Q.C.
July 15, 2008
Assembly of First Nations General Assembly
Quebec City





Health Supports

- A crisis line is available to provide immediate assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week to survivors, their families and anyone participating in Truth and Reconciliation Commission initiatives.

Toll Free: 1-866-925-4419

- More information is available through the Health Canada Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program

Website:

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





How to reach the TRC

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