

# Education for Reconciliation

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In the words of Justice Murray Sinclair:  
“Education is what got us here and  
education is what will get us out.”

*Kairos* is an ecumenical justice organization supported by the many church and religious bodies including the Anglican Church of Canada and specifically our parish. The *Legacy of Hope Foundation* is an Aboriginal charitable organization whose purposes are to educate, raise awareness and understanding of the legacy of residential schools, including the effects and intergenerational impact on First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and to support the ongoing healing process of Residential School Survivors. They have teamed up to promote a nation-wide *Winds of Change Campaign* involving a petition called Education for Reconciliation.

The idea is to present a petition with thousands of signatures to the Legislature of every province in Spring 2016. KAIROS and Legacy of Hope agree with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that education is the key to reconciliation. The mandatory indigenization of education at all levels is crucial: without a shared understanding of how our collective past brought us to where we are today, we will not be able to walk together into a better future.

**TRC Call to Action #62** requires the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

We are obliged to ensure every Canadian child learns about the Indian Residential Schools (IRS), treaties, colonization and the contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to Canada’s past and present so each child may then be a leader in the long-term work of reconciliation.

The TRC adopts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as its framework for Reconciliation. Article 15 of UNDRIP states that “*Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.*” This speaks directly to call to action number 62, among others.

If we are serious (as all Canadians need to be) about rebuilding the relationship with Indigenous peoples, we must educate our children. A significant step forward in the journey of reconciliation can be made in our public schools. KAIROS has prepared a report card on the status of curriculum in Ontario. They state, *currently, there is little to no mandatory curriculum in Ontario that covers Indigenous issues. There are some backgrounders being prepared on topics such as residential schools to assist with Grades 1 to 6 Social Studies courses and Grades 7 and 8 History and Geography courses, as well as some courses at the high school level. The Ministry of Education works closely with the Ontario History and Social Sciences Teachers’ Association and the First Nations, Métis & Inuit Association of Ontario. Since 2003, representatives of Indigenous communities and organizations have participated in the curriculum review process and as a result, curriculum expectations relating to topics such as residential schools have been added at both the elementary and secondary level.*

We believe the petition will encourage governments to move quickly in implementing teacher training, teaching guides, and resource materials and personnel, and in formally declaring a start date for the commencement of a mandatory curriculum. The petition is also a

way to start and continue a conversation about the long lasting and pervasive effects of the IRS on all aspects of Indigenous family and community life.

Please take some petitions, along with the background-er to help you open the conversation, from the Narthex or online at <http://bit.ly/windsofchangepetition> as many signatures as you can, and return them to the KAIROS Toronto office no later than March 15:

200-310 Dupont St, Toronto, ON M5R 1V9.

Only single-sided paper petitions can be tabled in the provincial legislature.

Education is the cornerstone for change. It is only with your help, commitment and participation in this campaign that we can affect a change in policy and practice as soon as possible. Thank you for joining in this urgent effort.

Further information about KAIROS:  
<http://www.kairoscanada.org/>

Further information about Legacy of Hope:  
<http://www.legacyofhope.ca/home> 