
Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action to Churches

The Summary Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was issued at the beginning of June, Aboriginal history month. There are 94 calls to action, nine of which are directed specifically to the churches who are parties to the Settlement Agreement of the lawsuit commenced against them and the Government of Canada. Anglicans, each one of us, are parties to the Agreement. We are each obliged to consider and act upon the calls to action both as Anglicans and as Canadians.

A small group from the Aboriginal Issues Working Group has been meeting over the summer to discuss the many challenges posed. As Justice Murray Sinclair said to us, “we are in for the long haul.”

The most challenging of the calls for the Redeemer community are set out below. In addition, four of the calls—#73 to #76—deal with cemeteries, unrecorded deaths and commemoration of the missing children and are also important for Anglicans to respond.

From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action report:

46. We call upon the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to develop and sign a Covenant of Reconciliation that would identify principles for working collaboratively to advance reconciliation in Canadian society, and that would include, but not be limited to:
 - i. Reaffirmation of the parties’ commitment to reconciliation.
 - ii. Repudiation of concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and the reformation of laws, governance structures, and policies within their respective institutions that continue to rely on such concepts.
 - iii. Full adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights

- of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.
- iv. Support for the renewal or establishment of Treaty relationships based on principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for maintaining those relationships into the future.
 - v. Enabling those excluded from the Settlement Agreement to sign onto the Covenant of Reconciliation.
 - vi. Enabling additional parties to sign onto the Covenant of Reconciliation.
48. We call upon the church parties to the Settlement Agreement, and all other faith groups and interfaith social justice groups in Canada who have not already done so, to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation. This would include, but not be limited to, the following commitments:
- i. Ensuring that their institutions, policies, programs, and practices comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
 - ii. Respecting Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination in spiritual matters, including the right to practice, develop, and teach their own spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies, consistent with Article 12:1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
 - iii. Engaging in ongoing public dialogue and actions to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
 - iv. Issuing a statement no later than March 31, 2016, from all religious denominations and faith groups, as to how they will implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
49. We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty

over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.

59. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary.
60. We call upon leaders of the church parties to the Settlement Agreement and all other faiths, in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors, schools of theology, seminaries, and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curriculum for all student clergy, and clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own rights, the history and legacy of residential schools and the role of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.
61. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with Survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to Aboriginal people for:
 - i. Community-controlled healing and reconciliation projects.
 - ii. Community-controlled culture-and language revitalization projects.
 - iii. Community-controlled education and relationship building projects.
 - iv. Regional dialogues for Indigenous spiritual leaders and youth to discuss Indigenous spirituality, self-determination, and reconciliation.

The Reports of the TRC are on the Redeemer website. We each 'own' the responsibility of reconciliation through knowledge, communication, prayer and action and reading the entire call to action is a good first step to taking ownership. If you would like to be part of the on-going work of the Aboriginal Issues Working group, please contact the group by email: aivg.redeemer@gmail.com. 