

***Manitou Conference: Minute for Right Relations
Responding to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report***

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has enabled 6 years of truth-telling. With the presentation of the final Report on December 15, 2015, the process of reconciliation, now formally begins. TRC Chair Justice Murray Sinclair said, "Change, of course, will not be immediate. It will take years, perhaps generations."

The purpose of the TRC was to acknowledge the experience of the students who attended the Indian Residential Schools (IRS), the impact on them and their families; to promote awareness of the IRS among Canadians, and to make recommendations for change.

The Report has 94 Calls to Action with 14 recommendations addressed to churches, such as the call to implement & promote the principles within the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People such as the right to self-determination in spiritual matters. See www.un.org

The Report also calls on faith groups to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples inhabited lands in the Western hemisphere. When European explorers arrived and "discovered" the lands, they claimed them, asserting their monarchies had a right to the land on behalf of Christendom. They considered Indigenous land as "unoccupied" as long as Christians were not present.

There's also the matter of much needed healing for the IRS Survivors & their families. Furthermore, Justice Sinclair states that "every social condition measurable in Canadian society places aboriginal people at the most disadvantaged position of all people in the country. Much of it is directly traced back to the experience of indigenous children in the IRS." The social reality of Indigenous Peoples must change.

As a church let's continue to open our minds to learn, to discover on whose traditional territory we live and worship, to hold our Federal Government accountable to their promise to honour the TRC recommendations. The work of healing & reconciliation belongs to us all and will benefit us all. This work is only beginning yet our faith tradition teaches us that new beginnings are all about New Life.

*Written by Teresa Jones (Rev) on behalf of the MTU Conf Right Relations Group 12/15
With references from www.trc.ca; www.nnym.org and www.united-church.ca*