



The Anglican Church of Canada L'Église anglicane du Canada

80 Hayden Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 3G2

March 27, 2007

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
Government of Canada
Fax: 613-941-6900

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I am writing to convey to you my strong disappointment and sadness at your refusal to offer an apology to Aboriginal Canadians who are former students of Indian Residential Schools, and to their families, as reported this morning in *The Globe & Mail*.

The stated goal of the assimilation policy of the Government of Canada in former times was, in the words of Indian Affairs deputy superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott, “to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic”. The main vehicle to implement this policy was the system of Indian Residential Schools, by means of which children were removed from their homes and communities and placed in boarding school, where they were forbidden to speak their own languages, and where they were taught the culture of the colonizers. Many did not return to their homes and families for years; others died at the schools and their parents were never told of their deaths. While this policy did not succeed, nonetheless the pain, suffering and dysfunctionality witnessed today in Canadian Aboriginal communities and families is a direct result of the attempts to “take the Indian-ness out of the Indians.”

The Anglican Church of Canada was complicit in implementing the policy of assimilation. A total of 26 Indian Residential Schools were run by the Anglican Church, functioning as an agent of the Government of Canada. We are ashamed of this part of our history. In 1993 our former Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers, offered an apology on behalf of the whole church for the harm done by the residential schools system. Here is an excerpt from that apology:

I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God

I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity. I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I offer our apology

The Anglican Church of Canada has been participating in the current Alternative Dispute Resolution Process. We have been sending a church representative to ADR Hearings in the role of listener, to hear and receive the story of the survivor, and to offer an apology on behalf of the church. We have learned that for many survivors, the apology is at least as important as the financial compensation, if not more so. People whose lives have been shattered through no fault of their own, are immensely helped by having their suffering acknowledged and validated, and by hearing the words of apology.

Noting that we are not alone in requesting that an apology be made, I quote from the judgement issued by the Honourable Chief Justice Brenner, in the Supreme Court of British Columbia: “[35] Although I am making no order and am issuing no directions, I would respectfully request counsel for Canada to ask that the Prime Minister give consideration to issuing a full and unequivocal apology on behalf of the people of Canada in the House of Commons.”

Mr. Harper, I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to refuse an apology to IRS former students and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.

The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison
Primate
The Anglican Church of Canada