

**Address by The Right Reverend Fred J. Hiltz  
Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada  
at the  
Northern National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
Inuvik, Northwest Territories  
June 28 - July 1, 2011**

Survivors, Elders, Youth, Commissioners, Residential Schools Committee,

On August 6, 1993 at a Native Convocation Gathering in Minaki, Ontario, Archbishop Michael Peers made an Apology on behalf of The Anglican Church of Canada to all those who had suffered abuse in the Indian Residential Schools.

Having confessed our failures as a Church, he went on to say,  
“I know how often you have heard words which have been empty because they have not been accompanied by actions. I pledge to you my best efforts and the efforts of our Church at the national level, to walk with you along the path of God’s healing.”

Eighteen years later that Apology is finally translated into Gwitchin, Inuvialuktun, Inuktitut.

I stand before you today to express again our Church’s remorse over the wrongs we committed in the Residential Schools and to renew our pledge to truth telling, healing, reconciliation and new life.

My remarks are grounded in a few verses from Psalm 139.

“You yourself created my inward parts. You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will thank you because I am marvellously made, your works are wonderful and I know it well.”

Here is a beautiful image of the Creator at work in a mother’s womb, creating a child precious in her sight, a child carried and cradled in love, a child whose birthday would be forever a special occasion.

When we took you from your homes and housed you in the Residential Schools, we denied you the daily nurture of familial love - love of parents, siblings and grandparents. We have heard this week so many stories of utter loneliness and longings for love.

When we cut off your hair and scrubbed you down, we defaced your God given beauty. When we took your clothes from you and uniformed you, we denied your ancestral dress and your individual likes.

When we said you could not speak your own language and celebrate your culture, we devalued your heritage and that of your grandmothers and grandfathers.

When we grabbed you by the arm and dragged you off and abused you physically and sexually, we degraded you. We bruised your bodies and in many cases crushed your spirits. In an aggressive effort to re-make you in our image, we violated your dignity.

For all these sins, every one of them, so many committed by day, so many more by night; so many in front of others, so many more in secret, I am deeply sorry - sorry for the pain we inflicted, sorry for the terrible memories so many of you have carried for so long.

I stand before you today renewing the pledge of The Anglican Church of Canada to the long journey of truth-telling, healing and reconciliation.

Expressions of that pledge include:

- participation of many clergy and laity in Independent Assessment Processes
- funding for projects of healing in indigenous communities  
- Anglican Fund for Healing and Reconciliation - 9 years, 430 projects - \$3.7 million
- establishing of the position of a National Co-ordinator for Suicide Prevention Programs in indigenous communities
- a growing realization of the need for supporting long-term mental health care programs in local communities
- a recognition that as a Church we must turn our attention to the needs of the large numbers of indigenous peoples living in urban centres
- a commitment to work with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in addressing long-standing indigenous justice issues
- a renewed commitment to required anti-racism training for all who serve on councils and committees of our Church

Last year the General Synod of our Church, by formal resolution:

1. Identified as a top priority – a commitment to walk with Indigenous Peoples on a journey of healing and wholeness.
2. To that end, the Synod repudiated the doctrine of discovery which had provided legal rights to the use and possession of lands, “found” by European arrivals, the doctrine that for so many years drove colonialism.
3. Endorsed the United Nations (UN) Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and called on the Government of Canada to do the same. When it did in November 2010, our Church congratulated the Government and urged it to

develop a comprehensive action plan in accord with the articles in that Declaration.

As a member of KAIROS, our Church is pleased to hear of the recent announcement of the Joint Canada-First Nations Action Plan which will address the future of historic treaty relationships, good governance, education and economic development in indigenous communities. I pledge that through our national office, we will do all we can to raise public awareness of this plan.

Two other very significant developments should be mentioned.

- The ministry of a National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald.
  
- The development of Area Missions in which in the spirit of self-determination, indigenous peoples are raising up leadership from among their own people - Bishop Lydia Mamakwa is the Area Bishop of Northern Ontario in the Diocese of Keewatin.

In this Northern National Event of the TRC with its theme - "*It's About Courage - A National Journey Home*". I have heard and seen so many expressions of courage.

- The courage of those of you who are telling your stories and taking first steps on the journey of healing, the courage of those who are persevering even when the steps are so hard.
  
- The courage of sharing your struggle to cry, to laugh, to love and the courage to reach out and help others to do the same.
  
- The courage and resilience in declaring yourselves no longer as numbers but as individuals with names given to you by your parents, with rights to live and to be healthy and happy.
  
- The courage in re-claiming your identity and culture.

The courage in the hearts of all Canadians who are working to usher in a new era "when long held derogatory attitudes toward aboriginal peoples will be a thing of the past, and this country will be brought to a new place of profound respect for indigenous peoples, for their rights and dignities, for their traditional ways and wisdom."

(New Year's Day Address, January 2011, Ottawa)

These remarks I share in the spirit of the prayer written for "Remembering the Children".

*...Remembering the Children  
we dare to dream of a Path of Reconciliation  
where apology from the heart leads to healing of the heart  
and the chance of restoring the circle,  
where justice walks with all,*

*where respect leads to true partnership,  
where the power to change comes from each heart.  
Hear our prayer of hope,  
and guide this country of Canada  
on a new and different path.”*

*Amen*

**Thank you  
Mahsi cho  
Nah Koo meek**