



Background Information on Residential Schools

Office of the General Secretary

August 30, 2000

Concern for justice

Abuses were real and people were harmed

- The most obvious harm arises from the sexual abuse, or by extreme physical abuse. In some cases sexual abuse has been established by a criminal conviction, beyond a reasonable doubt.
- More broadly, in many schools, the suppression of native culture and languages produced harmful effects.
- At the same time, the schools, which were regulated and funded by the government, were consistently run 'on the cheap', without adequate funding; many children were not properly fed or nourished.
- More broadly still, the policy of assimilation of which the schools were a major instrument – along with other government policies such as the *Indian Act* – harmed native communities beyond the residential schools and continue to harm communities today.

All the above are named as causes of action in suits against Canada and church organizations. However, only 'recognized' causes of action – physical and sexual abuse, and failure to provide the necessities of life – are being dealt with in litigation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) processes at this time, according to government policy.

Continuing injustice and perceived injustice prevents reconciliation

- litigation and ADR models now underway will take several years to run their course, although many plaintiffs are very elderly
- they will not address the largest categories of abuses above, particularly the claims of cultural and inter-generational abuse. As a result, they are likely to increase the ill will between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians

We share with the Law Commission of Canada a concern to identify redress models that will better meet the needs of Aboriginal Canadians.

The Commission did not feel any single approach should be adopted exclusively, but it did conclude "that redress programs are the official response that can be most effectively designed to meet the complete range of goals that have been identified...."

"What are the needs of survivors? They are as diverse and unique as survivors themselves. Nevertheless, the Commission was able to identify certain recurring themes in the manner these needs were expressed. Survivors seek: an acknowledgement of the harm done and accountability for that harm; an apology; access to therapy and to education; financial compensation; some means of memorialising the experiences of children in institutions; and a commitment to raising public awareness of institutional child abuse and preventing its recurrence."

[The Law Commission report, *Restoring Dignity: Responding to Abuse in Canadian Institutions*, is available at www.lcc.gc.ca]

Our goals in relation to residential schools

- *to contribute to healing and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples*
- *to survive* (so that we may continue our mission, including our work in healing and reconciliation)
- *to reach an agreement with the Government of Canada* (so that we can survive).

Healing and reconciliation:

Our understanding of healing and reconciliation encompasses the need for all of us, Anglicans and all Canadians, to address the forces within our social structures and ourselves that perpetuate injustice and discrimination. It is enriched by the understanding shared by Aboriginal members: For the Cree, the meaning of healing and reconciliation is this: to be purified and made whole so that nothing is lacking in you, and relationships are at peace. To the Lakota it means nothing blocking health and life so that one can walk a straight road. To the Inuit it means taking a burden off your chest. And to the Siksika it means letting go and lifting off burdens so one may rest before moving on.¹

So far, our journey toward healing has included:

- promoting awareness and education among the non-Aboriginal population (for example, the work of our Indigenous Justice Coordinator; the Ministry Matters special issue on *Residential Schools, Legacy and Hope*; the special section of the May 2000 Anglican Journal)
- the Apology which Archbishop Michael Peers gave on behalf of our church in August 1993 (see page 8)
- journeying with Aboriginal members in their exploration of a Covenant (see box)
- the diverse initiatives supported by our healing fund (see additional material on Healing Fund, page 7)
- the vision and program of healing in the Diocese of Keewatin, which has launched a multi-year program dedicated to education, training, prevention and healing, ultimately to ensure that the church is a safe place where all can walk together without fear, guilt or blame.
- our church's engagement and support over four decades with issues of justice for Aboriginal persons, particularly our support for land claims and self-determination

A Covenant

We, representatives of the Indigenous people of the Anglican Church of Canada, meeting in Winnipeg from the 23 to 26 of April, 1994, pledge ourselves to this covenant for the sake of our people and in trust of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ:

Under the guidance of God's spirit we agree to do all we can to call our people into unity in a new, self determining community within the Anglican Church of Canada.

To this end, we extend the hand of partnership to all those who will help us build a truly Anglican Indigenous Church in Canada.

May God bless this new vision and give us grace to accomplish it.

¹ The Rev. Mervyn Wolfleg, presentation to the Council of General Synod, May 2000

General Synod primer

Our mission

“As a partner in the worldwide Anglican Communion and in the universal church, we proclaim and celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ in worship and action. We value our heritage of biblical faith, reason, liturgy, tradition, bishops and synods, and the rich variety of our life in community.

“We acknowledge that God is calling us to greater diversity of membership, wider participation in ministry and leadership, better stewardship in God's creation and a strong resolve in challenging attitudes and structures that cause injustice.

“Guided by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to respond to this call in love and service and so more fully live the life of Christ.”

Our structure

- The General Synod is the church's national body. It was created in 1893 by a group of dioceses (and larger regional structures known as 'ecclesiastical provinces') in order to carry out certain functions on a national basis. Chief among these are mission in Canada and mission overseas. Mission involves spreading the good news of God's love through Jesus Christ, by word and deed. Missionaries were the primary agents of mission through most of the 19th Century and the earlier part of the 20th. In recent times, both overseas and at home, mission has been characterized by working in partnership with the local community and responding to its expressed needs.
- The Canadian Church is made up of 30 dioceses, each led by a bishop. Each diocese is independently incorporated and functions autonomously.
- More than 700,000 Anglicans are enrolled as members in one of about 1,800 local parishes across Canada.

Our financial assets

- The General Synod annually solicits funds from its dioceses to support the national program, and these voluntary contributions – which ultimately originate with individual Anglicans – are the General Synod's primary source of revenue.
- Our annual budget is approximately \$11 million.
- Over many years, additional funds, such as bequests, have established modest reserves which in 1999 produced income from investments of \$370,000
- The General Synod owns only one property, an office building in Toronto worth between \$3 million and \$4 million.
- General Synod operates a book and religious supply store with 1999 inventory valued at approximately \$1.5 million
- All told, the total assets of General Synod amount to less than \$10 million (and perhaps considerably less in a liquidation).

These are the only assets available to settle claims against General Synod. The General Synod does not own local churches, any more than the federal government owns municipal buildings.

Residential schools primer

- Before Confederation and up through the first half of the twentieth century, the policy of the Government of Canada towards the First Nations was assimilation. It was thought that the quickest route to 'civilizing' and 'converting' the indigenous population was to forcibly

remove indigenous children from their homes and communities and place them in residential schools. There was considerable variation in how the schools operated, but in many cases the children were forbidden to speak their mother tongues, their cultures were condemned as barbaric and their spirituality as heathen. By the end of the nineteenth century, a relationship had developed between the government and the churches, with the government establishing policy and providing most of the funds, and the churches operating the schools on behalf of the government.

- Between 1820 and 1969, the Anglican Church in cooperation with the federal government administered 26 Indian Residential Schools. By 1969, after taking a hard look at its relationship with Aboriginal peoples, the Church withdrew from the residential schools project and committed itself to building more just relationships with its indigenous members, as well as advocating on behalf of the indigenous population at large.
- No brief overview can begin to express the complex history of the residential schools and their legacy. Most of the people involved in the schools were well motivated by the standards of their day, even though they were participants in an abusive system. Some, according to the recollections of former students, were saintly even in that oppressive system. Some few were predators who abused the children physically or sexually. Most of the former students of the schools recall their experiences with pain and anger. Some few recall their experiences fondly. Many Aboriginal persons view with contempt the church which tried to eradicate their culture. Others retain a powerful Christian faith (often combined with Aboriginal tradition), and work within the church on behalf of justice for all native people.

Scope of the lawsuits

Approximately 7,000 individual plaintiffs are suing the government of Canada at August 2000.
Claims continue to increase.

Approximately 1,600 of these claims directly or indirectly involve the General Synod

- most General Synod law suits also involve a diocese, particularly British Columbia, Cariboo, Calgary, Saskatchewan, Qu'Appelle, Brandon, Keewatin and Huron
- in many cases, plaintiffs have chosen not to sue the church. The church is involved because of cross-claims or third-party claims lodged by the government.
- at the present time, General Synod is in court in British Columbia in actions involving eight plaintiffs. *Only one of those plaintiffs has sued the church. The government has named the church as a third party in the case of the other seven.*

Claims and legal costs

- the General Synod is named (either by a plaintiff or the government) in approximately 360 cases, including three class action suits. The damages claimed in these suits exceed \$2 billion.
- estimates of the government's ultimate liability for residential schools claims range from \$1 billion to \$5 billion
- legal costs continue to escalate.

What we offer

To meet the needs of the residential school survivors, as identified by the Law Commission of Canada:

- we have acknowledged harm and offered apology, and we can continue to be present in forums where acknowledgement is made and apology offered. We bring to this task a long-term commitment, engagement and expertise in working at healing and reconciliation.
- we can participate in financial compensation to the extent of our capacity. This includes limited current assets, and the potential to raise funds for healing and reconciliation into the future
- we can help to memorialise the experiences
- we have assisted in raising awareness of abuse and taken steps to prevent its recurrence, and we can continue to do so.

Additionally we can contribute to healing from our experiences of:

- long-standing partnership with Indigenous peoples and supportive engagement with issues of Indigenous justice;
- continuing ministry in 225 Indigenous communities, including the ministry of four Indigenous bishops and more than 100 Indigenous priests and deacons;
- extensive involvement with Northern communities, including direct contributions of \$2.7 million annually (about a quarter of our national budget)

To Canadian society generally, we offer

- opportunities for spiritual nurture and guidance
- direct provision of hundreds of social services in thousands of Canadian communities
- major support (both time and money) for non-religious charitable activities (increasingly important as government cutbacks require greater reliance on volunteers);
- as a national organization, we contribute to social cohesion and stability
- our mission and development work enhances positive images of Canada abroad.

Some of these contributions are provided through the General Synod; some through dioceses and local parishes; many through the good will and commitment of individual Anglicans. Although a General Synod bankruptcy would not prevent all this work from continuing, the disruption would be severe enough to have negative impacts across the board.

Need for urgent attention

- if the Department of Justice continues its approach to litigation, our resources will soon be exhausted, leading to bankruptcy
- this would massively disrupt our ability to participate in healing and reconciliation
- our capacity as a national organization would be significantly diminished
- we fear the possibility of a backlash – not necessarily from Anglicans – against Native peoples if they are perceived as contributing to the bankruptcy of a church organization. This would have a negative impact on Canada.

Remember...

The 200 years of Anglican missionary service has blossomed into the full membership and fellowship of Indigenous Canadians within the Anglican Church. This is a valuable national asset for Canada that should be sustained and reinforced, not destroyed.

What we are asking MPs to do:

- understand our concerns and help to convey them to the Ministers of Justice, Indian and Northern Affairs, and Finance
- urge the government to acknowledge the value of the continuing presence of the church in Canadian society, including its reconciliation work with Aboriginal persons
- support government action to assure just compensation for all persons harmed by the schools, and the continuing viability of church organizations to contribute to reconciliation and healing.

For Further Information

Residential Schools, Legacy and Hope (Ministry Matters Special Edition, Winter 2000)

Sins of the Fathers (Anglican Journal Special Issue, May 2000)

Restoring Dignity: Responding to Abuse in Canadian Institutions, report of the Law Commission of Canada

Residential School Updates by Archdeacon Jim Boyles (periodic)

All the above, and many other resources, are available through our web site at

www.anglican.ca/ministry/rs

Healing Fund

The fund was established in 1991 and has contributed seed money to support 60 community-based healing initiatives

Grants to date are approximately \$600,000

In August 2000, the church announced an increase of funding for Indigenous ministries and for the Healing Fund. The funds available in these areas will more than double, from \$262,000 to \$547,000 annually.

Recent grants include:

- **Fire Keepers: A Wellness Conference for Women and Their Communities,**
Thompson, MB
Fire Keepers is named in honour of the important role that women play in keeping their families nurtured and strong. It is believed that as women heal, they will be able to use their strength to heal those around them. Workshops will focus on Spiritual Health, History, Culture, Racism and Healing, Parenting in Separation and Divorce, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Suicide.
- **Residential Schools Victims Counseling Services Training,**
Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations
To create a "pool" of individuals who can act as a resource to the community projects and victims' groups who have expertise in both traditional and contemporary counseling techniques. These individuals will be made available to group counseling projects as well as for individual counseling of victims as the treatment unfolds in the Saskatchewan Region.
- **Bridging Wisdom of the Elders and Vision of the Youth,**
Split Lake Cree First Nation, MB
This gathering attempts to bridge the gap between elders and youth for healing of self, families and community through the catechist school, workshops, counseling sessions and gospel music jamboree.

A complete list of Healing Fund Grants is available at
<http://www.anglican.ca/ministry/rs/healing/>

A Message from the Primate
to the National Native Convocation
Minaki, Ontario,

Friday, August 6, 1993

My Brothers and Sisters:

Together here with you I have listened as you have told your stories of the residential schools.

I have heard the voices that have spoken of pain and hurt experienced in the schools, and of the scars which endure to this day.

I have felt shame and humiliation as I have heard of suffering inflicted by my people, and as I think of the part our church played in that suffering.

I am deeply conscious of the sacredness of the stories that you have told and I hold in the highest honour those who have told them.

I have heard with admiration the stories of people and communities who have worked at healing, and I am aware of how much healing is needed.

I also know that I am in need of healing, and my own people are in need of healing, and our church is in need of healing. Without that healing, we will continue the same attitudes that have done such damage in the past.

I also know that healing takes a long time, both for people and for communities.

I also know that it is God who heals, and that God can begin to heal when we open ourselves, our wounds, our failures and our shame to God. I want to take one step along that path here and now.

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 present our apology.

I do this at the desire of those in the Church like the National Executive Council, who know some of your stories and have asked me to apologize.

I do this in the name of many who do not know these stories.

And I do this even though there are those in the church who cannot accept the fact that these things were done in our name.

As soon as I am home, I shall tell all the bishops what I have said, and ask them to co-operate with me and with the National Executive Council in helping this healing at the local level. Some bishops have already begun this work.

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.

The work of the Residential Schools Working Group, the video, the commitment and the effort of the Special Assistants to the Primate for this work, the grants available for healing conferences, are some signs of that pledge, and we shall work for others.

This is Friday, the day of Jesus' suffering and death. It is the anniversary of the first atomic bomb at Hiroshima, one of the most terrible injuries ever inflicted by one people on another.

But even atomic bombs and Good Friday are not the last word. God raised Jesus from the dead as a sign that life and wholeness are the everlasting and unquenchable purpose of God.

Thank you for listening to me.

+ Michael, Archbishop and Primate

Response to the Primate
at the National Native Convocation
Delivered by Vi Smith
on behalf of the elders and participants
Minaki, Ontario,
Saturday, August 7, 1993

On behalf of this gathering, we acknowledge and accept the apology that the Primate has offered on behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada.

It was offered from his heart with sincerity, sensitivity, compassion and humility. We receive it in the same manner. We offer praise and thanks to our Creator for his courage.

We know it wasn't easy. Let us keep him in our hearts and prayers, that God will continue to give him the strength and courage to continue with his tasks.)