

**Remarks by Archbishop Fred Hiltz
at the
Alberta National Event
of the
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
Edmonton, AB
March 27 – 30, 2014**

Commissioners, Elders, Youth, Honorary Witnesses and especially you the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools,

Every time I sit and listen to your stories of so much pain, so much loneliness, and so many years of lost love, I am drawn back to the words of the apology offered on behalf of our Church by Archbishop Michael Peers in 1993.

“I am sorry,” he said, “more than I can say”

- “that we were part of a system that took you and your children from home and family”
- “that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you, your language and the signs of your identity”
- “that in our schools so many children were abused physically, sexually, culturally, and emotionally”

“We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God.”

He also said “I pledge to you my best efforts and the efforts of the Church at the national level to walk with you along the path of God’s healing.”

I repeat the Primate’s words as a reminder of the continuing call of our Church to contrition for past wrongs and commitments to the healing reconciliation and new life.

As to how our Church should mark the 20th Anniversary of that apology last year, I sought the advice of our National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples. Their counsel was that I establish a commission to examine the Doctrine of Discovery and its long lasting negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples to this day; and to develop a plan of action by way of follow up to resolutions passed by the 2010 General Synod of our Church repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and upholding the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Further to that, I have asked the Commission to take up and engage the whole Church in responding to the question Mr. Justice Sinclair put to all the parties of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement – “What is reconciliation?”

(What’s our understanding of it?

What does it mean for me, for you for us all?

How do we go about it?

What are the signs it is beginning to emerge?
What might it look like? How will we be changed?)

A third dimension of the work of this Commission will focus on the injustices that Indigenous Peoples continue to bear with respect to

- the violation of treaty rights and the privilege of free, prior and informed consent in relation to resource extraction
- the lack of clean running water in many indigenous communities
- the crisis of inadequate housing, health care, and protection services
- the abject poverty in which so many First Nations, Inuit or Métis are living in the core of many cities in Canada
- the horrific statistics concerning Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
- the unacceptable gaps in government funding for education between indigenous and other communities (\$3,500 - \$4,000 less than others)

The pursuit of justice and equity of services and opportunities for everyone in this country is an imperative. I have come to believe that only to the extent to which we take up this imperative, do our words of apology, our talk of truth and reconciliation, and our expressions of hope for a better Canada, have an integrity worthy of that respect for the dignity of every human being to which the Creator calls us all.

From the outset the Primate's Commission will be guided in its work by the wisdom of an Elders council and the hopes of indigenous young people in the shaping of a promising future for themselves and for their children.