

Residential Schools Update 2007

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"The United Church of Canada is committed to working to create a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples that starts in confession for past wrongs and, it is the church's hope, ends in the shared joy of walking together in a healed and renewed creation."

-- from The United Church of Canada Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Nov. 1993

Residential Schools Steering Committee Update (April 2007)

Settlement Agreement Given Approval by Nine Courts

On March 21, 2007, the comprehensive Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, signed by all parties in the spring of 2006, completed the second-to-last approval stage. Judges from nine jurisdictions approved the Agreement as a reasonable replacement resolution to 22 class action lawsuits. We now enter the final **five-month "opt out" period** that ends August 20, 2007, during which members of the class (i.e., former residential school students) decide whether or not to opt out of the Agreement. If less than 5,000 survivors opt out, the Agreement will be implemented this fall.

There is an extensive notification plan to inform the members of the class about the Settlement Agreement. Information or an opt-out form is available by calling **1-866-879-4913** or at the official court website (www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca).

The implementation of the Agreement could begin in late September when applications for the Common Experience Payment and the Independent Assessment Process would be available, the commissioners and Advisory Committee for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be appointed, and funds would flow to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Bob Watts, former Chief of Staff of the Assembly of First Nations, has been appointed as the Interim Executive Director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He has named two survivors as advisors: Fred Kelly (Saskatchewan) and Chief Bobby Joseph (B.C.).

In mid-March, the Moderator sent a letter to the Prime Minister urging the government to provide bridge funding to support the work of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation during the "gap" between current funding, which ends March 31, 2007, and the implementation date of the Settlement Agreement.

National Apology

On March 27, 2007, Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice indicated that the federal government does not intend to offer a formal national apology to residential school survivors. The United Church continued its efforts to urge them to do so in a press release on March 29 (www.united-church.ca/communications/news/releases/070329).

Advance Payments and Missing Records

In advance of the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which includes a Common Experience Payment, the federal government made available an advance payment of \$8,000 to former students 65 years of age and older as of May 30, 2005.

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As of the deadline (December 31, 2006), 13,547 applications were received. Of these, 10,319 have been processed for payment for a total of \$82.6 million. Due to the absence of school records (Quarterly Returns) to confirm their IRS residency, 1,329 applications were denied. Another 1,494 did not meet the criteria.

The United Church has expressed concern to the government about the denial of the advance payment due to lack of records, especially given that both government and church records are admittedly incomplete. In preparation for the Common Experience Payment, government and church representatives, including archivists, met in Ottawa for two days in November to develop co-operative strategies to access archival material and identify alternate ways for former students to validate their attendance at the schools.

Additional staff time and resources are currently being devoted to this work in our church archives network to search for any type of student information for **File Hills** IRS, SK, for the years 1920–1941 and **Norway House** IRS, MB, 1920–1954, 1956–1957. Manitoba & Northwest Conference archives are cataloguing student records of the **Teulon** Residence, 1984–1996.

Poster Display Available

Eight sets of four free-standing display boards depicting the story of the 1986 apology and the work of the Residential Schools Steering Committee are being produced. They include scenes from residential schools and a map showing the locations of former United Church-associated residential schools.

These poster boards are available to any gathering that wishes to inform the public about United Church involvement in the Indian Residential Schools system.

Please call Alison at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 2014 to book the display for your event. We pay the shipping out; you pay for the return.

Update on the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Process

The ADR process for claims for physical and sexual abuse or wrongful confinement was closed on March 21, 2007, when the courts approved the Settlement Agreement.

Under the Settlement Agreement, an Independent Assessment Process (IAP) will handle abuse claims and will be available as of the implementation of the Agreement this fall.

As of March 26, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC) had screened in 7,272 applications to the ADR, of which 9.96% relate to United Church-associated schools.

Number of ADR applications forwarded to the United Church as of March 30:	519
Number of hearings completed or scheduled into May 2007:	315
Number of hearings attended by United Church representative*:	146

*United Church sends representatives to all hearings except when requested not to by the claimant

Those who attend hearings on behalf of the United Church to offer apology and commitment to live out that apology are willing to speak about this experience, often one of incalculable grace.

It is anticipated that it will take up to two years to process the ADR claims already received.

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RSSC Meets in St. Albert, Alberta

General Secretary Nora Sanders wrote in part in her weekly message on February 26, 2007:

“Last week, the Residential Schools Steering Committee met in St. Albert, just outside of Edmonton. On Thursday we met at the Nechi Institute, the training facility connected to Poundmaker’s Lodge [*a Native residential addiction treatment facility*]. We met there with survivors of the former Edmonton Indian Residential School, a United Church-run school which was on the grounds where Nechi is now. Most of the survivors present were from Saddle Lake, AB, although one couple had driven from their home in Hazelton, BC.

“We sat together in a big circle, in a beautiful round room that seemed to be part of the landscape. The Moderator and I read the apologies from 1986 and 1998 and presented plaques that bore those words, and Nelson Hart read both apologies in Cree. David [*Giuliano*] had brought a United Church stole with him, and each of us wore it while speaking the words of the apology.

“After that, the survivors started telling their stories... At one point, in the midst of it all, someone brought in a couple of broken and stained old stone plaques that had been on the old residential school buildings. These were placed on the floor, and we all stood up and went to the centre of the room to look at them. There was the name of our church, right there on those stones that carried with them the horrible memories of these young children, now grown old.

“I know I have made it all seem grim. But there were good moments in the sharing, and even funny moments too. I valued being there with the other members of the committee as we went through the week together. We bring a mix of experiences and backgrounds to the work, and it seems that everyone is there for a reason, with something to bring to the work. It’s the kind of work that no one could do alone.

“It’s difficult work, painful work. There is so much in our past that we can’t be proud of, but I am proud to be part of a church that is trying to acknowledge the pain and to journey toward reconciliation and healing.”

The Residential Schools Steering Committee is grateful to Nechi staff, particularly Carola Cunningham and Terry Portras, and to George Brernton, a Saddle Lake Elder and former EIRS student, for so graciously facilitating our visit. The committee meets once per year at a site of a former residential school. In addition to the committee, four members of Edmonton Presbytery were also present for the day.

On Thursday evening, February 22, the committee met with 20 church and community people from Edmonton and the surrounding area at Trinity United. It was a time to be accountable to those present and to hear what is happening locally in responding to the legacy of residential schools.

Sarah Skwarchuk from the Native Counselling Service of Alberta explained her role as a health support worker who accompanies claimants in the ADR process. Bob Cardinal and the Rev. Neil Elford of the Capital Health Region spoke of the Aboriginal cultural helpers in their spiritual care program, and the Native awareness training for mental health workers.

One band councillor observed his daughter playing freely and unafraid with a girl of Asian descent in the church. This is a sign of healing, he said, according to the Nakoda Cree way.

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“Unsettling Dialogues” Workshop

Many of us are tempted to ignore the painful past because we cannot change it. Talking about the burden of history can be frustrating and overwhelming for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We may get stuck in an unproductive dialogue, talking past each other, because we don't know what to do to put the past behind us.

On February 24, Paulette Regan and Brenda Ireland helped 21 people gathered at Southminster-Steinhauer United in Edmonton “to embrace these unsettling stories [residential schools, broken treaties, and the Indian Act] as powerful teachings that can help transform Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships so that we can work together respectfully with vision and critical hope.”

The Justice and Reconciliation Committee of Alberta and Northwest Conference sponsored this powerful workshop. Regan (Euro-Canadian) and Ireland (Anishnabe) have worked together for the past 20 years in the fields of Indigenous history, education, and community and relationship-building.

Regan was a federal resolution manager in the settlement negotiations with 27 survivors in Hazelton, B.C. She co-hosted the “welcoming home” feast for them with Brian Thorpe of the United Church in February 2004.

Front Runners Project

With financial and in-kind assistance from the national and local United Church, the filming of *Front Runners* took place in January in Winnipeg. (See the October 2006 and December 2006 issues of *Residential Schools Update* for the story of 10 Manitoba residential school students who were torch runners at the 1967 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg.)

The film will have its premiere this fall on Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) and a screening on *Spirit Connection* in the spring of 2008. The Residential Schools Steering Committee will make the DVD along with a resource guide available to congregations for study and discussion in 2008.

If your congregation is interested in organizing a gala screening with the producer, writer, actors, or some of the survivors, please contact us.

The 1987 “New Covenant” Revisited

Twenty years ago church leaders issued “A New Covenant,” the landmark ecumenical statement on Aboriginal rights that called for a new relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, one based on a recognition of the inherent right of Aboriginal peoples to be distinct, self-determining nations with rights to an adequate land base.

“A New Covenant,” signed by the churches that now form KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, acknowledged the impact of centuries of colonialism and discrimination, and sought to rectify historical injustices by calling on Christians, those of other faiths, “and all people of good will” to continue advocating and working in solidarity to generate “public awareness and support for the full recognition and implementation” of Aboriginal rights in Canada. The covenant affirmed the churches’ ongoing work in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples on Aboriginal rights and justice issues, as well as the long journey that lay ahead.

To commemorate the statement’s 20th anniversary, church and Aboriginal leaders will gather for a ceremony and press conference in Winnipeg on June 21, National Aboriginal Day, during the Anglican

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General Synod and the National Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, to celebrate joint successes and accomplishments, and to demonstrate that the churches and Aboriginal peoples continue to be inspired by the spirit of *A New Covenant* and its vision of a new relationship based on sharing, mutual respect, and the recognition of rights and responsibilities.

The churches will also release a commemorative poster of the 1987 “New Covenant,” along with a statement inviting all Christians to work “ecumenically and collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society to build nation-to-nation relationships that protect and enforce Aboriginal treaty and inherent rights.”

In December, the churches and Aboriginal peoples will issue a new 2007 statement on Aboriginal rights. (Written by Ed Bianchi, KAIROS)

To Contact Us

With questions, concerns, or comments

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Residential Schools Steering Committee Update (July 2007)

National Survivors' Society Offers Forgiveness

In a letter to Moderator David Giuliano on April 25, 2007, Michael Cachagee, Chairperson of the National Residential School Survivors' Society, wrote in part: "In the light of INAC Minister Jim Prentice's recent comments on a non-apology to the Survivors of Indian Residential Schools and in the spirit of moving forward, we have taken the sacred position of forgiveness for those who wronged us.... We are proud to say that the Anglican Church of Canada, The United Church of Canada, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada have provided an apology and have also made a sincere effort to encourage and engage Survivors in the process of their own healing."

Settlement Agreement a Step Closer to Approval

On March 21, 2007, judges from nine jurisdictions formally approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement as a fair and reasonable resolution to the claims made in 22 class action lawsuits. As a result, the agreement entered the final approval phase, a five-month "opt out" period during which former students can decide whether or not to participate in the agreement.

The opt-out period ends August 20, 2007. If less than 5,000 survivors opt out, the agreement will be implemented by the end of September. Applications for the Common Experience Payment and the Independent Assessment Process would then be available.

Children and grandchildren of former students may wish to opt out to protect potential legal options in the future.

An extensive notification plan to inform the members of the class of the Settlement Agreement is underway. Opt-out forms or more information is available at **1-866-879-4913** or at Indian Residential Schools Class Action Settlement (www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca).

"Bridge Funding" for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation

In mid-March, the Moderator sent a letter to the Prime Minister urging the government to provide funding to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) during the "gap" between the end of the previous funding period (March 31, 2007) and the implementation date of the Settlement Agreement. In April the federal government advanced \$25 million to the AHF to enable them to continue to support existing community projects already underway.

Conference Prepares for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Settlement Agreement provides \$60 million for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that will provide opportunities for survivors to tell their stories; research, document, and preserve the historical record of those stories and of the residential school system itself; and promote public awareness in mainstream Canada about this history and its impacts.

How can we prepare for the commission? Speakers, including some with direct experience in other truth and reconciliation movements (South Africa, Ireland, North Carolina, Australia), attended a conference at the University of Calgary, June 14–17, 2007, to engage some 200 participants in thinking about this question.

A "made-in-Canada" truth and reconciliation commission faces spiritual, attitudinal, cultural, psychological, legal, regional, and logistical challenges. Michael Ignatieff recognized the difficulty of

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“bridging the gap between two Canadas and two histories.” He outlined several lies that must be dispelled in order for the commission to “build a shared truth”:

- The residential school story happened a long time ago so we should stop dragging up the past and move on. (*The last school closed in 1996, and 80,000 survivors are still our neighbours.*)
- The intention behind the system was essentially good but there were a few “bad apples” and the schools were underfunded. (*Problems were systemic based on attitudes of cultural and racial superiority, many children died or were neglected or abused, and educational standards were low.*)

Canadian speakers such as Chief Bobby Joseph, Assistant Crown Attorney Rupert Ross, and Dr. Cornelia Weiman called upon us to embed spirituality in the process, engage a higher purpose and hold out the conviction that reconciliation is possible, retain the power of the circle, provide safety and support for those who tell about their experiences, and lay the foundations for the reconciliation process to continue after the commission concludes. National Chief Phil Fontaine encouraged survivors to reach out to churches who “realize mistakes were made,” have opened their archives, and have created Healing Funds.

Bob Watts, former Chief of Staff of the Assembly of First Nations, has been appointed as the Interim Executive Director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. His rapporteur’s report can be found at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission website.

Also view Minister Prentice’s speaking notes on “Truth and Reconciliation as Nation Building.”

Researching Student Deaths

Over the course of the history of the residential schools, many Native children died tragically as a result of illness, disease (especially tuberculosis), or accident. In April, Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice indicated that he has asked department officials to initiate a search of archival records for information related to deaths and burials of students attending residential schools. The United Church welcomes the opportunity to co-operate fully with this research.

United Church Archives in Transition

Later this year, the United Church Archives will be ending its relationship with Victoria University and seeking a new home. During the transition, we have been assured that all files related to residential schools will remain accessible for research and study.

ADR Claims Still Being Processed

As of March 21, 2007, when the courts approved the Settlement Agreement, no more Alternate Dispute Resolution claims for physical and sexual abuse or wrongful confinement have been accepted. Former students will be able to make an abuse claim under the new Independent Assessment Process (IAP) once the agreement is implemented this fall.

It will take up to two years to process all the ADR claims already received.

Number of ADR applications forwarded to the United Church as of June 29:	585
Number of hearings completed or scheduled into September 2007:	350
Number of hearings attended by United Church representative*:	151

*United Church sends representatives to all hearings except when requested not to by the claimant

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One United Church representative who attended an ADR hearing in Manitoba reported:

“The claimant told her story with much sadness and emotion. Years of cruelty and the after-effects were very difficult for her to describe and she said she could not tell any more of her story than she had.

“At the close of the hearing when the adjudicator asked if I wished to speak and I asked the claimant’s permission, she was very willing, and a little surprised to receive an apology from the church. She was clearly pleased and thankful to be read and receive the words of apology. She offered an embrace to all of us present. She described her continued work in the United Church and that of her family as well. The adjudicator commented specifically that she had never been in a hearing where a written apology was offered and thought it a very good process, appropriate and helpful to the whole hearing.”

Leadership Development Workshops

About 40 church leaders from B.C. communities in which the United Church has historically been in ministry with Aboriginal people participated in the workshop “Responding to the Reality of the Residential Schools Legacy as a Community” held June 5–8 at the Vancouver School of Theology. Most meaningful for them was

- hearing the stories of other leaders and survivors from Native communities
- experiencing the vision of whole and healthy communities as they once were through Kathi Camelleri’s presentation “It Takes a Village”
- learning about trauma and its lasting impacts as explained by Gerald Kiesman of the B.C. Survivors’ Society

Many positive comments were also made about the respect, safety, giftedness, caring, and sincerity of the people in the room, as well as the wealth of accurate information presented. There were many steps taken personally and collectively on the journey of healing and reconciliation.

The Residential Schools Steering Committee sponsored the 3½ day workshop led by an eight-member planning team with the following goals:

- sharing how each one relates to the residential school experience and is on the healing journey
- understanding trauma and healing pathways
- learning about the Settlement Agreement and its content so as to be able to provide information and practical help in completing forms
- identifying longer-term healing needs in the church and Aboriginal communities
- dialogue about the reconciliation journey in the church and the country

The participants were inspired to use what they had learned in a variety of ways back home.

Former Moderator Bob Smith and B.C. Conference President Janice Young delivered the 1986 and 1998 apologies to the gathering, as well as presenting the apologies on a plaque to Ray Jones, as Chair of the VST Native Ministries Consortium. Chief Bobby Joseph was our Elder for the week. Blair Galston provided an archival display and service.

The Steering Committee plans additional workshops this fall in other regions of the country and invites ministries serving Aboriginal people to send two or three leaders (ministry personnel and/or lay) to attend a workshop:

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- **Manitoba:** Sept. 4–7 at the Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre, Beausejour, Manitoba
- **Saskatchewan and Alberta:** Oct. 31–Nov. 2 at Calling Lakes Centre, Qu'appelle Valley, Saskatchewan
- **Ontario and Quebec:** Nov. 20–23 at Five Oaks/Francis Sandy Training Centre, Paris, Ontario

Contact Cecile Fausak for a registration flyer.

Community Impacts Strategy Conference

Examining the potential positive and negative impacts of the Settlement Agreement on survivors and their communities was the topic of a national conference held in Winnipeg, April 30–May 2, 2007, sponsored by Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC) and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Nearly 1,600 participants, most of whom were survivors of residential schools, identified needs, opportunities, and concerns related to the money that will come into their communities. Topics included financial planning, wills and estates, fraud and scams, elder abuse, gang violence, substance abuse, and gambling.

Returning to Spirit

A program established to bring reconciliation and healing to the residential school experience is transforming lives, relationships, and communities. The developers of the program, Marc Pizandawatc, an Algonquin, and Sister Ann Thompson, have found a way to help people break through the “stuckness” of being victims and perpetrators, and return to the spirit of who they really are and move forward.

“Returning to Spirit” is a three-part process that involves intense week-long reflection by First Nations people in one session, and by church people in another session, before both communities are brought together for conversation, healing, and reconciliation.

The Roman Catholic Church has supported this program as their primary healing project. The United Church’s Justice and Reconciliation Fund has twice provided grants to the trainer program held at Nakoda Lodge, Morley, Alberta.

Until recently, only Roman Catholic religious had participated in the church session, but in May 2007, at the Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert, Alberta, the first Anglican priest, the first United Church minister, and lay people benefited from this life-changing experience.

The next sessions for First Nations are planned August 27–31, 2007, at Thunderchild First Nation and December 3–7, 2007, at Regina, Saskatchewan. A reconciliation workshop is scheduled for October 22–26, 2007, in Prince George, B.C. The demand is very high and there is a growing need for more trained facilitators.

Poster Display Available

Eight sets of four free-standing display boards depicting the story of the 1986 apology and the work of the Residential Schools Steering Committee are available. They show scenes from residential schools and a map with the locations of United Church-associated schools. The displays were booked for recent Conference meetings and for celebrations of the May 26 National Day of Healing and Reconciliation.

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These display boards are available either from the Conference offices of BC, ANW, SK, MBNWO, ANCC, and Toronto or from Alison Jordan at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 2014. We pay the shipping out; you pay the shipping back.

Cross-Country Conference Activities

Conferences paid attention to Aboriginal issues at their recent meetings. A few highlights:

- B.C.: first joint meeting of the B.C. Native Ministries Council with the B.C. Conference Executive in Prince Rupert, which included a memorial feast for four Elders
- Saskatchewan: repatriation of Treaty 4 pictograph
- Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario: Dauphin Native Friendship Centre catered a supper of stew and bannock
- Manitou, Maritime, All Native Circle, Montreal and Ottawa: presentations by RSSC staff
- Hamilton: update on land claims issues with George Montour and Paul Vavosur of Grace Caledonia United Church
- Toronto: special worship service including smudging and reflector Sandi Hill, former Vision Keeper for the Conference

Front Runners Project

With financial and in-kind assistance from the national and local United Church, the filming of *Front Runners* took place in January in Winnipeg. (See past issues of *Update* for the story of 10 Manitoba residential school students who were torch runners at the 1967 Pan Am Games.)

Watch for the film's premiere this fall on Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). If your congregation is interested in organizing a gala screening with the producer, writer, actors, or some of the survivors, please contact us.

Spirit Connection Program to Explore "Why Apologize?"

It is 10 years ago in May since St. Andrew's United Church in Port Alberni prepared a feast and offered an apology to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people for the harm caused to students at the Alberni Indian Residential School. This was the first such step taken by any United Church group. (Recently, Julianne Kasmer of Comox-Nanaimo Presbytery has taken time to prepare an account of this process and event.)

St. Andrew's went on to present a petition to B.C. Conference that was transmitted to General Council, calling for the church to make an apology to all former residential school students. The response was a Statement of Repentance made at the General Council in August 1997. In October 1998, the Executive of the General Council decided to offer an apology to former students of United Church-run residential schools, and to their families and communities.

In late April 2007, in Prince Rupert, Moderator David Guiliano and General Secretary Nora Sanders offered both the 1986 and 1998 apologies verbally and on a plaque to those gathered for the B.C. Native Ministries Council.

Questions are still raised: Why is the church apologizing and for what? What role do apologies play in healing and reconciliation? Why do so few people know that the church has apologized?

To reflect on these questions, *Spirit Connection* hired freelance producer Larry Krotz to develop a show to be aired on Vision TV. Former students of the Portage la Prairie residential school were

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interviewed at their homes and at the former school, which is being developed as a museum. The interviews will be shown to members of Trinity United Church in Portage la Prairie in August, with some of the interviewees in attendance. The ensuing dialogue will be recorded for airing possibly this fall.

To Contact Us

With questions, concerns, or comments

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Residential Schools Steering Committee Update (October 2007)

Settlement Agreement Implemented September 19, 2007

From Moderator David Giuliano:

On Wednesday, September 19, I was meeting with The United Church of Canada's Residential Schools Steering Committee. Around the table were First Nations and non-Aboriginal people of faith. They are guiding us and caring for the long journey of healing and reconciling from the horrible legacy of the schools and the churches' role in that injustice.

At 4:00 p.m., the national Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement became official. It is an agreement that lays out compensation for residential schools survivors and initiates a Truth and Reconciliation process.

Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine called it a 150-year "journey of tears, hardship and pain." Speaking in Winnipeg, Chief Fontaine said that he was overcome with grief, joy, and hope. "This is an important day... It is perhaps—and I don't want to overstate this—even a turning point in the history of our nation." I am praying that it is.

Last November I had the honour of offering an apology to Chief Fontaine on behalf of The United Church of Canada for our part in the residential schools. I did not know whether he would accept my apology or not. Many survivors are waiting to see if we intend to live up to our apology before accepting it. I was deeply moved when he affirmed the work we as a church are doing and accepted the apology. Having heard some of the story of his personal suffering, the miracle and grace of his acceptance still moves me to the brink of tears.

Our little group stood for a moment to honour those who have been making this 150-year journey. Maybe on a Sunday at church, you will want to stand to honour them too, and offer words of prayer, including specific names. Maybe you will lift a cross or a tobacco tie to the Creator.

Posted to WonderCafe on Sept. 21, complete text including a prayer, available at online at [WonderCafe](#).

Applications Available

Applications for the Common Experience Payment (CEP) and the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) are available from:

- Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC) at **1-866-879-4913**
- Service Canada at **1-866-699-1742** (CEP only), or visit a Service Canada centre
- many Aboriginal organizations and First Nations offices (e.g., Assembly of First Nations*)

Independent Assessment Process

The Settlement Agreement provides for an enhanced Alternative Dispute Resolution process called the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) whereby former students may pursue a claim for sexual or serious physical abuse. Compensation awarded by the adjudicator under the IAP will be paid by the government. The United Church has already fulfilled its financial obligations under the agreement.

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Re-opening ADR Claims

Under the Settlement Agreement, there are provisions for some claimants who already settled under the ADR (Alternate Dispute Resolution) process to have their awards reviewed and possibly adjusted upwards. This would include

- those who received less than 100% of their ADR award
- those whose ADR claim was settled in a jurisdiction other than Ontario , B.C., and the Yukon
- those whose ADR award included compensation for the highest level of loss of opportunity
- those who alleged student on student abuse that was not recognized in their ADR award

More information can be obtained from the IAP Guidebook or from IRSRC through the contact information listed above.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Update

It will likely take up to two years to process the backlog of 1,500 ADR applications. About 150 of those will be claims related to United Church schools.

Number of ADR applications forwarded to the United Church as of Sept 30:	626
Number of hearings completed or scheduled into October 2007:	427
Number of hearings attended by United Church representative*:	183

*United Church sends representatives to all hearings except when requested not to by the claimant

Working Group on Missing Children

The United Church's residential school staff and chief archivist are participating in the Missing Children Working Group initiated by the federal government last spring in response to concerns about children who never returned home from the schools. The work, carried out under the auspices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, will focus primarily on archival research on student deaths and burials.

Research is being initiated at government and church archives as well as in archives held by provincial governments, universities, and child welfare agencies. This is a critical issue for the families of missing children and for the United Church , which feels a deep responsibility to provide whatever information it can to them.

Special focused research efforts will take place in the United Church archival holdings even while the archives are in transition.

Selection of Commissioners for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Over 300 nominations were received by August 14, 2007 , for the chair and two commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The United Church nominated four people, of whom two were Aboriginal and two were women.

The selection committee, including United Church appointee the Very Rev. Bill Phipps, has begun to develop a short list of candidates to be recommended for appointment by the government in consultation with the Assembly of First Nations. This work was delayed somewhat due to the appointment in late August of a new Minister of Indian Affairs, Chuck Strahl.

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Muffins for Granny—New in AVEL

Muffins for Granny is a powerful documentary written, directed, and produced by Anishinabe filmmaker Nadia McLaren. Hear the stories of former students of residential school and follow McLaren in her journey to understanding as she honours the memory of her grandmother. Now available in AVEL outlets and free from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (www.ahf.ca).

Justice and Reconciliation Fund

The Justice and Reconciliation Fund supports reconciliation and relationship-building initiatives between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. It is available to Conferences, presbyteries, congregations, outreach/community ministries, and educational centres of the United Church .

Project proposals are reviewed by staff from Aboriginal Ministries and the Residential Schools Steering Committee as they are received. Projects totalling \$43,800 have been approved so far in 2007. Funding criteria and application forms can be found online (www.united-church.ca/aboriginal/relationships/fund).

Leadership Development Workshops

Twenty-five participants attended the workshop “Responding to the Reality of the Residential Schools Legacy as a Community” held in September at Dr. Jessie Saulteaux Resource Centre in Beausejour , Manitoba . They found the following to be most helpful or meaningful:

- hearing the stories of other community leaders and survivors from Aboriginal communities in a safe environment
- experiencing the vision of whole and healthy communities as they once were through Kathi Camilleri’s presentation “It Takes a Village”

This was the second of a series of four such workshops sponsored by the Residential Schools Steering Committee. An eight-member planning team designed and facilitated the event with the following goals:

- to share how each one relates to the residential school experience and is on the healing journey
- to understand trauma and healing pathways
- to learn about the Settlement Agreement and its implications: ADR/IAP process, Common Experience payment, programs for healing
- to identify longer-term healing needs in the church and Aboriginal communities
- to dialogue about the reconciliation journey in the church and the country

Director Melody McKellar welcomed the group to the centre, and offered an opening smudge. MNWO Conference representative to the Executive of the General Council Caryn Douglas and President Lois Creith offered the 1986 and 1998 apologies to the gathering and presented the apologies on a plaque to Jane Marx, Elder with the Centre. Caryn spoke of the vulnerability and strength that survivors and apologizers both experience in the speaking and hearing of apologies.

Diane Haglund, MNWO Conference archivist, provided an informative booklet of Manitoba United Church school histories and pictures, and a list of pertinent records held in archives by the church at the University of Winnipeg .

Ruth Murdock of Sawano Pinesiwan taught the group about post-traumatic stress response and vicarious trauma. Trauma is “an event which is beyond the ‘normal’ human experience involving

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intense fear, terror, horror, helplessness, and a complete loss of control. During a traumatic event, the victim is made completely helpless by an outside force.”

Nelson Hart helped translate this understanding for Cree thinkers. Ruth encouraged victims, like herself, to move from “reaction places of grief, despair, anger” to “authentic, real places of truth.” Those listening to traumatic stories need to help victims take responsibility and carry their own bundles of pain—don’t carry it for them. Self-care is vital for all.

The participants were inspired and empowered to use what they had learned in a variety of ways back home.

Two more workshops will be held this fall. The United Church invites its ministries serving Native people to send two or three leaders (ministry personnel and/or lay) to them :

- Oct. 31–Nov. 2: Calling Lakes Centre, Qu’appelle Valley, for Alberta and Saskatchewan
- Nov. 20–23: Five Oaks/Francis Sandy Training Centre, Paris, for Ontario and Quebec

FrontRunners on TV

With financial and in-kind assistance from the national and local United Church , the filming of *FrontRunners* took place in January 2007 in Winnipeg . (See past issues of Residential Schools Update for the story of 10 Manitoba residential school students who were torchrunners at the 1967 Winnipeg Pan Am Games.)

The drama *Niigaanibatowadd: FrontRunners* will air on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network’s (APTN) new show “From Stage to Screen” on Monday, November 12.

The film will also have a local launch during Thanksgiving week at Cape Mudge First Nation on Quadra Island , B.C., the home of Lori Lewis, director, co-producer, and actress. Then at the University of Calgary Theatre where writer Laura Robinson created the play as writer-in-residence in 2000–01, there will be a premiere on October 12, 7:00 p.m. with the original runners and Laura and Lori on hand.

Plans are in the works for a gala screening in Winnipeg in the spring, when it is hoped that a study guide with the DVD, and Laura’s book with the script, will be published.

Upcoming Spirit Connection Show “An Invitation to Encounter”

Former Portage la Prairie residential school student Max Merrick was 14 the last time he entered Trinity United Church in Portage . On August 21, 2007 , he returned for the filming of “An Invitation to Encounter: A Conversation with Residential School Survivors.”

Four survivors of the Portage la Prairie residential school were interviewed at the former school, which is now being developed as a museum. Max, Russell Merrick, Stan Myran, and Grace Daniels remembered life at the school through the 1940s and ‘60s. A 15-minute video of their stories was then shown to members of Trinity United Church , and the ensuing reactions and conversation were also recorded.

The story of this encounter will be aired on Vision TV on Sunday, October 21.

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Could your congregation consider arranging a conversation with survivors during the upcoming 10th anniversary of the 1998 United Church apology to former residential school students, their families and communities?

Manitobans for Healing and Reconciliation

An inaugural gathering of the Manitobans for Healing and Reconciliation Network was held in Winnipeg on September 10, 2007 . The aim is to promote the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation (May 26 annually) as an “everyday event” in Manitoba . Plans are underway for 2007–08 activities and for the May 26, 2008 , celebration/provincial launch in Winnipeg .

For more information, contact Jessie Howell at 204-582-1822.

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With questions, concerns, or comments

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