

To: GVRD Board of Directors

From: Aboriginal Relations Committee

Date: October 1, 2015 Meeting Date: October 30, 2015

Subject: **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Summary Report on Indian Residential Schools**

ABORIGINAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

That the GVRD Board:

- a) endorse the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Summary Report on Indian Residential Schools, and send letters to the Honourable Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and the Honourable Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation urging them to move forward quickly with report recommendations; and
 - b) direct staff to report back on how the following proposed Metro Vancouver activities may form the basis of the 2016 Aboriginal Relations Committee Work Plan:
 - liaise with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
 - raise awareness about Indian Residential Schools;
 - provide cultural competency training; and
 - strengthen relationships with First Nations.
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At its July 22nd, 2015 meeting, the Aboriginal Relations Committee directed staff to report back at a future meeting, under the Manager's Report, with an analysis of the summary report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and recommendations in terms of Metro Vancouver's role.

At its October 1, 2015 meeting, the Aboriginal Relations Committee received a staff presentation on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada June 2015 summary report on Indian Residential Schools as an attachment to the "Manager's Report", dated September 11, 2015, titled "Backgrounder: Analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Summary Report." The Committee subsequently passed the recommendation as presented above.

Attachment:

"Backgrounder: Analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Summary Report", from the attachment to the "Manager's Report", dated September 11, 2015.

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BACKGROUNDER:

Analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Summary Report

PURPOSE

This Backgrounder provides a brief overview of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) of Canada¹ summary report and includes recommended options for Metro Vancouver and member jurisdictions to contribute to the reconciliation process.

Following the recent release of TRC's summary report, titled "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future,"² the Aboriginal Relations Committee, at its July 22, 2015 meeting, passed the following resolution:

That the Aboriginal Relations Committee direct staff to report back at a future meeting, under the Manager's Report, with an analysis of the summary report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and recommendations in terms of Metro Vancouver's role.

BACKGROUND

Residential School System in Canada

The residential school system existed in Canada from the 1870s until the 1990s. In the 19th century, the Canadian government developed a policy of "aggressive assimilation" calling for Aboriginal children to be taught at church-run, government-funded residential schools. Pursuant to this federal policy, about 150,000 Aboriginal children were taken from their families and sent to residential schools.

According to the TRC summary report, many students were physically, mentally, and sexually abused; some committed suicide or died fleeing their schools. Most children died from malnourishment or disease. Seven generations of Aboriginal children were denied their identity as they were separated from their language, culture, spiritual traditions, and their collective history.

In the Lower Mainland, the St. Paul's Indian Residential School operated in North Vancouver on the Squamish Nation IR# 1 between 1889 and 1958. Approximately 2,000 children attended the residential school during that time. The last residential schools, St. Michael's Indian Residential School and Gordon Indian Residential School, both located in Saskatchewan, closed in 1996.

To educate the public about Indian Residential Schools and to foster a process for healing between Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, the TRC was established in 2008 under the terms of the *Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement*.

¹ The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC) is an independent national organization that guides a process of reconciliation with Aboriginal families, communities, churches, government, and Canadians.

² [Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future – Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, June 2, 2015.](#)

That same year, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made a historic apology to former residential school students, saying that the “policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”

In 2013, the TRC organized seven National Events across Canada. The BC National Event took place between September 18 and 21, 2013, in Vancouver at the Pacific National Exhibition. A number of events planned for September 2013 by Reconciliation Canada³ coincided with the TRC National Event.

Metro Vancouver’s Involvement in the Reconciliation Process

The Metro Vancouver Board received correspondence from the TRC in March 2013 seeking Metro Vancouver’s support to foster reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. At the April 11, 2013, meeting of the Intergovernmental and Administration Committee, Marie Wilson, one of the three appointed TRC Commissioners, provided information about the BC National Event and inquired about potential Metro Vancouver’s in-kind contributions for this historic event.

In support of the TRC’s and Reconciliation Canada’s efforts to raise awareness about the residential school system, Metro Vancouver staff participated in the four kilometer “Walk of Reconciliation” through downtown Vancouver on September 22, 2013. Staff also attended some of the forums and witnessed survivors sharing their personal stories during the TRC’s BC National Event for the advancement of reconciliation.

TRC’s Summary Report

After six years of hearings and testimony from nearly 7,000 witnesses, the TRC released its summary report on June 2, 2015 titled, “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future.” The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, the Commission Chair, presented the findings that included 94 recommendations. The TRC directed several of their ‘Calls to Action’ toward local government.

With the release of the summary report, the TRC concluded a five-year mandate to create awareness about and document the history of the Indian Residential School system as well as guide a process of truth, healing, and reconciliation.

The more than 382-page document consists of four main chapters: commission activities, the history of residential schools, the legacy, and the challenge of reconciliation. The summary report provides some stories from survivors, including tales of children describing abuse and neglect they experienced at residential schools.

The report calls for all levels of government to make changes as to how they interact with Aboriginal peoples. The TRC Chair called for changes in policies and programs demanding that Canada move from “apology to action.”

According to the TRC, the Canadian government pursued the policy of assimilation and cultural genocide⁴ because “it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to Aboriginal people

³ *Reconciliation Canada* is a charitable project based on collaboration between the Indian Residential School Survivors Society and Tides Canada Initiatives Society.

⁴ *Cultural Genocide* involves the destruction of political and social institutions of a group, the seizure of their land, the forcible transfer of populations and restriction of their movements, the banning of their language and spiritual practices, the persecution of spiritual leaders and the disruption of families to prevent the transfer of its cultural values and identity to persecution of spiritual leaders and the disruption of families to prevent the transfer of its cultural values and identity to succeeding generations.

and gain control over their land and resources. If every Aboriginal person had been ‘absorbed into the body politic’, there would be no reserves, no Treaties, and no Aboriginal rights.”

Reconciliation is about “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship”, but “we are not there yet,” states the report. The TRC indicates that, although some progress has been made, significant barriers to reconciliation remain. Instead of moving towards reconciliation, there have been divisive conflicts with the federal government over Aboriginal education, child welfare, and justice. The Commission cites issues ranging from the call by Aboriginal groups for a national inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls to the impact of economic development of lands and resources on treaties and Aboriginal title and rights.

The TRC will release its final report in its entirety in the coming months.

TRC RECOMMENDATIONS

Broader Recommendations

The 94 recommendations in the TRC summary report aim to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the progress of Canadian reconciliation.” The recommendations are non-binding, meaning that the government does not have to act on them. However, the Commission calls upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations contained in the TRC report.

The TRC calls for action on issues around Aboriginal child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice, equity for Aboriginal people in the legal system, professional development and training for public servants, missing children and burial information, among others. All TRC’s recommendations are included in the “Calls to Action” document.⁵

Nearly all of the 94 recommendations fall under the federal jurisdiction. The recommendations fall into 2 primary headings (Legacy and Reconciliation) and 22 subheadings:

LEGACY	
Child Welfare	1 – 5
Education	6 – 12
Language and Culture	13 – 17
Health	18 – 24
Justice	25 – 42

RECONCILIATION	
Canadian Governments and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People	43 – 44
Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation	44 – 47
Settlement Agreement Parties UN Declaration	48 – 49
Equity for Aboriginal People in the Justice System	50 – 52
National Council for Reconciliation	53 – 56
Professional Development and Training for Public Servants	57

⁵ [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Calls to Action, 2015.](#)

Church Apologies and Reconciliation	58 – 61
Education for Reconciliation	62 – 65
Youth Programs	66
Museums and Archives	67 – 70
Missing Children and Burial Information	71 – 76
National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation	77 – 78
Commemoration	79 – 83
Media and Reconciliation	84 – 86
Sports and Reconciliation	87 – 91
Business and Reconciliation	92
Newcomers to Canada	93 - 94

Local Government-Centered Recommendations

The summary report includes several recommendations that focus on the role local governments can play in the reconciliation process. Some of these recommendations include providing cultural competency training; adopting and implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*⁶ as a framework for reconciliation; collaborating with other orders of government to protect, maintain and commemorate residential school cemeteries; and conducting historic preservation. A full list of the TRC’s recommendations centering on local governments’ collective role can be found in the Appendix of this report.

BC LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF RECONCILIATION

Canada’s Big City Mayors

On June 1, 2015, in recognition of the TRC’s undertaking, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Big City Mayors’ Caucus released a Statement of Reconciliation.⁷ In his Statement, Mayor Gregor Robertson, Caucus Chair, acknowledged the traumatic impact of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools. Canada’s big city mayors committed themselves to learning from the lessons of the TRC and ensuring that local governments fully acknowledge the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples in their policies. The Caucus committed to undertaking a new partnership “based on truth, dignity, and mutual respect.”

City of Vancouver

The City of Vancouver responded to the TRC’s recommendations at a June 23, 2015 Council Meeting when Council passed the following motion:

- Have staff report to Council on how to move forward with the TRC’s recommendations, while being mindful of the City’s jurisdiction;
- Request the City’s school board, police department and public library also conduct a review of the recommendations; and,
- That the City’s motion be forwarded to UBCM and FCM to advocate on behalf of local government to the Province and federal government to provide a response to the recommendations.

Cariboo Regional District

The Cariboo Regional District (CRD) has undertaken a number of activities to create a culture of awareness, understanding, and collaboration with First Nation communities. For example:

⁶ [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.](#)

⁷ [Statement of Reconciliation from Canada’s Big City Mayors, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, June 1, 2015.](#)

- The CRD acknowledged the atrocities of residential schools and worked together with First Nations to raise awareness of what happened through a Truth and Reconciliation event.
- The CRD worked with First Nations to host the St. Joseph’s Mission commemorative ceremonies. This reconciliation event has evolved into an annual event called “Orange Shirt Day”.⁸
- The Regional District has also held a series of Community to Community forums with First Nations.

Alberni Clayoquot Regional District

The Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) has been raising awareness and understanding about Indian Residential Schools through its own Truth and Reconciliation process. The ACRD Board adopted a resolution to embrace reconciliation and to dedicate a section of its website to provide the community with information on what happened in residential schools and the implications for Aboriginal peoples today.

RECOMMENDED OPTIONS FOR METRO VANCOUVER AND MEMBER JURISDICTIONS

The TRC’s summary report states that reconciliation is about

establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

The release of the TRC report is an opportunity for Canada, BC, and local governments to work in partnership with First Nations in advancing the process of reconciliation. While some of the options such as those set in TRC recommendations 43 and 47 below involve considerations beyond the scope of this report, Metro Vancouver may wish to consider some of the following recommended options:

Option 1: Liaise with the TRC

- Invite a representative from the TRC to a meeting of the Municipal Technical Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Relations (MTAC) or other relevant committee(s) to provide an overview of the summary report.

Option 2: Raise Awareness about Indian Residential Schools

- Liaise with Reconciliation Canada to discuss future opportunities to participate in dialogue workshops, providing participants with an opportunity to discuss issues related to reconciliation, explore Aboriginal history, and the intergenerational impacts of Indian Residential Schools.
- Organize a “Lunch & Learn” session at Metro Vancouver head office to provide staff with information on the history of the residential schools system and the mandate of the TRC.
- Publish an article for staff regarding the TRC summary report on the Metro Vancouver Intranet site.

⁸ The “Orange Shirt Day” has been inspired by a survivor’s story about her first day at residential school. She was excited to wear a new orange shirt to school only to be stripped of all her clothes and the new shirt given to another child. Her story is now a symbol of defiance against bullying and racism and a commitment to ensure that every child matters.

Option 3: Provide Cultural Competency Training

- Participate in Cultural Competency Training as part of the initiative currently being coordinated by the Union of BC Municipalities.⁹
- Participate in the *Provincial Health Services Authority's* online *Indigenous Cultural Competency* (ICC) training program which is designed to increase knowledge and further develop individual competencies. The program covers the following topics: terminology, timeline of historic events, context for understanding social disparities, and aspects of colonial history such as Indian Residential Schools. UBCM will be coordinating a pilot project for local governments in the fall 2015.

Option 4: Strengthen Relationships with First Nations

- Broaden relationship strengthening activities with area First Nations in support of reconciliation efforts (e.g. Community-to-Community Forums, special events, forums and gatherings).¹⁰

APPENDIX:

1. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future. Calls for Action – Municipal Governments (selected recommendations).

REFERENCED WEBSITE RESOURCES:

1. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future – Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf
2. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Calls to Action, 2015.
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
4. Statement of Reconciliation from Canada's Big City Mayors, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, June 1, 2015.
http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/letters/Statement_of_Reconciliation_from_Canada%E2%80%99s_Big_City_Mayors_BIL.pdf

⁹ UBCM has offered to coordinate on an annual basis a local government cohort for the indigenous cultural competency (ICC) training offered through the Provincial Health Services Authority.

¹⁰ As an example, Metro Vancouver is currently in discussions to co-host a Lunch and Learn session for its staff, along with presentations from Fraser Basin Council and Squamish Nation on the topic of working with Aboriginals on sustainability initiatives.