

Thoughts on the
Truth and Reconciliation Council Report
By Sally Boerema

I think the thing that made the most impact on me from the recent study of the Truth and Reconciliation Council Report was the calculated and deliberately destructive nature of the policies that brought so much pain to the Aboriginal Peoples. While I have long been aware of the damage done through residential schools and other policies, I still tried to hope that for many at least the intentions were good or at least neutral. My eyes were really opened through this study though going back I can't seem to find the quotes that so impacted me.

With reference to the Call to Action points 58-61: While I agree that the Pope should apologize (58) and that people should know about their churches role in history, (59) most of these calls to action are directed to "church parties to the settlement agreement". Not sure exactly who all that is but don't think it necessarily applies to us as a mission or as individuals. As far as educating people, most people I rub shoulders with every day already know at least as much about it as I do already. I do believe that when we are with the broader public (for example our supporters) we can and should do what we can to educate people on the "missing or highly sanitized" aboriginal history that they have been taught.

That being said, the call to action that disturbs me the most is #61 where it seems that they are suggesting that churches (with a doctrinal statement of beliefs of their own) should fund another religions teachings. Thankfully, this is a "call to action" and not a law. I believe strongly that Indigenous people have the right to follow their own religious practices, however, that a Christian church would be asked to fund the teaching of another way is appalling. In the first few sub points it uses the words "community-controlled" and "culture" projects but on Bocket Reserve I think I know what that would mean. In sub point iv it especially mentions the funding of dialogue between Indigenous spiritual leaders and youth. I believe with all my heart that the following of the traditional indigenous religion is the path to a lost and Godless eternity and that salvation is through faith alone in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. I would never want to have any part in funding the teaching of a false way to precious young souls.

Back to #60 which does include the words "and all other faiths". This one seems to be more limited to teaching clergy and staff an accurate version of history and the consequences of that history. Pre field training and required reading would both be good ways to make staff aware. I also think that the need to "respect Indigenous spirituality" is very important but question the meaning of "in it's own right." Again, if that means respecting someone's right to believe what they want to believe and to collaborate on the teaching of what it is that they do believe for our own understanding then I am all for it. However, if that means agreeing that something is right (in it's own right) which I believe before God to be wrong. Whoa! Yes, unfortunately there will be "religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities" – it is inevitable if all are free to make personal belief choices. The Bible tells us it will be so. Preach the Word, Preach the Word, Preach the Word. I believe that is the primary job of missionaries everywhere.