

## Truth and Reconciliation Report

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The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did a monumental task of hearing the stories of a hidden and disrespected past. The treatment of First Nations people by the colonial settlers was based in an ethnocentric perception. The attitude of prejudice and superiority colored every aspect of the interactions with the people of the land. Instead of listening and learning to gain understanding, they sought to dominate and control. The residential school movement was a part of that entire attitude toward First Nations people. What Sir Hector Langevin, Secretary of State for the Provinces told Parliament in 1883 states it plainly:

"In order to educate the children properly we must separate them from their families. Some people may say this is hard, but if we want to civilize them we must do that."

Sadly, it still exists today. Government still has the ability to take away children from their families and "civilize" them, assimilate them into dominant society.

As we interact with non-native people, we have the opportunity and responsibility to educate them about the history of the residential schools. There is vast ignorance of the impact that the experience has on generations of First Nations, not only during the 150 years of the existence of the schools, but on the generations that follow. Some will never understand, but because we in NAIM have listened to the stories, sat in with our friends as they shared their experience with the TRC adjudicators, witnessed the devastating effects on family, community, culture, and spirituality, we can be agents of reconciliation.

The apology given by Prime Minister Harper was a first step. As some would say, it opened a can of worms, not pretty to look or deal with, but necessary for healing and moving forward with a new culture of respect and dignity. God created all people, from the same source, and all in His Image. It is imperative that we learn to value and respect the worth of every individual.

I believe that the emphasis on bringing First Nations education into the school system is an important step to teach the children of Canada and future leaders the dangers of racism and social injustice. I also believe that transformation comes through relationships, with people who are different than we are, and ultimately from relationship with our Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to be agents of change, directing people out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. That does not mean forcing "religion" on people, rather calling them to a relationship with the One who made them, and who wants them to be who He created them to be.