

TRC Assignment by Cheryl Reynolds

Summary:

It is always difficult to read, watch and listen to stories of any form of abuse and genocide, in particular when you know people and see faces of friends who have gone through the residential school system and you've heard their stories. It leaves scars that are both seen and unseen. There is no easy answer, no easy response. It is gut-wrenching to know that people, both adults and children, were treated in such a way. And by the 'church'! That thought always turns my stomach. There needs to be acknowledgment of past hurts and that what happened was wrong. There needs to be time for sharing stories, for listening, for caring, for healing. There needs to be awareness of what happened and for the past to be taught correctly from both sides. This is a very difficult and emotional assignment to respond to because I recognize my own sinfulness. You can have all the head knowledge and facts, knowing what happened, and it still be removed from the heart. This assignment has become a heart issue for me and it's hard to put into words.

In the closing event in Ottawa the statement was made "Forgiveness is not for the weak – when you forgive, you live". I am not ignoring the past nor sticking my head in the sand, nor brushing it aside. My desire is to live. I want to be intentional in creating space in my life and those I work with for there to be dialogue as needed, forgiveness granted, reconciliation entered into and transformed lives moving ahead in a new way together.

We are all part of the healing process. Past hurts and attitudes cannot be perpetuated. Real change only happens as each person chooses to learn what has happened, what ideologies they hold, how they consciously or unconsciously perpetuate the problem and what needs to be done to continue on in a good space for all. This can only happen when we submit to God and follow Him.

My response to the assignment is very personal.

Suggestions for our organization

The C&MA put out a response to the TRC called 'The Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action Learning and Prayer Guide'. It is a great way to pray through the 94 Calls to Action. Good for a Day of Prayer.

www.cmacan.org/tr-prayerguide

TRC Call to Action 58 calls on the pope to apologize for the Catholic Churches part in the past.

Is there a place for us as an organization, either at a board level or leadership level, to ask for forgiveness from our First Nations brothers and sisters and allow them to respond?

TRC Call to Action 59 calls for ongoing education strategies to ensure that people don't forget the effects of colonization, history and legacy of residential schools and why apologies are necessary.

We do this by requiring new staff to take training during MDP. Temera does a great job in this area. Would a few survivors be willing to sit with new missionaries and share first-hand what happened and how it affected every area of their own life and the lives of family members?

We could including more Indigenous authors on our ProD reading list. Also a component of 'Current Events' so we can keep up-to-date on what is happening in all areas related to TRC.

TRC Call to Action 60 calls on all faith organizations to work in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders (survivors, schools of theology, etc) to develop teaching curriculum (training) on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality.

We can respect people of other faiths without agreeing with it or participating in it. Our mandate from God is to share the gospel with others and that is always in conflict with other religions that do not put Christ first. How we do that is what we need to be clear on.

TRC Call to Action 61 calls on church parties in collaboration with Aboriginal leaders to establish permanent funding for self-determined healing, reconciliation, education, relationship building, culture and language revitalization and Indigenous spirituality, self-determination and reconciliation.

When is enough money (funding) enough? I know that sounds harsh but it is a legitimate questions to be asked. Is money the answer? Is relationship the answer? What is the answer?

TRC Call to Action 46 Personal Covenant of Reconciliation (Adapted from one found on the internet and made personal for myself.)

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart - Jeremiah 29:11-12 (NKJV)

I, a child of God, humble myself before Almighty God, and do hereby Affirm and Declare the following:

Whereas, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16-17)*

Whereas, I am responsible for my part in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus *to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things, Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Whereas, the answers to problems are spiritual, *for the struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12)*

Whereas, the Lord Jesus Christ declared that *every kingdom divided against itself would be brought to desolation, and He prayed that we would be One, as He and the Father are One, in order that others may believe God sent Him into the world (Luke 11:17; John 17:21)*

Whereas, Jesus' Great Commandment is, *'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* And the second is like it: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* (Matthew 22:37-39)

Now Therefore, Be it resolved, I humbly repent of failing to establish and maintain Christ-honoring relationships with one another, particularly my First Nations brothers and sisters.

Now Therefore, be it further resolved that I commit to intentionally reconcile and live in accordance with 2 Chronicles 7:14, *humbly coming together before God, seeking His face, turning from our wicked ways, crying out to the Lord to forgive our sins.... And to heal our land.*

Now Therefore, be it further resolved that I recognize that *faith without works is dead*(James 2:26), and I dedicate myself to pray to discover God's plans to equip me and engage His people in practical and united ways of serving the First Nations Communities I'm involved in.

Signed: Cheryl Reynolds

Personal 94 Call to Action for myself that coincide (sort of) with the TRC 94 Calls to Action. Very simplistic but a way to start being intentional about action:

1. Encourage FN parents in their role as parents, modeling what Christ wants us to do within family, to love, discipline, encourage, protect, provide for, etc. Our kids have said to us as parents to just encourage them in what they are doing well. What I extend to our children I also extend to other parents.
2. Pray for children who are taken into the foster care system and be aware of what is happening.
3. Learn about the Jordan's Principle.
4. Encourage the FN children I come in contact with. A smile, a high five, a hug where appropriate and calling them by name is a start.
5. Research culturally appropriate parenting programs for those in need. Our friend Nick Helliwell, along with Promise Keepers, has made a DVD series on Fatherhood. Excellent teaching from a First Nations believer perspective and needs to be in the hands of those who need it. Share our copy with others.
6. Learn what section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada is.
7. Speak up when I see gaps in education and employment.
8. Ensure that the cost for programs is accessible for everyone and no favoritism is shown.
9. Keep abreast with what is happening regarding inequality – don't stick my head in the sand.
10. Encourage my FN friends who are teachers. They are doing a great job. Give a gift of support and supplies.
11. Provide a home away from home for FN students here at Caronport, monthly soup and bannock evenings.
12. Encourage and participate in programming for early childhood age children.
13. Learn to greet people in Cree.
14. Have someone pray in their language.
15. Learn two songs in aboriginal languages and include them in programs we do.
16. Call people by the name they choose.
17. Encourage and model healthy lifestyle and provide healthy eating at any event I take things to, ie funerals, wakes, birthdays, home visits, etc.
18. Learn about the differences within the FN communities, coastal, prairie, northern, etc.
19. Acknowledge and respect differences.
20. Create space and time for healing by listening to peoples stories. Set up a visit with Marilyn, Barb, Iva, Vera and Nancy to just learn from them.
21. Learn what is meant by Aboriginal Healing Practices.
22. Encourage the FN nurses that I know are in the field by telling them they are doing a good job when I see them.
23. Read the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
24. Set aside biases whenever I hear something. Learn the facts first.
25. Deal with things in a timely manner.
26. Take a class lead by an aboriginal teacher.
27. Make learning about human rights and anti-racism part of my ProD learning for myself.
28. Be a learner. Observe.
29. Get more info on a topic that is important to my FN friends and research it together.
30. Be available, through building relationships, to help people make better choices in life and avoid jail.
31. Have open dialogue with FN friends about alternatives to jail time for crimes committed to understand FN way of thinking.
32. Pray for those who do jail visitation that they would connect with those seeking a change in their lives that only Christ can bring.
33. Get to know someone with FASD.
34. Encourage a mom or grandma who has child/grandchild with FASD.
35. Speak up for FN people when I see things happening.
36. Be ready in season and out of season to help someone caught up in poor lifestyle choices. Read the book about helping without hurting again.

37. Support those God has called to work with those just getting out of jail, Nick Helliwell and Kevin Eby.
38. Help raise funds for youth to come to YQ from Weagamow reserve in northern Ontario.
39. Learn more about family violence and its effects on everyone involved.
40. Pray for and encourage Bea in her desire for a home for women coming off the streets.
41. Keep abreast of the MMIW Inquiry by following the news.
42. Practice consistency in my own life and be consistent with others.
43. Learn the framework for reconciliation in the United Nations Document. Can't respond or understand the issues if I haven't read what is being talked about.
44. Set two goals and a plan of action for myself for this year to move forward in reconciliation.
45. Treat people as created in God's image.
46. Write a Covenant of Reconciliation for myself. Think about how I should live in relations with others of all nationalities and races.
47. Be conscious in all my communications to write with no 'white biases'. Think about what and how I say things.
48. Show respect for FN Spiritual leaders. I don't have to agree with them but I can treat them with respect.
49. Buy fuel and Tim's coffee from the Sakama Gas Station in Regina.
50. Talk with friends about Indigenous Law and what it looks like. Conversation starter and then listen to understand.
51. Always represent the FN people fairly when writing to supporters.
52. Visit the reserve more often. Visit a reserve I haven't been to yet.
53. Ask Marilyn and Barb to hold me accountable.
54. Financially support FN brothers and sisters in their needs, ie Nick and Vivian.
55. Host youth from Weagamow Reserve for YQ.
56. Once a year, spend a day doing a review and course correction in my own life.
57. Speak with love on all issues and don't get caught in taking on others offences.
58. Be quick to ask for forgiveness and give forgiveness.
59. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation to teach supporters the history of the people we work with.
60. Come along side FN friends who want to reach their own people for Christ, Kirk Custer.
61. Learn some key phrases and greetings in Cree and use them.
62. Prepare age appropriate materials for using with kids.
63. Share Ellen Hooge's curriculum.
64. Consult with Christian Elders on how to do things while on the reserve. What do they do with traditionalists smudging at the funerals?
65. Choose a topic I am unfamiliar with and research it in depth.
66. Come along side and encourage those working with youth, Joni, Tal, Kirk.
67. Visit Wanaskewin First Nations museum again and take the time to read everything to better understand.
68. Use money to do something to commemorate reconciliation.
69. Read 'Firewalker' by FN author. Waiting for a friend to finish it and she'll pass it on to me.
70. Attend a public Library program by FN person.
71. Attend funerals on the reserve.
72. Remember people on the year anniversary of their death by calling one of the family members or attending the meal.
73. Write on my calendar, yearly, those who have passed on and remember them.
74. Take food to the funerals and to the family home. Help them out in any way needed. Be available.
75. Help with the annual cemetery clean up on Gordon's Reserve in June.
76. Find out who is considered a 'knowledge keeper' in our area.
77. Read the book on Gordon's Elders.
78. Encourage people to write their testimonies, Marilyn.
79. Visit Batoche.
80. Attend National Aboriginal Day events –Summer Solstice on June 21.

81. Advocate for treaty flag to be hung beside the Canada flag and provincial flags. Attend the flag raising in Moose Jaw.
82. Visit locations of former residential schools and pray for those impacted by attending there.
83. Buy authentic FN artifacts from the artist themselves, Clarkes, Chan, Vivian, Miles.
84. Encourage Aboriginal Radio programming, Terry Hall, NEFC and Ruth Carrol in Yellowknife.
85. Attend powwow on Gordons.
86. Send Indian Life Newspaper to supporters.
87. Find and read stories of aboriginal athletes.
88. Watch FN kids play sports. Attend their games and cheer them on.
89. Volunteer at Aboriginal sports events, NAIIGS, or reserve school or provincial level.
90. What are authentic aboriginal sports and games? Learn a new game every year.
91. Respect protocol on reserve land.
92. Consult with FN people before beginning a project. Is it appropriate? Is it my idea of what they need or is it a real need we can do together?
93. Welcome new missionary staff to the field and speak of the local history of the area.
94. Learn the Oath of Citizenship as amended by the TRC.