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Truth and Reconciliation

“Call to Action”

I was encouraged to see the growing awareness and openness of our Nation to discuss and address the issues that have long affected our First Nations brothers and sisters. To be able to speak face to face with a common awareness of our nations history has been too long in coming and will hopefully build the needed respect that has so long been lacking. Not having a historical base and clear context has slowed our ability to effectively understand the larger picture personally, in our churches and our greater communities. I was disappointed to leave Vancouver just as this process job the TRC was taking off.

I personally lived in communities that were frustrated and angry and didn't feel free to share their story or resolve the issues that were affecting their families. I watched the Federal and Provincial inequality in the way it handled Native community issues such as floods and business development but was also impressed by the Native communities desire to work together to make headway and seek for ways to improve local conditions with limited resources.

I came into Vancouver where through the development of the Tillicum Centre we I had a front row seat to the growing confidence to share the stories and watch the many changes beginning to occur. Some of these things we have already begun to do. We were a safe place to begin to tell the stories of sexual abuse, residential abuse and the 60's scoop and others before the greater society maybe felt safe enough to share with. We also had the ability to bring in occasional workshops and seminars which were able to address the issues from a First Nations perspective. It was often gut wrenching to hear and have so few tools within the community. A willingness to listen didn't seem enough while wondering if opening people up with the inability to take them further was doing more harm than good. As a resource network person I was constantly on the look out for good connections and they were rare. Christian counselling groups honestly confessed their lack

of understanding of Native issues. We encouraged Schools and Churches to grow in awareness of the issues but the materials were scarce and we were overtaxed.

The Truth and Reconciliation website offers a wonderful tool for sharing with the greater non-Native community, our churches, and staff volunteers what our role as a society and individuals has been and to offer apologies and restitution where appropriate. We have all in many ways benefited from the results of our societies treatment of First Nations and carry responsibility. As Christians we carry a greater responsibility to right so much that was done in the name of Christ and for that reason to help carry the load of helping to heal the pain and share this knowledge of our history. A greater focus on helping our churches gain a better understanding and prayer for the healing of all our communities in this regard is needed.

Much of the reconciliation has been geared toward money and that does not seem to offer solutions but instead to re-victimize people.

One of the best strategies I've seen has been when possible to build relationships and friendships between the communities so that people can hear first hand the stories. This seems to have a more dynamic impact than hearing it second hand from us alone.

While in Vancouver I worked to find ways we could build links and grow in our understanding and help other Christian organizations to be more aware of the issues and resources for meeting the needs of people they had a regular contact with. I personally need to look for ways to do this in a new context.

Recently while on furlough I put together a notebook of some of the appropriate stories from the TRC website. It provided an accessible resource to wet the appetite to go further in their understanding of our common history.

I have seen some of the churches feel out of guilt that they have to make up for past actions by allowing things to happen that are not in line with Scripture. I believe we are in a needed place as the church not directly involved in residential schools to hold fast to the word of God and let God's truth touch all of our lives in a redeeming way.