



MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
RALLIEMENT NATIONAL DES MÉTIS

President Clément Chartier ADDRESS TO THE TRUTH AND
RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

“CELEBRATING THE NEW COMMISSIONERS”

July 16, 2009

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Ladies and Gentleman, Elders, Survivors, I thank you all for being here this afternoon.

I know you'll join me in welcoming and congratulating Ms. Wilson, Chief Littlechild and Justice Sinclair on their appointments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Each brings unique skills, experiences and perspectives to this commission.

Commissioners, by shining a light on one of the darkest chapters of Canada's history, you will be uncovering profound stories of cultures attacked, entire ways of life destroyed, languages lost and unimaginable sorrow.

An important story you should be hearing is the treatment of thousands of Métis who attended Church-run residential schools.

A relatively small number of Métis survivors did indeed attend schools which were part of the Federal Indian Residential School system and are eligible for compensation under the settlement agreement, and of course can, and hopefully will, take the opportunity to appear before you and relate their experiences.

The vast majority of Métis survivors however, myself included, went to schools not covered by the settlement agreement and have been denied compensation for our experiences in residential schools.

Métis residential schools had the same assimilationist goals and methods as any other residential school.

Survivors of these schools endured the same forced separation from family and community, the same dislocation from the land, the same attacks on their culture and way of life, and in many instances, were victims of the same physical, sexual and psychological abuse.

Yet no one - neither the Federal nor any Provincial government, or any of the churches and religious orders which ran the schools - has stepped forward to take responsibility.

There has been no direct apology.

Before reconciliation between the Métis Nation and the rest of the country can take place, there must first be acknowledgement and acceptance of responsibility by those who committed these wrongs against our children.

We simply cannot go from government and church denial to reconciliation.

When I appeared in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008 the Métis Nation was there to support those Aboriginal peoples who were the direct beneficiaries of that long overdue and historic apology. We appear in that same spirit here today.

As I said then, it does not matter who paid the churches to run the Métis residential schools, because in the end, it is the children who paid, and paid dearly.

Until the exclusion of these Métis survivors is dealt with openly and honestly, until responsibility is taken and the harm done to Métis survivors and Métis communities is fully acknowledged, it will remain an undeniable and persistent obstacle to true healing and a lasting reconciliation between Canada and the Métis Nation.

Commissioners, I wish you all the courage and strength needed to take on a challenging mandate, an important part of which must be the search for justice for the vast majority of Métis survivors who have been excluded from past settlements.

One of the ways you may be able to do this is to question the federal government representatives, provincial government representatives from within the Métis Nation Homeland and church officials what role they played in the running of the Métis residential schools.

Following the June 11th apology, in September 2008 the Métis National Council entered into a Métis Nation Protocol with the federal government. One of the agenda items deals with the Métis and residential schools issue. While we are just now embarking on addressing this issue, we hopefully will conclude a satisfactory resolution well before your work concludes so that we as well can engage in the reconciliation process.

In closing, this Truth and Reconciliation Commission represents an opportunity to ensure the healing journey isn't taken just by some survivors but by all survivors.