



DIOCESE OF NELSON

Catholic Pastoral Centre

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May 22, 2015

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The Government of Canada mandated “Indian Residential Schools” from the 1840’s until the last school closed in 1996. This was part of a policy of cultural assimilation of the Aboriginal Peoples of our Nation which has left a legacy of hurt and alienation. One of these schools was situated within the Diocese of Nelson at St. Eugene’s within the territory of the Ktunaxa Nation in the East Kootenays. Although there was only one residential school in the area of our Diocese, all the First Nations communities of our Diocese were strongly influenced by the Residential Schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is coming to the end of its mandate of bringing about healing and reconciliation between our Native and non-Native peoples in the wake of the experience of Indian Residential Schools. The “final event” of the TRC will take place in Ottawa between Sunday 31 May and Wednesday 3 June 2015. One of the events in Ottawa will be a Walk for Reconciliation which will include many Bishops and other Religious Leaders from across Canada.

I would like to invite the members of our Diocese to spiritually accompany these gestures of reconciliation. I leave you with a few suggestions:

First: All of us can take just a few minutes to view the videos that have been posted on the website of the Archdiocese of Ottawa. They are well done and provide a balanced insight into the Residential School legacy. These videos are short, take a minimum of your time and can be accessed at the following: <http://catholicottawa.ca/videos-1>

Second: Please add one of the following intercessions in your Prayers of the Faithful at Sunday Masses on the May 31st weekend:

- For the material and spiritual needs of our Aboriginal peoples.
- For the spiritual and emotional healing of the Aboriginal peoples who suffered in residential schools.
- For reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the Church, for the harm done by Indian Residential Schools
- For the full participation of Aboriginal peoples in the Body of Christ.
- For new vocations among Aboriginal peoples.
- For the just treatment of Aboriginal Peoples and the redress of wrongs.

Third: All Christian Churches are asked to ring their church bells across the country at the time of the Walk for Reconciliation as an expression of our solidarity. Twelve o’clock noon Ottawa time has been chosen for this gesture of solidarity. This would be 10:00 am Mountain Time or 9:00 am Pacific

Time. I ask that all of our Church that have bells to ring them at this time on Sunday 31 May. We are asked to continue the ringing for a complete minute. If this time coincides with your Mass time, you may choose to ring the bells before or after the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Please announce these gestures in your weekend bulletins so all will be aware of the significance of our actions.

A new relationship between our Native and non-Native peoples will require generations to achieve. The initiatives of all parties over the past decade have been significant. May we be prepared to continue and to increase our prayers and our efforts.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ John Corriveau". The signature is written in a cursive style.

+John Corriveau, OFM Cap.
Bishop of Nelson