



**Launching of Truth and Reconciliation Commission:
An opportunity for healing and hope**

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCBC) is pleased with the launching of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has been established by the Government of Canada following the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. We welcome this as an opportunity for healing and hope.

The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission promises to be an important step forward in the history of the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and the whole of Canadian society. Native Peoples and non-Natives, former students and personnel, religious and lay people -- all who lived in or were involved with the former residential schools will have an opportunity to share their experiences, their joys and sorrows, their tribulations and difficulties, as well as their hopes for renewed life and reconciliation.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops understands that the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to shed light on the whole story of the former residential schools through the testimonies of those who lived it. While recognizing there will certainly be challenges in representing all viewpoints in this history, the CCCBC hopes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will focus not only on the past, but also on the current situation involving Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal Peoples. This will be important if the Commission is to bring forward recommendations for building relationships that better respect the human person, contribute to justice and peace, and are constructive for our communities.

Although the CCCBC as the national association of Catholic Bishops was never involved with the former residential schools, some 50 autonomous Catholic entities, most of them religious orders and some of them dioceses, were involved either directly or indirectly. This is why the CCCBC invites all Catholics to be attentive to the hearings of the Commission and its eventual appeals for reconciliation.

In a spirit of hope and solidarity with this process as the Commission begins its work, the Catholic Bishops of Canada encourage everyone wishing to share their experiences to participate in its hearings, so the truth that frees can be a source of healing and reconciliation for all.

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