

The Philanthropic Community's
DECLARATION OF ACTION

*T*he Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has done a great service by focusing the attention of Canadians on the shared and ongoing impact of the Indian Residential School System.

The participants and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have brought forward important truths of Canada's relationship with the Aboriginal peoples — the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, be they in urban, rural or remote locations.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has provided a platform for Indian Residential School Survivors, as well as their descendants, to share their stories and experiences. It has given voice to those who were previously silenced, who had not been heard, listened to, or believed. These courageous Survivors have brought understanding and hope into the lives of those affected across generations. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission process has also begun to map the direction to healing and reconciliation.

This historic process has provided both a place and a way for Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to learn and remember, to understand and acknowledge, as well as to participate and take action in supporting the healing and reconciliation so necessary for our country to become stronger and more inclusive for future generations.

Aboriginal peoples in Canada have contributed much, often willingly and freely, but too often without consent or choice. Yet they have persevered, demonstrated strength and resilience, and held faith that a better relationship is possible.

It falls on all people living in Canada to continue the hard work of healing and reconciliation, each in our own way and where possible, together, in our families and communities, in the organizations we work with and belong to, and as a nation. This is an important calling to which all of us are duty bound to respond.

Today we, the undersigned, come to you as a group from Canada's philanthropic community. We thank the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for inviting us into this circle that is built on the seven sacred lessons of: Truth, Humility, Honesty, Respect, Courage, Wisdom, and Love. These teachings are consistent with our collective purposes, principles and missions.

This is an opportune moment for Canada's philanthropic community to engage in and demonstrate leadership on reconciliation. We bring with us our networks, our voices, and our resources, along with new ways of thinking and doing to our work in areas such as: Inclusion, Culture and Language, Health, Housing, Education, Employment, and Environment.

We are committed to supporting the fulfillment of the vision of Aboriginal peoples, to building a fairer and more just country, and to the recommendations that will be outlined by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We will work, each in our own way, and together, towards achieving the goal of reconciliation and, in the end, a much stronger, more inclusive Canada.

Therefore, here in this space made sacred through the sharing of the stories and experiences of the Survivors and their descendants, we bring our diversity and distinctiveness, our emerging vision of renewal, and our determination to ensure that the philanthropic community is engaged in the work of reconciliation.

We will:

Learn and Remember by...

- 1) Listening with respect, compassion and empathy while reaching out to those who have given voice to the tragedy that was the Indian Residential School System experience, understand the cumulative impact of unresolved trauma passed from generation to generation as well as to remember the voices that were silenced; and
- 2) Engaging the philanthropic community in the dialogue necessary to ensure that we do this with, and not for, Aboriginal peoples in all their diversity.

Understand and Acknowledge by...

- 3) Learning about the history and legacy of the colonial system that imposed the Indian Residential School System, that dispossessed and inflicted harm upon Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, so that we can understand how to work toward the reconciliation that is needed now and into the future; and
- 4) Recognizing the need for an ongoing commitment to support the continuation of this multi-generational journey of healing and reconciliation.

Participate and Act by...

- 5) Sharing our networks, our voices, and our resources to include and benefit Aboriginal peoples;
- 6) Committing to building relationships with Aboriginal peoples, and extending the reach of our efforts in both policy and practice; and
- 7) Exploring new opportunities to support healing and reconciliation and the implementation of the spirit, intent and content of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings and recommendations.

Conclusion

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has set a path that will determine what reconciliation could look like in Canada, as well as how it may be achieved. We are honoured to participate, encouraged by the work that has been done, and emboldened to ensure that Aboriginal peoples' voices and needs remain an essential part of our work.

We thank the Commissioners and the staff who have worked tirelessly to support the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and those who shared their stories, memories, and experiences.

We place our Declaration of Action herewith to symbolize that this is concrete and will continue. Our signatures are a call to action inviting others to join in moving forward in an atmosphere of understanding, dignity and respect towards the shared goal of reconciliation.