



Equipping for Leadership

A guide for churches to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action



The
Presbyterian
Church
in Canada

Resources

Include the Calls to Action in your prayers during **worship**.
Download *A Time for Hope* for examples of prayers.
presbyterian.ca/downloads/42587

Listen to **testimonies** of residential school survivors online.
wherearethechildren.ca/en/stories

The blog *âpihtawikosisân* includes articles that **address misconceptions** about Indigenous peoples written by Chelsea Vowel, a Métis writer and educator.
apihtawikosisan.com/aboriginal-issue-primers

The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network provides articles and videos on **current events** from Indigenous perspectives.
aptnews.ca

Read books by **Indigenous authors**.

For suggestions visit
cbc.ca/books/108-indigenous-writers-to-read-as-recommended-by-you-1.4197475

Watch the film "Reserve 107" for an example of **community-based relationship building** and reconciliation.

reserve107thefilm.com

Learn about **hospitality protocols** for hosting an Indigenous elder.

carleton.ca/indigenous/resources/guidelines-for-working-with-elders

Contact

Visit presbyterian.ca/healing to learn more about how The Presbyterian Church in Canada is responding to the TRC's Calls to Action. If you have questions or would like support to begin a reconciliation group in your congregation, contact Justice Ministries.

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In 2015, the Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) announced 94 Calls to Action upon concluding six years of receiving testimonies from residential school survivors. These Calls to Action are for churches, governments, businesses, and all parts of Canadian society to address the history and legacy of residential schools.

The 1994 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada adopted a Confession to God and Indigenous people for the harm it caused while operating eleven residential schools (two after 1925). Reconciliation is a priority for the church, and the Calls to Action provide concrete recommendations of how the church can live into this commitment.

This resource is intended to encourage and assist church groups to learn about, and respond to, one or more of the TRC's Calls to Action.

This resource has four sections. Section 1, *Called by God*, grounds us as God's people called to be ambassadors for reconciliation in the context of the church's history of running residential schools. We worship a loving God who calls us to, and strengthens us for, this journey. Section 2, *Learn*, draws attention to what God and Indigenous people are telling the church about the need for reconciliation. Section 3, *Advocate*, suggests how a church group can respond to the ongoing legacy of residential schools, using three of the Calls to Action as examples. Section 4, *Build Relationships*, grounds the work of reconciliation in building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples based on mutual recognition, respect and shared responsibility.

For each section, you are invited to:

- **Read** one or two Calls to Action or other texts related to reconciliation.
- **Reflect** on your thoughts, feelings and questions that arise from what you learn.
- **Act** and take steps that contribute to reconciliation. There are suggestions for action in each section.

Any of the sections can be used as a stand-alone resource. If you are beginning to learn about the history of the church and residential schools, we suggest you start with section one, *Called by God*. This section can be done alone, or in a group, in a 30-45 minute time period. The other sections will take longer and will involve more than one conversation. These sections are better for a small group.

While reconciliation is a call for societal transformation, it is also a process of personal transformation. As you respond to the Calls to Action, consider keeping a journal of your hopes for reconciliation and the things you learn, feel and question throughout the process. There are further resources listed in this resource to help along the journey.

No one is alone in the work of reconciliation:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Called by God

Just as we prepare ourselves to worship God, so too is it important to prepare for the transformative work of reconciliation. We set aside time to be grounded in our intentions. With open hearts and minds we seek God's call for reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 followed by The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Confession to God and Aboriginal Peoples (presbyterian.ca/downloads/34144). The Confession was adopted by General Assembly in 1994 to address The Presbyterian Church in Canada's role in operating residential schools and the harm caused to Indigenous people and communities.

Reflect: How does reading the passage from 2 Corinthians and the Confession make you feel?

What questions do these texts raise? Why was it important for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to apologize to Indigenous people? What principles of reconciliation do scripture and the Confession guide you towards? Write down your impressions so you remember them later.

Suggestions for Reading the Calls to Action:

The Summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report provides concise background information on each Call to Action. Access the Summary of the Final Report at tinyurl.com/summary-trc

Read the headings in the Calls to Action to get an overview of the topics they cover. Choose one or two Calls to Action that you want to focus on. Consider where you can affect change. For example, if you are a health care professional, consider the Calls to Action for health care.

Act: Learn about The Presbyterian Church in Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

- Organize a short study to discuss the Confession with your congregation using the reflection questions or your own questions. Create an intergenerational space by inviting young people to participate. Find out if your presbytery has studied the Confession.
- Talk to your minister or session about posting the Confession in your church as a reminder of the church's commitment to seeking ways to walk with Indigenous peoples to find healing and wholeness. (Confession, paragraph 7).
- The PCC has eight ministries with Indigenous people that form the National Native Ministries Council. Learn more here: presbyterian.ca/canadian-ministries/native-ministries

Learn

We listen to what God and Indigenous people are telling us about the need for reconciliation. This is a ministry of witness and presence. Reconciliation is a journey and a process. The Commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission stressed in their final report that everyone in Canada needs to learn about the history of the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in order to develop a common memory of this history. Education about the truth of past relationships sets a foundation for all Canadians to participate in building a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Read: Calls to Action #59 and #62 are calls for education. Call to Action #59 is for churches to develop education strategies for their members about the church's role in residential schools and colonization. Call to Action #62 is addressed to federal, provincial and territorial governments to implement mandatory curriculum about colonization, treaties, and the history and legacy of residential schools for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students.

Reflect: What questions do you have about residential schools, treaties, and the impacts of colonization? Write them down. This can be a later reference point for learning.

Act: Start by choosing one of these ideas related to Call to Action #59:

- Find out whose traditional territory your church was built on. Talk to your minister about acknowledging the traditional territory at the beginning of worship and meetings. Download the PCC's resource "Acknowledging Indigenous Territory in Church" to learn how. presbyterian.ca/downloads/42590
- The KAIROS Blanket Exercise is an experiential activity that explores the 500-year relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on the northern part of Turtle Island (North America). Attend a KAIROS Blanket Exercise, or invite Justice Ministries to lead the Blanket Exercise for your church. kairosblanketexercise.org
- Attend a talk given by an Indigenous speaker. Consult with colleges, universities, friendship centres (nafc.ca/en) and public libraries for opportunities.

Next, consider contacting your provincially or territorially elected official to encourage efforts to prepare mandatory curriculum on residential schools, treaties and Indigenous peoples' contributions to Canada for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students (Call to Action #62).

Advocate

As you learn about the consequences that colonization and residential schools had and continue to have on Indigenous people, consider ways that you and your congregation can advocate alongside Indigenous people for change. Forty-two of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action relate to the legacy of residential schools. These Calls to Action address the persisting disparities related to Indigenous child welfare, education, language and culture, health and justice. Ending these disparities is a key part of reconciliation.

Read (choose one):

Download the TRC Summary of the final report at tinyurl.com/summary-trc. Read the preamble for the Call to Action you have selected. Page numbers are listed below.

Child Welfare – Call to Action #3 is about *Jordan's Principle*, which says that First Nations children should have timely access to health services that should not be delayed or disrupted by disputes over which level of government is responsible for paying for such services. (Read "Jurisdictional Disputes," p. 190)

Education – Call to Action #8 calls for the Government of Canada to close the gap in federal education funding for First Nations children. (Read "Funding Inequities," p. 195–6)

Justice – Call to Action #41 relates to addressing the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women and girls. (Read "Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls," p. 226–7)

Reflect: How did the text make you feel? Did anything surprise you? Do you want to learn more?

Act: The following is a suggested process for responding to the Call to Action you selected from above.

1. Organize a group within your congregation to take leadership in responding to one of the Calls to Action above.

Build Relationships

At the end of most worship services, there is an assurance of God's love and a commissioning to extend God's love into the world. In a similar way, the Calls to Action give us specific ways to engage in reconciliation and build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As your congregation continues its journey towards reconciliation, seek to build relationships with Indigenous people that reflect the principles in the Calls to Action: mutual recognition, mutual respect and shared responsibility.

Read: Call to Action #46 calls on "the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to develop and sign a Covenant of Reconciliation that would identify principles for working collaboratively to advance reconciliation in Canadian society." While this is directed at specific organizations, the spirit of and the principles set out in Call to Action #46 can be applied to local relationship-building as well.

2. Visit the website of an organization involved in advocacy related to the Call to Action you chose to focus on.

Child Welfare – The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada advocates for Indigenous children and their families to receive equitable services. Its work includes providing resources and organizing campaigns related to *Jordan's Principle*. fncaringsociety.com

Education – The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada advocates for Indigenous children and their families to receive equitable services. The *Shannen's Dream* campaign addresses the unequal access to education for First Nations Children. fncaringsociety.com

Justice – The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a source of information and leader in advocacy regarding violence against Indigenous women and girls. nwac.ca/national-inquiry-mmiwg/understanding-mmiwg

3. Read and summarize the information they provide. Write down any questions you have as a group. Ask each group member to learn more about one question.
4. Next time you meet, share what you learned. Continue to seek ways of learning about this Call to Action.

5. Consider taking actions in response to this Call to Action.

Child Welfare – Participate in the *Jordan's Principle* campaign activities suggested by The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. Encourage children and youth in your congregation to join you.

Education – Share what you learn about *Shannen's Dream* with children and youth in your congregation. Help them to join the Shannen's Dream movement.

Justice – Attend a vigil for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Annual Sisters in Spirit vigils are held in many Canadian cities on October 4 (see the NWAC website for dates).

Reflect: Where is the closest Indigenous community or organization to your congregation (E.g. reserve, Friendship Centre, Indigenous service provider, etc.)? Who can you ask about ways to support or participate in local reconciliation work?

Act:

- Consider visiting the nearest Band office, Friendship Centre, or Indigenous service provider. Introduce yourself and ask if there are ways that you can learn more about their work.
- Seek opportunities to volunteer with a grassroots Indigenous organization.
- Attend or volunteer at public events like Pow wows, lectures and panel discussions, ceremonies or walks for reconciliation.