



MODERATOR OF THE 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Rev. Dr. Robert N. Faris, B.A., M.Div., M.Th., Ph.D.

August 25, 2022

The Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous Services
patty.hajdu@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Hajdu:

Greetings from the General Assembly which met June 5–8, 2022. The General Assembly considered a report on intergenerational trauma and other harms caused by Residential Schools and colonization.

The church's relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada has been marked by colonization and the racist beliefs that underscored colonization (namely, the superiority of a Christianized, western European worldview as expressed in such ideologies as the Doctrine of Discovery). In 1994, the church confessed its role in causing harm to Indigenous children and their families and communities through our operation of Residential Schools. The church also rejected the Doctrine of Discovery in 2019. The church is committed to walking toward reconciliation.

We acknowledge that an important part of walking toward reconciliation is responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action ourselves, and we have been working on doing so. We also acknowledge that advocating that all Calls to Action are met is an important action for the church to take, and so we write to you today lifting up Call to Action 21.

Call to Action 21 calls for the federal government to provide sustainable funding for existing and new Indigenous healing centres to address the harms of Residential Schools and colonization. The need for such centres—and the sustained funding it will take to keep them open—is clear, given the intergenerational harm caused by the schools, which continues to impact families and communities today. These harms are evident in that:

- suicide and self-inflicted injury are the leading cause of death in Indigenous youth and adults under 44;¹
- Indigenous people are more likely to experience violence: Indigenous people are three times more likely to have experienced violent crime, and while Indigenous people make up 5% of the population, 15% of people killed in encounters with police were Indigenous;²

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada. (2016). Suicide prevention framework.

² Jacques Marcoux and Katie Nicholson, "Deadly force: Fatal encounters with police in Canada: 2000-2017", *CBC News*.

- there is ongoing apprehension of Indigenous children by social services—52.2% of children in foster care are Indigenous, yet only 7.7% of children in Canada are Indigenous;³
- Poorer health outcomes, including higher death rates than non-Indigenous people, are experienced across a number of health-related conditions; and⁴
- lower education outcomes and higher unemployment rates disproportionately affect Indigenous people in Canada.⁵

Given the barriers to accessing health and wellness services faced by Indigenous peoples in the North, it is urgent that healing centres addressing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual harms caused by Residential Schools is a priority in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Answering Call to Action 21 would be an important step for the government to move towards acknowledging the systemic anti-Indigenous racism that exists in Canada and working to address the ongoing harms that continue to impact Indigenous people and communities.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Robert N. Faris
Moderator of the 2022 General Assembly

³ Government of Canada, “Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care,” <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1541187352297/1541187392851>.

⁴ Statistics Canada, “Mortality among First Nations people 2006-2016, released October 20, 2021.

⁵ Evelyne Bougie and Sacha Senecal, “School Success and the Intergenerational Effect of Residential Schooling”, Western University Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International, 2010.

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Victor S.J. Kim and The Rev. Donald G.A. Muir