

Reader 1:

Good morning. I'm David Belrose. On March 29, in Edmonton, Alberta, Rev. Meg Roberts, representative of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada, and Gary Groot, President of the Canadian Unitarian Council Board of Trustees, presented an Expression of Reconciliation at the Final Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Reader 2:

And I'm Bev Leaman. On behalf of the Canadian Unitarian Council and the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada, and the Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship, we commit today to the journey of healing and reconciliation between Canadian Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people.

Reader 1:

We commit to these steps to advance that journey:

- To assemble educational materials for our congregations regarding the history and impact of the Indian Residential School system.
- To create a new program for congregations about racial equity and intercultural competency.
- To continue to encourage our congregations to learn more about the richness of Aboriginal spirituality and cultures; working together to advance the struggle for justice for Aboriginal people.

Canadian Unitarians draw from various sources for inspiration: direct experience of the forces that uphold life, science, and world religions. We hold in common seven principles, and see how these were transgressed in the Canadian Indian Residential School system and by government legislation.

We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Reader 2:

This was denied when you were forced to relinquish your cultural identities and denied the nurturance of your families and communities.

Reader 1:

We affirm justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Reader 2:

These were violated when parents were forced to give up their children to a school system where so many children were emotionally, physically and sexually abused.

Reader 1:

We seek to accept one another and encourage each other's spiritual growth.

Reader 2:

This was disallowed when your spiritual practices were outlawed and another religious tradition imposed upon you.

Reader 1:

We support a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

Reader 2:

Although many children received basic education, they were also used for manual labour, living in unsanitary conditions, leading to thousands of deaths from tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.

Reader 1:

We promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

Reader 2:

The mere imposition of this school system was a clear violation of the use of any democratic process.

Reader 1:

We affirm the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Reader 2:

How could this be achieved when government legislation revoked the basic rights of Aboriginal people to govern themselves?

Reader 1:

We respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Reader 2:

This principle is integral to Aboriginal cultures. Not only did non-Aboriginals lose an opportunity to learn from your cultures, this understanding was all but eradicated from your children's way of life by this school system.

Reader 1:

Our congregations across Canada are reading this Expression of Reconciliation in their services. We want our Aboriginal brothers and sisters to know that we walk with them.

Reader 2:

We light this chalice, our symbol of Unitarianism.

May it light our way to truth, offer its warmth in our healing, and may its fire strengthen our commitment to the process of reconciliation.