

Expression of Reconciliation for the Legacy of the Indian Residential School System

March 27, 2014

Reconciliation has the power to bring light and healing into the dark history of the Indian Residential School system and its profound legacy of harm to student survivors and their families.

The operation of the Indian Residential Schools resulted in the devastation of Aboriginal language and culture. The damaging effects for many of the 12,000 children who attended the 25 residential schools in Alberta still endure for school survivors and family members who struggle today to find peace and to heal from past wrong-doing.

Reconciliation is a powerful spirit of understanding, compassion and action. True reconciliation can only be achieved if we commit to a fundamental shift in our relationship with Aboriginal people in our province.

Through acts of reconciliation, we are saying to Aboriginal people that you are not alone in emerging from the shadows of a history that is too dark and too long to endure on your own.

We are committing as individuals, communities and governments to be witnesses and messengers of reconciliation.

Starting with the youngest members of our society, Alberta commits to residential school survivors, their families and communities that Albertans will hear your stories and know your truths.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Government of Alberta commits that all Alberta students will learn about the history and legacy of residential schools, along with the history of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples of Canada.

Provincial Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum will include enhanced mandatory content for all Alberta students on the significance of residential schools and treaties.

This is supported by the addition of a new Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum development standard for Alberta: Curriculum must include diverse perspectives of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples living in Alberta in relation to historical and contemporary contexts.

The Government of Alberta commits to continue work on professional development so that teachers learn about the history and legacy of residential schools and First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples and are better prepared to meet the needs of First Nations, Metis and Inuit children and youth.

The Government of Alberta will continue to work with First Nations, Metis and Inuit partners to promote reconciliation by providing opportunities for Albertans to hear first-hand from those who attended residential schools and those whose families and communities continue to experience this legacy today.

Albertans expect us to enable all students to achieve success, and First Nations, Metis and Inuit students are no exception. We are making progress on many fronts; for example, we are working with the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta and the Government of Canada through the Memorandum of Understanding on First Nations Education in Alberta. However, there continues to be an achievement gap between First Nations, Metis and Inuit students and other students in Alberta. We are committed to working with our partners to address this gap and collaborate to ensure a bright future for Aboriginal students in Alberta.

As part of this commitment, Alberta Education is creating a new Assistant Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Learning. This new leadership role will provide a focal point within the ministry and government for implementing First Nations, Metis and Inuit education policies, programs and initiatives. It will help ensure that our work with partners -school jurisdictions, parents and communities - is well-aligned and that we continue to take a coordinated and collaborative approach to First Nations, Metis and Inuit education in the province.

The Government of Alberta commends the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on its work to raise awareness about the impact of the residential school experience on First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples across Canada.