

Trigger/Content Warning: Residential Schools, Genocide, anti-Indigenous racism

While this letter is mainly for settlers to engage with, we understand that Indigenous kin may find their way here.

Below are trauma-informed mental health crisis resources for Indigenous communities.

IRSSS Toll-Free Line: 1-800-721-0066

24hr National Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419

KUU-US Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717

Tsow-Tun-Le Lum: 1-866-925-4419

Talk4Healing, Counselling for Indigenous Women: 1-855-554-4325

Anishnawbe Health 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Management Service: 1-855-242-3310

Hope for wellness Line: 1-855-242-3310

MMIWG Inquiry support Line: 1-844-413-6649 (or info@mmiwg-ffada.ca)

Nunavut Kamatsiagtut Help Line: 1-800-265-3333

The Open Letter and Calls to Action for fellow non-Indigenous Catholic community is on [page 2](#).

Open Letter and Calls to Action for fellow non-Indigenous Catholic community

People across so-called Canada have witnessed the recovery of the remains of Indigenous children from residential schools. As further searches and recoveries continue, it is important that we join in solidarity with Indigenous communities in calling for meaningful accountability from the Catholic church and the Canadian Government for the atrocities they have caused.

We must honour and respect the calls by Indigenous communities and families who have known and continue to experience the intergenerational impacts of genocide by the state and religious powers to which we are complicit.

Since June of this year, members of the Catholic community have issued statements or letters of apology. However, **any form of apology by the Catholic Church must go beyond a symbolic statement.**

Rather, we demand the Church and members of the clergy to commit to real change in building good, honest, and humble relations with Indigenous peoples. To bend down and hope to be worthy enough to untie the sandals and wash the feet of those the Church has oppressed. It is simply not enough to *hear* these concerns or *apologize*, but meaningful change requires us to **atone in tangible and sustainable ways** through day-to-day actions, and shifts in our religious and spiritual practices.

Our Calls to members of the Catholic community

We call for the Church to acknowledge that it has and continues to commit genocide of Indigenous peoples and cultures, which have had ongoing intergenerational harms across Indigenous families and communities. That we are guilty of the genocide of thousands of Indigenous children and the increasing numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women. That we have not sufficiently worked towards creating right relations with the Indigenous peoples on whose land we occupy.

We demand that the Catholic Church, in addition to the federal government, honours the Calls to Action developed by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#).

In particular, No. 49 which states:

We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius.

And the Calls to Action #58 - #61 (Church Apologies and Reconciliation) and #71 - #76 (Missing Children and Burial Info).

For tangible, meaningful forms of reconciliation, we call for dedicated, permanent and sustainable flow of funds towards Indigenous organizations. Significant funds from the Church must support the investigation of all former residential school properties, as well as Indigenous-led programs and initiatives that offer safety and healing for survivors, their families, and all Indigenous peoples navigating the child welfare system.

To our fellow non-Indigenous Catholics,

We have not followed our own Biblical teachings about justice for the oppressed. Rather, we have been the perpetrators of injustice, upholding and representing an institution that oppresses many marginalized communities. It is time we admit that the Church has been a place where oppression is not only tolerated but invited by our clergy.

We ask that you stand in solidarity with us. We ask that, until there is meaningful change by the Catholic Church, you redirect tithes, offerings, and any monetary donation to the Catholic Church towards Indigenous organizations. We ask that you send this letter to leaders of your congregations both your own and adjacent to you.

“The just uphold the rights of the oppressed, but the corrupt care only for themselves”
(Proverbs 29:7)

We call upon members of the Catholic Church to condemn the vices of pride and violence within our own community. We are complicit to generations of injustice and harm. Only through radical love and action can we atone for our sins and build kind and loving relations across unceded and stolen lands we now occupy.

Sincerely,

A Coalition of Catholics for the Betterment of Indigenous People

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Who we are

We are a diverse group that includes non-Indigenous Catholics, ex-Catholics, Queer, and racialized folks who are angered and saddened by the treatment of Indigenous peoples by the Catholic church and Canadian government. We meet bi-weekly to talk about our thoughts including the nuances of the Catholic Church, research past apologies and actions all to help better inform the action we take. Our current action is drafting an open letter to the Church. Our goal is to understand what is the best way to respond to these issues, and take action.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Calls to Action

Church Apologies and Reconciliation, Calls to Action #58 - #61

58. We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims of abuse and to occur within one year of the issuing of this Report and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.

59. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary.

60. We call upon leaders of the church parties to the Settlement Agreement and all other faiths, in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors, schools of theology, seminaries, and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curriculum for all student clergy, and all clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right, the history and legacy of residential schools and the roles of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.

61. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement, in collaboration with Survivors and representatives of Aboriginal organizations, to establish permanent funding to Aboriginal people for:

- i. Community-controlled healing and reconciliation projects.
- ii. Community-controlled culture- and language revitalization projects.
- iii. Community-controlled education and relationship building projects.
- iv. Regional dialogues for Indigenous spiritual leaders and youth to discuss Indigenous spirituality, self determination, and reconciliation.

Missing Children and Burial Information, Calls to Action #71 - #76

71. We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

72. We call upon the federal government to allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

73. We call upon the federal government to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children.

74. We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child's burial location, and to respond to families' wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested.

75. We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.

76. We call upon the parties engaged in the work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries to adopt strategies in accordance with the following principles:

- i. The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies.
- ii. Information shall be sought from residential school Survivors and other Knowledge Keepers in the development of such strategies.
- iii. Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.