



## Statement for Social Justice Institute event, April 12, 2013

Over the past several years, the Christian Reformed Church has walked along with others in the ecumenical community and the broader Canadian public to learn about the heritage and tragic ongoing effects of Indian Residential Schools. In this journey of learning we have heard the testimony of Indigenous People that the path of reconciliation and healing is shared by all of us who live in this place called Canada. In presenting an Expression of Reconciliation at the Saskatoon National Event in June 2012, then-Director of Canadian Ministries, Bruce Adema stated: “as members of the body of Christ in Canada we confess that the sins of assimilation and paternalism in Indian Residential Schools, and in wider government policy, are ours as the Christian Reformed Church.” This confession prompts us to continued dialogue, education, understanding and action.

Recently the activities of the Idle No More movement have reminded us of the urgent need for a new relationship between Indigenous people and all of us who live in this blessed place called Canada. As our Indigenous friends remind us, new and reconciled relationships are based on a shared story of mutual respect and “nation to nation” relations as expressed in treaties. A treaty is a sacred agreement between the people of Canada and First Nations that implies deep mutual responsibilities. The failures, over generations, of broken treaties and policies of assimilation are all elements of a fractured covenant that has had devastating effects on Indigenous communities and on true shalom in Canada as a whole. Our future health depends on the shared journey of reconciliation and a covenant based on mutual respect and justice.

I commend the organizers and participants at this conference, and thank you for your commitment and leadership on this journey of reconciliation.

I strongly encourage CRC members and all Canadians to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, including attending community hearings, national events, and associated campaigns such as “It Matters to Me!” These events are an essential part of the journey together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people toward renewed relationships of peace and friendship, realizing the full contribution of Indigenous people to our shared lives on this land.

It is my fervent prayer that the activities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be heard as a call to renewed dialogue about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and that all Canadians will be active participants on the journey toward truth, reconciliation and justice.

For further information about Christian Reformed Church resources or activities to facilitate continued learning and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, please contact Steve van de Hoef, Justice and Reconciliation Mobilizer at [svandehoef@crcna.org](mailto:svandehoef@crcna.org) or Mike Hogeterp, Centre for Public Dialogue at [mhogeterp@crcna.org](mailto:mhogeterp@crcna.org), or visit [www.crcna.ca/aboriginal](http://www.crcna.ca/aboriginal).

**Ben Vandezande**  
Interim Director of Canadian Ministries

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560  
616-241-1691  
616-224-5895 fax

3475 Mainway  
PO Box 5070 STN LCD I  
Burlington, Ontario L7R 3Y8  
905-336-2920  
905-336-8344 fax