

## **Listening, Connecting and Walking in Solidarity: Reconciliation in Our Archdiocese**

Over the past months, we have been hearing about the recovery process of unmarked graves at Residential School sites in Canada, which has reached the consciousness of our church and the larger community in a new way. The pain and trauma caused by these schools has always been at the forefront for Indigenous Peoples, especially for Survivors who attended them. There is a renewed commitment in the church to support and walk with Indigenous Peoples on this path of truth and reconciliation.

We know that this will be a long journey, and we are prepared to do what is necessary to move towards right relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Listening, offering an apology, making amends, and walking together in solidarity with Indigenous communities will all play a part. The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #61](#) will be a roadmap to draw upon. Those around us will be “watching our feet” to see how we fulfill our commitments to reconciliation.

Bishop Don and Sr. RéAnne Letourneau have been in conversation with Residential School Survivors, Elders and Indigenous community members, asking them about what solidarity and support is needed from their perspective. Here is some of what they have heard:

- That Indigenous spiritual leaders can assist in facilitating a way forward;
- That financial support should be prioritized for the needs of survivors;
- That a Regina-based initiative guided by survivors could help with healing and intergenerational trauma caused by Catholic-operated Residential Schools;
- That assistance would be welcome with work related to cemeteries connected with Catholic-operated Residential Schools;
- That building connections with parishioners of Catholic parishes, especially those near First Nations communities, are an important part of the reconciliation journey.

### **How can our archdiocese fulfill TRC responsibilities in a practical way?**

- We have created an archdiocesan TRC Healing Fund to receive the resources that will be used to help take our reconciliation commitments from theory to reality:
  - We will be offering those who have already donated to the Rebuilding Our Church Campaign the opportunity or redirect (or top up) a portion of their donation to go to the TRC Healing Fund;
  - We will be offering all parishioners the opportunity to support the TRC Healing Response Fund either when they donate to the Archbishop's Appeal or via a pew collection in December;
  - The allocation of funds that have been designated for justice work; and
  - The collection of online funds from the Sask Bishops Healing Response Appeal.

### **We are working with Indigenous partners on both a plan and the structures to support the plan:**

- Our intention is to invite Indigenous and non-Indigenous members to working groups for potential project initiatives for Regina and outside Regina;
- We are planning how to use TRC Healing Fund resources most effectively and transparently and with clear accountability.

As we create pathways and structures to build relationships and share resources in a good way, we are conscious of how important it is not to repeat the mistakes of the past. The main guidance on this journey must come from Indigenous survivors, Elders and spiritual leaders, with the church's role being to support, listen, connect, and walk in solidarity.

