

AN APOLOGY TO THE FIRST NATIONS OF CANADA  
BY THE MISSIONARY OBLATES OF CANADA      March 29th 2014

In 1991, on the eve of the 500th anniversary of the colonization of the Americas, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate made a public apology to the Native Peoples of Canada. Today in the context of this final National Truth and Reconciliation event, the Oblates of Lacombe Province would like to renew this apology and pledge once more our desire to journey in solidarity and mutual respect with all the First Peoples of Canada.

Through the first centuries of contact, the relationship of non-native to First Nations People was deeply wounded by the settlers' attitude of cultural and religious superiority and the imposition of colonial power.

For the last many decades the Indian Residential Schools have come to epitomize the harm of that colonial relationship. The good that came out of the Schools came at an unbearable cost to the First Nations. The primal bond inherent within families was violated as a matter of policy, as children were separated from their natural communities. These schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to those of First Nations and as such contributed to the domination of aboriginal culture, language and the integrity of the family itself. We missionaries played a significant role in the implementation of this flawed policy. For this we sincerely apologize.

The residential environment made children very vulnerable. We wish to apologize for failing to protect the children in our care, and for the times when we placed the reputation of the institution above the well-being of the students. The significant number of incidents of abuse has shocked society and the church. These acts are inexcusable, intolerable, and a profound betrayal of trust. We deeply, and very specifically, apologize to every victim of such abuse.

As missionaries, with a desire to serve, we commit ourselves to that deeper service Jesus Christ modeled for all Christians when he washed the feet of his disciples. Our hope for the journey forward is that we may serve not from a place of 'above' or 'below', but from a place of friendship, of equality, and of respect.

As a gesture of reconciliation, we, Missionaries Oblates of Mary Immaculate, would like to place a copy of these words along with the Apology of 1991 into your care.

Please note that the Oblate Apology of 1991 is available in print in the Churches' Listening Area.

Ken Forster OMI

Provincial of the O.M.I. Lacombe Canada