

**Subject:** Final TRC National Event - Edmonton

**Date:** Wednesday, April 2, 2014 at 3:28:19 PM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** Isabelle Gigault

**Priority:** High

Hello my fellow Oblates;

The final Truth and Reconciliation Event took place this past week in Edmonton, Alberta. I was present for the event from the opening ceremonies on Thursday March 27<sup>th</sup> until Sunday March 30<sup>th</sup>. I am very grateful that eight other Oblates participated in the event as well. During this final TRC National Event we renewed our Oblate Apology to First Nations people (see attachment in English and French). We were given a maximum of four minutes, so it was abbreviated but the original Apology of 1991 was available in the Churches Listening Area (see attachment of the 1991 apology in English and French).

Many of you may be saying, "Apologize again?". I think there are many reasons why it was necessary for us as Oblates to renew our apology. Firstly it was in 1991 that we made our first public apology regarding Residential Schools. This is a generation later and the younger generation of aboriginal people who experience abuse within family and an environment of chaos in their lives are attributing this firstly to the influence of the schools on their parents. Their pain is still very "raw".

Secondly as in every relationship where trust is broken, it is not once that a person says sorry and all is healed. Rather the sincere apology if heard, suffices for the minute, but two days later the injury is brought up again until finally respect is restored and the injured party begins to feel the joy of a renewed relationship of trust.

I must say that this final TRC National Event had an atmosphere of hope in the midst of the storytelling of immense pain. Many of those who spoke in the main hall shared how they were trying to offer something more to their children and grandchildren. They spoke of breaking addiction and trying to restore family relationships. They gave hope to many who were deep in anger and resentment, I believe. I sensed that these years of TRC have contributed to healing by allowing a public forum to express bitterness and be heard. In the smaller listening circles one seemed to experience a more acute pain being expressed, but also some expression of searching for a more caring humanity that was also within the system.

One individual pointed out the evident truth: "Not everyone who administered or worked in these schools was evil intending to injure. The majority were like you and me in this room, very good dedicated generous people who were willing to undergo sacrifice living often in remote places and in rustic circumstances. Many loved the students." This is obviously a truth that we hold for many of you who gave the best days of your life to a ministry that was already embraced by the Oblate Provinces to which you belonged. In obedience to your call you offered your best and worked long hours to care for the students.

In hindsight, we may and must acknowledge that to remove young children from their families, for the majority of their young lives, was not acceptable. This is true regardless of the love that child care workers, religious and administrators personally offered. We proclaim that parents are the first educators of their children in the faith but we know that

this also is true in sharing their values, traditions and language. No matter how wounded a family is we hold that to be a right and responsibility.

Fr. Mark Blom, OMI gave a short but insightful homily on Sunday Morning for a small number who gathered at Sacred Heart Parish for an early mass so that they could participate in the “walk”. The man was cured by “mud” and “spittle”. We have experienced, Fr. Mark said, our face pushed in the mud and the spittle of rejection. We need now to come through this to “respect”, which means to see again. May the Lord heal both our native brothers and sisters as well as ourselves. This desire for healing of native persons as well as members of the church was expressed publically by a native organizer of the event, when I was on stage after the “Expressions of Reconciliation” when our renewed Apology which we placed in the Bentwood Box.

**Please see links below for interviews and articles from the Final National TRC Event held in Edmonton:**

[Interview with Fr. Ken Forster, OMI - CTV News](#)

[Interview with Fr. Ken Forster, OMI - CBC News](#)

[Lessons from TRC - Blog Spot - Archbishop Richard Smith](#)

[The Canadian Council of Churches - Expression of Reconciliation](#)

[Global News - Catholic Bishops Issue Letter of Apology to First Nations People](#)

[SJJ Edmonton - Indian Residential Schools: Catholic Apologies and Statements of Regret](#)



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