

## TRC REPORT

# How Canada can mend relationships with Aboriginals



The children in residential schools suffered severe abuse and neglect.

Photo courtesy of Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Report suggests that education is key to 'closing the gap' on brutal indigenous history



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Opinions Editor

After spending six years listening to testimonies across the country from nearly 7,000 residential school survivors, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released a final report on June 2 that outlines measures by which Canada can fully mend its relationship with the Aboriginal Peoples.

The 360-page document recounts stories of Aboriginal children taken from their parents, and the abuse these children faced in residential schools.

The report provides 94 recommendations for amendments in government, communities, churches, schools, and Aboriginal municipalities, ranging from government policy and programs to the simple way Canadians interact with each other.

The Commission uses the establishment of residential

schools as the main basis for the report, and confronts Canada on the "cultural genocide" inflicted upon Indigenous communities across the country.

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Director for the Office of Aboriginal Peoples at SFU

Among the many suggestions, the report cites the creation of a national Centre and Council for Truth and Reconciliation, the implementation of Aboriginal health-care rights, the creation of new legislation for indigenous languages and education, as well as an inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women, a statutory holiday to honour those who attended residential schools, and the implementation of the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples.

The Commission now calls for political parties to take action over words, and implement these strategies into their regimes.

SFU professor of public policy, Doug McArthur, told

*The Vancouver Sun* that one of the most important things now "is for our provincial and federal governments [...] to respond to this report and to

clearly indicate [...] that they do understand what this report is all about. The next step [...] is to take action around education, healthy communities, and those sorts of issues."

In particular, the Commission emphasizes "education" as a main course of action in "closing the gap" between the First Peoples and the country.

In an interview with CBC on June 2, head of the Commission, Justice Murray Sinclair, emphasized the imbalance between educational funding and the accomplishments of Aboriginal students, claiming that "education is the key to reconciliation because we need to look at the way we are educating our children."

*The Peak* sat down with William Lindsay, Director for the Office of Aboriginal Peoples at SFU, to discuss the education of First Nations issues

at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

"There has to be education about the First Peoples," he continued. "In particular, local peoples, because if you were to ask people at SFU who the local First Nations are, probably 80 per cent of the students here couldn't tell you."

"Right now the high school kids get bits and pieces. [...] They have a grade 12 course [on First Peoples] that's an elective in British Columbia, but isn't [a course] they have to take."

Lindsay noted the recent work that SFU has undertaken with both the TRC and Reconciliation Canada, in implementing the university's Aboriginal Strategic Plan. He referenced SFU's recent residential school education week in February of 2013, and other subsequent workshops held at the university on the issue.

Then turning his focus to the future, Lindsay commented, "The Faculty of Education and First Nations Studies are doing an excellent job at educating students, but it's something that could be done better across the university. My office will be working for the next year on developing some in-house Aboriginal awareness workshops [...] designed for the staff and faculty." **P**

## Satellite Signals



## Woodward's

The Goldcorp Centre for the Arts will host a discussion on Tuesday, June 16 on the future of Canada, and the "dark history we may be unknowingly repeating" — referring to the removal of social security services in accordance to economic austerity policies.

The talk, led by Harry Leslie Smith, a 92-year old social activist and WWII veteran, and The Tyee, will present Smith's personal anti-austerity beliefs, his experiences of the Great Depression, and his emigration to Canada.

## Surrey

SFU is a co-sponsor of an art exhibition titled "From Punjab, with Love," which is on display at the Surrey Art Gallery until August 2, 2015.

The exhibit features a 2.4 metre by 9.1 metre mural by Orijit Sen, based on his famous original housed at the Virasat-e-Khalsa Museum in Anandpur Sahib, India. The mural portrays "the daily life, history, myths, and festivities of the Punjab region through the centuries."

## Harbour Centre

The Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies is hosting a "Herstory Cafe," titled "Canadian Political Cartoonists View the Struggle for Women's Rights."

On Thursday June 18 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., political cartoonists Chris and Cynthia Hou will be discussing how Canadian cartoonists have portrayed issues regarding women and women's rights over the past 150 years. **P**

By Samaah Jaffer & Albert Kho