



TRC thanks chief coroners, chief medical examiners for commitment to help research deaths of Aboriginal children at residential schools

June 11, 2012 – Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), expressed gratitude today to Canada’s provincial and territorial chief coroners and chief medical examiners for their unanimous commitment to support the Missing Children Project.

An unknown number of Aboriginal children in the care of government-funded, church-run Indian Residential Schools died or went missing during the 150 years in which the schools operated. The TRC established the Missing Children Project to examine the extent of these deaths and disappearances.

On June 8, at their annual meeting in Quebec City, the chief coroners and chief medical examiners unanimously passed a resolution committing each of them to enter into discussions with the TRC regarding the role that each office might play in advancing the project’s aims.

“I thank the chief coroners and chief medical examiners on behalf of the many Aboriginal families who were never able to discover what happened to the children who were taken from them and simply never returned,” said Justice Sinclair. “Our preliminary research indicates that thousands of Aboriginal children died or went missing while attending residential schools. The death rates for the schools, particularly during times of epidemic or disease, were much higher than in the general population.”

To date, the Missing Children Project has identified approximately 600 cases of Aboriginal children who died while attending residential schools. It has been relying primarily on federal government and church records which are not complete.

The office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario is the first such provincial/territorial office to support the work of the Missing Children Project. It has so far identified 120 deaths which may be of Aboriginal children attending residential schools in Ontario. It has also developed a methodology that can be used by other provinces or territories undertaking similar research.

The resolution of the Chief Coroners and Chief Medical Examiners of Canada is as follows.

WHEREAS the Chief Coroners and Chief Medical Examiners of Canada support the intent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Missing Children project, and;

WHEREAS the Chief Coroners and Chief Medical Examiners of Canada view the deaths of aboriginal children in residential schools as a national tragedy;

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BE IT RESOLVED THAT each Chief Coroner's and Chief Medical Examiner's office engage in discussions with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in order to better understand the role that each Office might play in advancing the aims of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Missing Children project.

Moved: D. Cass, Deputy Chief Coroner, Ontario
Seconded: K. Stewart, Chief Coroner, Saskatchewan
Carried (unanimous)
June 8, 2012

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established as a result of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in the 150-year history of the residential schools, and guide and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

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