

Expression of Reconciliation

Commissioners, elders, survivors and their families, and friends,

To begin, I would like to acknowledge that I am a resident of East Vancouver, so we are not just meeting but I am living on the traditional land of the five Coast Salish peoples. Thank you for your hospitality.

I stand here today as an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church and I am not alone. I invite other Christian Reformed members to please stand as their affirmation of these words today. Our denomination does not have a history of running residential schools in Canada, however, as a member of the broader church in Canada, I confess that the sins committed in the name of Jesus are ones that we are also sorry for. The sin of broken trust, the sin of tearing families apart, the sin of thinking that the Aboriginal ways were not good enough, the sin of making proud assumptions as we forced a way of forming minds and hearts that were contrary to your cherished traditions and spirituality, the sin of thinking punishment and abuse were the right thing to do in the name of progress, the sin of using the power of control instead of the power of love.

I have been deeply moved by hearing so many of you courageously name your pain and share your devastating memories. I am quieted by the way that so many of you have found the freedom to forgive. I am thankful to be invited as a witness to your truth telling. I am struck by the profound grace offered and your commitment to the hard work of reconciliation. Your words and presence have taught me, challenged me and changed me.

In our church right now hang 17 original paintings entitled *Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin* -- The Creator's Sacrifice - by Cree Artist Ovide Bighetty. They depict the story of Jesus-- one who made known the Creator Spirit. One who himself was a victim of injustice but was restored and transformed and who now meets others on their healing journeys.

This image entitled '*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow*' is a story of transformation. First in his own life and then in his coming alongside others to bring about transformation in their own lives.

Truth has been spoken, yet we know the work of reconciliation is not yet complete. Therefore I commit myself and my people to the work of listening, grieving, encouragement and support. And We commit to pray that the Creator may meet you and all of us on the road to healing.

Thank you. Hiechgka

All My relations

Rev. Trevor Vanderveen
Pastor of First Christian Reformed Church of Vancouver
2670 Victoria Drive, Vancouver, BC V5N 2C6