

Justice Murray Sinclair Statement

Commission Chairman,
Presentation of report and the 94 Calls to Action,
Ottawa, Tuesday June 2, 2015

“residential schools’ amount to nothing short of **cultural genocide** – a systematic and concerted attempt to extinguish the spirit of Aboriginal peoples. These actions included the removal of generation after generation of Aboriginal children from their families, the suppression of Aboriginal language and culture, and the attempts to re-educate Aboriginal children with non-Aboriginal culture....to remove a culture deemed inferior.

In this way, Canadian governments and churches and others sought to erase from the face of the earth the culture and history of many great and proud peoples...this is the very essence of Colonialism... ..leaving in its path the pain and despair felt by thousands of Indigenous people today.

But rather than denying or diminishing the harm done, we must agree that this damage requires serious, immediate, and ongoing repair. We must endeavour instead to become a society that champions human rights, truth and tolerance, NOT by avoiding a dark history but rather by confronting it.

A society that respects and protects the cultures of all peoples within it... ..a society in which children are proud of their identity, culture and traditions... ..not made to feel ashamed of them.

A society that seeks an end to the cycles of violence, abuse and poverty instead of seeking to re-victimize, marginalize and further punish. ...as though further injury could in some way resolve a past injury.

To become this society, we need to bear witness to the past and join in a vision for the future.

This must be the goal of reconciliation. If we are to truly live by our convictions, we must confront and accept that Canada’s history includes a history that’s inconsistent with how we see ourselves.

Question:

Where is the progress today with the 94 Calls to Action, and the additional Calls for Justice from the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women report?