



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
Social Justice Committee



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RECONCILIATION AND VINCENTIANS

I was able to watch and listen to Prime Minister Trudeau's very sincere and humble apology to the Innu people which was followed by the equally emotional acceptance by Toby Abed of the residential school survivors. As I listened and shared a tear with these two men, I tried to imagine the pain and life long effect the residential school system has had on our fellow Canadians. In addition, there has been so much pain while the Innu waited patiently for this apology. What an incredible moment it must have been for these families to hear this apology.

I have reflected on the recent actions our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have undertaken related to the Inuit people we have met and partner with in our North of 60 program. I have also reflected on what reconciliation means within our own Catholic faith. Reconciliation is so important to us as Catholics that it is one of our sacraments. If we use this as the basis of how we consider the importance of reconciliation to indigenous people, we should be able to better understand how critical it is to indigenous people if we are to be successful in our continued efforts to develop a strong and long-lasting partnership of sharing and caring with them.

As a lay Catholic organization our words and actions are a direct result of our own faith tradition and can provide us with the unique ability to speak and act as members of the Catholic faith in Canada. I would remind you that since the Catholic faith tradition is such an integral part of any actions and words we do and say as Vincentians, we should also have an understanding of the rich and deeply spiritual faith traditions of indigenous people. In my experience there is a great deal we can and should learn about the spirituality of indigenous people. Please consider the opportunity to include this education as part of any activities you undertake related to indigenous people. Why not invite an indigenous person to speak at future meeting? Reconciliation is only the beginning of a better future for all Canadians. I hope and pray that we may all consider this in our future actions and words as Vincentians.

Jim Paddon