



The **Catholic Bishops**
of **Alberta** and the
Northwest Territories

Les évêques catholiques
de l'**Alberta** et des
Territoires du Nord-Ouest

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**Statement by Most Reverend Richard W. Smith, Archbishop of Edmonton
On Behalf of The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories
On the Occasion of the Truth and Reconciliation Event in Edmonton, Alberta**

This Edmonton national gathering of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, together with the preparation that has led to it, represents an important historical moment for First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples, and for everyone who calls Alberta home. It is an important and necessary step on a long-term journey of moving towards deep healing and authentic reconciliation. Since many Indian Residential Schools in this province were administered by Roman Catholic entities, the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories wish to offer their hearts and voices as we listen and speak to one another in these important days.

Those who attended the Residential Schools often had to leave home at a young age. We recognize that there were students who benefitted from the experience and education they received at these schools. At the same time, we acknowledge with deep pain that others speak of their experience at Residential Schools in terms of pain, suffering, and lengthy alienation from family, local community, language and culture. Some also speak of being subjected to sexual and physical abuse at these schools.

We add our voice to those of the Catholic bishops and leaders of religious communities across Canada who have already expressed words of apology and regret. We, the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and Northwest Territories, apologize to those who experienced sexual and physical abuse in Residential Schools under Catholic administration. We also express our apology and regret for Catholic participation in government policies that resulted in children being separated from their families, and often suppressed Aboriginal culture and language at the Residential Schools.

We commit ourselves to work in the Catholic community and the wider society to challenge attitudes of racism and prejudice that continue to exist in Alberta and Canada today. Aboriginal communities still face many serious issues that go beyond what will be addressed at the TRC, including land, treaty rights, education, health care, housing, jobs, and environmental threats. We will continue to find ways for Catholics, together with other concerned Canadians, to support more effectively Aboriginal peoples in their ongoing struggles to achieve justice and equity in Canadian society.

The canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha has deepened our appreciation of the gifts of Aboriginal culture and spirituality. May her prayers to the Creator help all of us reach the healing and reconciliation we seek.

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton
President, The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories

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