

**PRESS RELEASE: From Truth Comes Reconciliation: An Assessment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (2nd Edition)**

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The important press announcement below — **the 600th post on this site since its inception on January 5, 2022** — acknowledges today's release of the second edition of ***From Truth Comes Reconciliation: An Assessment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report***, edited by Rodney A. Clifton and Mark DeWolf.

This second edition is jointly published and distributed by Sutherland House Press and the Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

It deals with the unfortunate outcome that, contrary to what was intended, Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations have soured since 2015 when the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Report on Canada's Indian Residential Schools (IRSs) was published. Since then, "reconciliation" has become a lofty but perhaps unattainable goal for individual Canadians and governments alike.

Since May 2021, the intensity of conflict has actually increased, due in part to the publication of a false report of 215 Indigenous children buried in the schoolyard of a residential school in Kamloops, B.C. Over the last three years, at least one schoolteacher, Jim McMurtry, has been fired for saying that the only thing buried in the Kamloops schoolyard "was the truth." As far as anyone can tell, he was correct, but that did not matter because his words were too politically insensitive for his employer. As a result, he was dismissed from his teaching position. Ron Paull, the mayor of Quesnel, a Northern B.C. town, was stripped of his duties because his wife gave copies of a book to a few business associates. The book was *Grave Error: How the Media Misled Us (and the Truth about Residential Schools)*, edited by Chris Champion and Tom Flanagan. A week later, in the Mountain View School Division in Manitoba, trustee Paul Coffey was pilloried by other trustees, Indigenous leaders, and the *Winnipeg Free Press* for uttering a few politically incorrect words. But if anyone cared to check, his words were supported by the TRC Report.

So how reliable *is* the 7-volume TRC Report? Clearly Canadians are increasingly polarized on what they think the Report says and what it means for the future of Canada. Some people insist that the Report proves that McMurtry, Paull, and Coffey are "residential school deniers," but their critics have either ignored or brushed aside the substantial evidence supporting the "deniers" arguments.

Sadly, a major problem is that very few people have carefully read the 3,500-page TRC Report. Far more Canadians have only read the *Summary* volume, which is *not* an adequate summation of the entire Report. Many other Canadians know only what the media told them about the Summary volume's conclusions. For this reason, *From Truth Comes Reconciliation*, sorts through the evidence in the full Report, examining the controversy that has enveloped the IRS conversation since the Report was published. The editors believe that to make prudent decisions about our nation's future, Canadians need to be well-informed, and this is what they set out to do.

The book has three parts. Part I, "Understanding the TRC Report," has two chapters. In Chapter 1, Joseph Quesnel reviews 233 years of legislation beginning with the Royal Proclamation in 1763 and ending with the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996. Over this period, many bills and policies have shaped the relationship between Indigenous people, governments, and non-Indigenous Canadians. In Chapter 2, Rodney Clifton and Mark DeWolf answer thirty significant questions that the TRC Report fails to answer in a manner that would help Canadians become truly informed: "What percentage of Indigenous children actually attended residential schools?" "How many years, on average, did students reside in these schools?" "Were Indigenous students always punished for speaking their native languages?" The answers to these questions—all of which can be obtained from the TRC Report if one looks hard enough—will probably surprise many readers.

Part II, "Critical Analyses of the Report," includes seven chapters that scrutinize the Report's research methods, assumptions, and generalizations. In Chapter 6, Hymie Rubenstein refutes the commonly held assumption that Indigenous people are exceptional compared with other human beings. In Chapter 7, Brian Giesbrecht, a retired lawyer and judge, examines four troublesome legal issues that the Report ignores: the appointment of honorary witnesses, testimonies that were not carefully evaluated before they were published, the undervaluing of positive testimonies provided by former students and IRS staff members, and the validity of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

In the closing chapter of Part II, Masha Krylova uses psychological theory and research to show the harm that could come from the TRC Report's claims that virtually all the difficulties Indigenous people experience today can be attributed to colonialism and residential schools — neither of which are under their individual control. Krylova explains how Indigenous people can be empowered by redirecting their attention away from uncontrollable attributions to controllable attributions like their own ability and initiative. The social psychological research literature clearly shows that this change has helped many people overcome their sense of powerlessness.

Part III, "Personal Reflections," includes five chapters contributed by people with considerable personal experience with Indigenous people. In Chapter 10, Lea Meadows writes about her parents and grandparents who were both IRS students and later IRS teachers. In Chapter 11, Mark DeWolf recounts his experiences as a student in St. Paul's Anglican Residential School on the Kainai First Nation (Blood Reserve) in Southern Alberta. DeWolf was one of hundreds of non-Indigenous children who attended IRS institutions. He discusses his father's positive legacy as the school's Principal and suggests that St. Paul's was not the only IRS institution where students were treated with kindness and respect, and where Indigenous parents clearly supported the school's efforts. In Chapter 12, Rodney Clifton writes about his experience as the Senior Boys' Supervisor in Stringer Hall, Inuvik, an Anglican hostel where Indigenous children also experienced kindness and care.

***From Truth Comes Reconciliation*** concludes by suggesting that there are ways to bring polarized Canadians closer together while helping Indigenous people find success. In fact, a close reading of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's entire Report has given the editors confidence that their research and writings will be received with gratitude. In Volume 6 of the Report, the Commissioners write:

To the Commission, "reconciliation" is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country.... Expanding public dialogue and action on reconciliation beyond residential schools will be critical in the coming years. The relationship between the federal government and Aboriginal peoples is deteriorating.... Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians from all walks of life spoke to us about the importance of reaching out to one another in ways that create hope for a better future. Whether one is First Nation, Inuit, Metis, a descendant of European settlers, a member of a minority group that suffered historical discrimination in Canada, or a new Canadian, we all inherit both the benefits and obligations of Canada. We are all Treaty people who share responsibility for taking action on reconciliation. (Vol 6, ***Reconciliation***, pages 3, 4, and 7)

As authors and editors of ***From Truth Comes Reconciliation: An Assessment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report***, Clifton and DeWolf have taken the Commissioners' request seriously, and have responded by writing this book. It is their sincere hope that many Canadians will read the book, and eventually that Canadians will come to a just, honorable, and lasting reconciliation.

The book is an excellent resource for anyone interested in a factual analysis of the residential school controversy. For my part, I don't believe that residential schools are particularly important on the long list of things that account for indigenous dysfunction. For example, the tragic decades when binge drinking virtually captured life on most reserves is a far more important cause. However, residential schools became a convenient scapegoat for both indigenous and non-indigenous leaders - none of whom have any idea what to do about the problem. So, they vilified residential schools, and pretended that "reconciliation" will set everything right