

Every Child Matters

Letter Writing and Phone Zap

OPIRG Peterborough June 2021

Introduction: The TRC Calls to Action and Accountability

Indian residential and day schools were created by the settler colonial Canadian government and the churches to assimilate Indigenous children and ultimately eradicate Indigenous peoples, communities, and cultures. The children who attended the “schools” experienced unfathomable extents of abuse and mistreatment which produced generations of Indigenous peoples who still suffer from the trauma and violence that came from them. Unfortunately, many children who attended these “schools” never even made it home.

Since the first residential school, which opened in 1831, there has been resistance from Indigenous peoples and ongoing calls for the government and churches to end this genocide. Government officials like John A. Macdonald introduced various forms of violence to use against Indigenous peoples through residential and day schools. The current Canadian government is perpetuating the abuse, violence, and mistreatment of Indigenous peoples and they need to be held accountable.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which was highly critical of the treatment within residential schools, influenced the first public apology from the government in 1998, 167 years after the first residential school opened. This took far too long and an apology is merely a start.

In 2015, the government of so-called Canada released the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. In the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, there are a total of 94 Calls to Action to improve the relationships of colonizers with Indigenous peoples.

We must demand accountability from the government to work towards fulfilling these Calls to Action.

We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the many documents listed on the TRC website, www.trc.ca, including all 94 Calls to Action and the stories of the survivors.

In this letter template, we will be focusing on the section of the Calls to Action, Towards Reconciliation, Missing Children and Burial Information (71-76):

71) We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

72) We call upon the federal government to allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

73) We call upon the federal government to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children.

74) We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child's burial location, and to respond to families' wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested.

75) We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.

76) We call upon the parties engaged in the work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries to adopt strategies in accordance with the following principles:

i. The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies.

ii. Information shall be sought from residential school Survivors and other Knowledge Keepers in the development of such strategies.

iii. Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.

It is evident that as residential and day schools began to close, Indigenous children were then pushed from the abuse and assimilation in the residential and day schools to the same treatment in the child welfare systems. To this day, Indigenous families are being torn apart and disproportionately filtered into the child welfare system.

Intergenerational trauma is ongoing due to continual barriers and institutionalized racism. The violence and abuse from residential schools transferred directly into not only the child welfare system but also the foster care system, and carceral systems as Indigenous peoples are targeted and ultimately overrepresented. The ongoing genocide is also present in current educational and healthcare institutions as Indigenous peoples are frequently undermined and dehumanized to the extent that their lives and identities are threatened. Residential and day schools are not merely a "dark part of history" as the government frames it, the impacts of residential and day schools and racism against Indigenous peoples persist.

There are numerous ways you can do your part in supporting Indigenous peoples' rights and sovereignty. This letter and call script can be used as a stepping stone for your support and/or allyship. We invite you to continue learning and to continue fighting for change.

Instructions:

- Download the letter template and input your name, riding, and city.
 - Change/add any information and feel free to add some of your own story and feelings to the letter.
 - Print off the letter once completed, add your signature, and mail out with the appropriate address.
NOTE: Postage is free if sent to the House of Commons
 - Once mail is sent, call the representative(s) to further express your concerns that were stated in the letter.
 - Encourage your friends and family to send out a letter as well!
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SAMPLE LETTER

The Honorable Maryam Monsef PC MP
Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development
417 Bethune Street Suite 4
Peterborough, Ontario
K9H 3Z1

Dear [Justin Trudeau/ Carolyn Bennett/Maryam Monsef/Marc Miller] ,

I am contacting you today as your constituent in the [Your Riding] in [City]. I am upset and disturbed by the utter ignorance on behalf of the government regarding Indigenous peoples, and more specifically the impact resulting from Residential and Day schools on Indigenous peoples.

Your public statements concerning this “dark chapter in history” are unacceptable. Residential and day schools have contributed to intergenerational trauma that touches the lives of every Indigenous person today. This is a current chapter in so-called Canada’s society, and it is far overdue that the government does more to take accountability and take real action to support Indigenous peoples and their rights and lives in every form.

The recent recoveries of the mass graves of over 1000 Indigenous children on the grounds of numerous Indian Residential Schools is a clear instance of which the government has failed Indigenous peoples. The very creators of these schools have refused to do so much as identify the children that have been ripped from their families and never returned. The empty promises and apologies are a disgrace. Reconciliation requires action.

I demand that you immediately act on the 94 Calls to Action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I demand that you act on **all** of the Calls to Action and make sure the *Missing Children and Burial Information Calls (71-76)* are acted on promptly so that families may no longer live without the knowledge of where their relations may have been buried by the hands of colonization, the government, and the Churches.

I demand that the staff of the residential and day schools be held accountable for the murder, rape, assault, and all forms of abuse of Indigenous children. Do not allow the abusers to continue without charges and conviction.

The horrendous treatment of Indigenous peoples in so-called Canada should not be a norm. I implore you to use your position to support Indigenous peoples and make effective change for the future of so-called Canada and its relationship with Indigenous peoples.

I expect to hear back from you regarding your plans and the immediate actions you will take to fulfill your responsibility to act on the 94 Calls to Action.

Sincerely,

[your signature]

[your name]

PHONE SCRIPT

"Hello, I am [your name], as a constituent in the [Your Riding] in [City] I am calling on [Justin Trudeau/ Carolyn Bennett/Maryam Monsef/Marc Miller] to immediately act on the 94 Calls to Action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The government has continuously failed Indigenous peoples and it is far overdue that real action is taken towards reconciliation. The recent recoveries of mass graves of more than 1000 Indigenous children on the grounds of Indian Residential School is a blatant reminder that Indigenous peoples are still being oppressed by the hands of colonization, the government, and the Churches.

I demand that [Justin Trudeau/ Carolyn Bennett/Maryam Monsef/Marc Miller] act on **all** of the Calls to Action and make sure the *Missing Children and Burial Information calls (71-76)* are acted on promptly so that families may no longer live without the knowledge of where their relations have been buried.

I demand that the staff of the residential and day schools be held accountable for the murder, rape, assault, and all forms of abuse of Indigenous children.

I implore you, [Justin Trudeau/ Carolyn Bennett/Maryam Monsef/Marc Miller], to use your position to support Indigenous peoples and make effective change for the future of so-called Canada and its relationship with Indigenous peoples.

I look forward to hearing from you about this issue. You can reach me at [Your Phone Number]. Thank you."

Contacts

House of Commons Address (Can be used for each of the government officials listed below)	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6
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Government Official	Address (Constituency Office)	Phone Number (Constituency Office)	Phone Number (House of Commons)
Justin Trudeau	1100 Crémazie East Suite 220 Montréal, Quebec H2P 2X2	514-277-6020	613-992-4211
Marc Miller	3175 Saint-Jacques Street Montréal, Quebec H4C 1G7	514-496-4885	613-995-6403
Carolyn Bennett	40 Holly Street Suite 103 Toronto, Ontario M4S 3C3	416-952-3990	613-995-9666
Maryam Monsef	417 Bethune Street Suite 4 Peterborough, Ontario K9H 3Z1	705-745-2108	613-995-6411

Sample Mailing Format

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