2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

### **SECTION 5: CHURCH APOLOGIES**

(2002)

#### LANGUAGE ARTS, HISTORY, SOCIAL STUDIES

#### **MAIN IDEA**

The four (4) Churches that were involved in the operation of residential schools for Aboriginal children are from various orders. The Churches wished to spread gospel to help young people to survive in a world where the old ways of life seemed to be vanishing. All churches wished to evangelize; however, whatever the good intentions of the Churches involved, they now admit that the consequences were tragic for Aboriginal people and have since apologized for their wrong doings.

#### **LEARNING OJECTIVES:**

- To encourage students to understand that 3 out of the 4 Churches have since apologized and admitted to the injustices of the residential school system.
- Students will learn about the 4 Churches individually and how they have contributed to the healing process of the residential school Survivors.
- Students will learn what an apology is and when and how to apologize.

#### **ACTIVITIES**

- 1. Share **Background Information** with the class.
- 2. Share the extracts from **Church Apologies** with the students, read them as a class.
- 3. Review What is an Apology sheet with the students.
- 4. Have students complete My Apologies worksheet.
- 5. Ask students to volunteer to give an example from their worksheet.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

Formative: Class participation in class discussion and Apologies worksheet.

2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

#### READING

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Four Churches were involved in the operation of residential schools for Aboriginal children: the Roman Catholic Church; the Church of England (or Anglican); the Methodist (or United) Church; and the Presbyterian Church. An estimated 100,000 to 150,000 Aboriginal children attended residential schools for a time representing about 20% of the potential First Nation status population.

Most early missions had a day school or sometimes a small residential school as part of their outreach to the Native community. Staff turnover was high, and many staff lacked professional qualifications and experience in cross-cultural education.

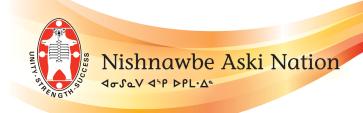
The Churches wished to spread the gospel, to help young people survive in a world where the old ways of life seemed to be vanishing, such as the buffalo hunt. They also provided education to Aboriginal children as part of their mandate to offer it to groups which has no access to public education, such as females and the poor.

The good intentions could not hide the injustice of the system. "In spite of stories of individual caring staff, and in spite of the fact that many church people believed that the schools would provide the education that would be the key to an improve future for Aboriginal people, it was a fundamentally flawed structure under girded by government policy.

"The nature of sins remains that sometimes, from causes not of individual doing, best intentions sow destructions. Reconciliation demands honesty, and honesty now requires that the memories of Aboriginal people who attended the schools be heard in all their pain" (*Why the Healing Fund*, United Church of Canada publication)

During the time they operated residential schools, the churches explicitly supported the federal government's assimilation goal in running the schools. Government paid for capital expenditures and staff salaries through operating grants; the churches had responsibility for the day to day atmosphere and school activities. After 1969, the churches withdrew from running the schools and control passed to the federal government and individual bands.

Between 1986 and 1994, the church orders involved in running the residential schools apologized for their role in imposing a world view that considered Aboriginal culture inferior. They accepted their role in the deliberate policy to assimilate Aboriginal people—something the federal government has so far failed to do. They repented for the grief and suffering that took place in the schools they operated, and the break with traditional spirituality.



2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

# READING BACKGROUND INFORMATION continued...

These apologies were made in public, in the presence of Aboriginal people who had attended and been affected by residential schooling. Church leaders also encouraged congregations at the local level to be involved—for example, by arranging feasts with local Chiefs and giving a copy of the apology to each Chief—making public confessions on the territory of Aboriginal people.

Today the churches are committed to educating non-Aboriginal people about the legacy of residential schools policies. They are developing resources and conducting special fund-raising campaigns among their own members, as well as reaching out to the general public.

2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

#### **CHURCH APOLOGIES**

#### UNITED CHURCH APOLOGY

The **United Church of Canada** is one of Canada's largest Christian denominations. It is also the liberal of the major Christian faith groups. The following three statements by the United Church shows an evolution in the church's recognition of its past contempt of Native spirituality:

#### In 1947:

"However, we do not feel that any church has to justify its missionary work in spite of failures, we believe the change from paganism to Christianity is such that we can let the work speak for itself."

- Submission by the UC of Canada of Missions to a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons -

#### In August 1986:

The Church's 31st General Council issued what is believed to be "the first of the religious organizations to apologize" for its treatment of Native Canadians. The statement did not specifically mention residential schools:

"Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich and to be treasured. We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality. We confused western ways and culture with the depth of breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting Gospel. We tried to make you like us and in doing so we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred and we are not what we are meant by God to be. We ask you to forgive us and walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed by God's creation healed."

- Part of the apology issued to First Nations members of the United Church of Canada (1986) -

#### In 1986:

"Overall, the nature of impact of the residential schools can be described as a tragic paradox. While they may have been understood by the churches as a means to 'save' Native people both physically and spiritually, the residential schools were part of a social economic system driven both by the assumption of European superiority as well as by the desire to take over the land and other resources that were part of the traditional territories of the Native people."

- Moderator's Task Force Report -



2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

# CHURCH APOLOGIES UNITED CHURCH

#### In July 1991:

Father Douglas Crosby, OMI, then presidential of the Oblate Conference of Canada, delivered a detailed apology to approximately 25,000 natives at Lac Ste. Anne, on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage. He said in part:

"We apologize for the part we played in the cultural, ethnical, linguistic and religious imperialism that was part of the European mentality and, in a particular way, for the instances of physical and sexual abuse that occurred in these schools. We recognize that in spite of the good that came of them, the residential schools have caused pain to so many. For these trespasses we wish to voice today our deepest sorrow and we ask your forgiveness and understanding. We hope that we can make up for it being part of the healing process wherever necessary."

The (OMI) Missionary Oblates operated most of the Roman Catholic residential schools in Canada

2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

#### **CHURCH APOLOGIES**

### ANGLICAN CHURCH APOLOGY

The Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Michale Peers, made the following apology to students abused in its schools:

My Brothers and Sisters:

"Together here with you I have listened as you have told your stories of the residential schools." I have heard the voices that have spoken in pain and hurt experienced in the schools, and of the scars which endure to this day. I have felt shame and humiliation as I have heard of suffering inflicted by my people, and as I think of the part our church playing in that suffering. I am deeply conscious of the sacredness of the stories that you have told and I hold in the highest honour those who have told them. I have heard with admiration the stories of people and communities who have worked at healing, and I am aware of how much healing is needed. I also know that I am in need of healing, and my own people are in need of healing, and our is in need of healing. Without healing, we will continue the same attitudes that have done such damage in the past. I also know that healing takes a long time, both for people and for communities. I also know that it is God who heals, and that God can begin to heal when we open ourselves, our wounds, our failures and our shame to God. I want to take one step along that path here and now. I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of identity. I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many abused physically, sexually, culturally, and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I present our apology."

- A Message from the Primate to the National Native Convocation Minaki, ON -



2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

#### **CHURCH APOLOGIES**

#### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH APOLOGY

"...It is with deep humility and in great sorrow that we come before God and our Aboriginal brothers and sisters with our confession. We acknowledge that the stated policy of the Government of Canada was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominate culture, and that the Presbyterian Church in Canada co-operated in this policy...For the Church's complicity in this policy we ask for forgiveness...we...encouraged the Government to ban some important spiritual practices through which Aboriginal peoples experienced the presence of the creator God. For the Church's complicity in policy we ask forgiveness...In our cultural arrogance we have been blind to the ways in which our understanding of Gospel has been culturally conditioned...For the Church's presumptions we ask forgiveness...in Residential Schools...The Presbyterian Church in Canada used disciplinary practices which were foreign to Aboriginal peoples, and open to exploitation in physical psychological punishment beyond any Christian maxim of care and discipline. In a setting of obedience and acquiescence there was opportunity for sexual abuse, and some were so abused. The effect of all this for Aboriginal peoples, was the loss of cultural identity and the loss of a secure sense of self. For the Church's insensitivity we ask forgiveness. We regret that there are those whose lives have been deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. For our Church we ask forgiveness of God. It is our prayer that God, who is merciful, will guide us in compassionate ways towards helping them to heal. We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples. What we have heard we acknowledge. It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say. With God's guidance our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people."

2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

#### **CHURCH APOLOGIES**

#### ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH APOLOGY

It is difficult to find any apology by the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Canada for it's physical, sexual, spiritual, emotional, and cultural abuse of Natives. However, the Vatican did issue a generic apology within an Apostolic Letter. The Catholic Church of Canada as a whole did not apologize instead they left it up to their individual Dioceses responsible for running specific schools.

In it the Pope said:

"In spite of the cultural conditioning of times past, the Church had an obligation to express regret for the weaknesses of so many of her sons and daughters who sullied [the Church's] face."

No admission of error on the part of the Church itself is possible, because of the Catholic belief of the Church's historical purity and absence from error. But the pope was able to express regret at actions by past members of the Church. Unfortunately, it is not liable to be very meaningful for Canadian Natives, because of its lack of specificity. Neither Canada nor its residential schools were mentioned.

### POPE JOHN PAUL II APOLOGY

The pope included three prayers in his Mass which verged on an apology. The first prayer is most closely related to abuse in Canadian residential schools. However, the Pope asks for the forgiveness of God, not forgiveness from the Church's victims:

In a "Confession of Sins Committed in Actions Against Love, Peace, the Rights of People, and Respect of Cultures and Religions" the pope prayed: "...Christians have often denied the Gospel; yielding to a mentality of power, they have violated the rights of ethnic groups and peoples, and shown contempt for their cultures and religious traditions: be patient and merciful towards us, and grant us your forgiveness!"

In a "Confession of Sins Against the Dignity of Women and the Unity of Human Race" the Pope prayed: "Lord God,...you willed the diversity of peoples within the unity of the human family. At times, however, the equality of your sons and daughters has not been acknowledged, and Christians have been guilty of attitudes of rejection and exclusion, consenting to acts of discrimination on the basis of racial and ethnic differences...For all those who have committed acts of injustice by trusting in wealth and power and showing contempt for the 'little ones."

- Residential School Project Newsletter, Mar. 2000 -

2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

#### **INFORMATION**

#### WHAT IS AN APOLOGY?

An apology is a regretful acknowledgement of an offence or failure. It is an assurance that no offence was intended. It is an explanation or defense. To make an apology; express regret is the action of apologizing.

How does it make the person receiving the apology feel? How does it make the person giving the apology feel?

#### WHEN AND HOW TO APOLOGIZE

One key to getting along well with people is knowing when to say you're sorry. Sometimes little comments or actions can hurt or offend others. The little things can add up. It doesn't take long for someone to hold a grudge and for grudges to grow into conflicts. In most cases, if someone is offended by something you do or say, it's much better to apologize right away. That solves the small problem and keeps it from getting bigger. It's hard to apologize. Many of us are ashamed or have too much pride. Sometimes we just don't know how to do it. Here are some tips that my make it easier to say you're sorry.

**Take responsibility:** the first step in apologizing is to admit to yourself that you have offended someone.

**Explain:** it's important to let the person you hurt know that you didn't mean to do harm. At the same time, you must show that you take your mistake seriously. Recognize that your actions caused a problem for the other person.

**Show regret:** the other person needs to see that you have suffered, too. Come right our and say you are sorry or ashamed. "I felt bad the minute it told your secret to Fred. I'm ashamed of myself."

**Repair the damage:** to be complete, an apology must correct the injury. If you damaged someone's property, offer to fix it. If the damage isn't so obvious, ask "What can I do to make it up to you?" There may be nothing concrete you can do, but the offer must be sincere. "I'll try to keep my mouth shut in the future. Meantime, let me buy you a cup of coffee." Another way to repair the damage is to send a note or a small gift.

**Use good timing:** Apologize right away for little things; for example, if you bump into someone, say you're sorry right away. Don't wait until the next day to apologize. However, if you have done something more serious, like insult a friend, your apology should be more thoughtful. A quick apology might seem phony.

Source: http://extension.unl.edu/welfare/apology.htm

WORKSHEET



2002 CURRICULUM UPDATE

### **MY APOLOGIES**

Think of four (4) different scenarios where you were at fault. Come up with an apology for each scenario to show your regret (without using real people names).

Scenario #1:			
Apology #1:			
Scenario #2:			
Apology #2:			
Scenario #3:			
Apology #3:			
Scenario #4:			
Apology #4:			